

AAUW NEWS OF NOTE

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Mission Statement: AAUW advances equity for all women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

Vision Statement: AAUW will be a powerful advocate and visible leader in equity and education through research, philanthropy, and measurable change in critical areas impacting the lives of women and girls.

HINGHAM AREA BRANCH MARCH 2009

CALENDAR

March 2, Monday	Writers Group 9:00 AM Brewed Awakenings, Hingham
March 3, Tuesday	Book Group, 7:00 PM Home of Lynn Howard
March 5, Wednesday	Adventures in Dining 6:30PM Peppercornz, 1037 Main St., South Weymouth RSVP: Pat Laidler
March 10, Tuesday	Branch Meeting 7:00 PM Greening Your Home and Environment Hanover Public Library, 534 Hanover St., Hanover
March 12, Thursday	Girls Game Night 7:00 PM Home of Sharon Lemoff
March 24, Tuesday	Board Meeting 7:00 PM Home of Sharon Lemoff
March 26, Thursday	Writers Group 7:30 PM Brewed Awakenings, Hingham
April 9, Thursday	Declutter Bugs 4:30 PM Panera, Derby Shops, Hingham
April 14, Tuesday	Branch Meeting 7:00 PM Hingham Public Library, Hingham
April 16, Thursday	Girls Game Night 7:00 PM Home of Hollie Bagley

BRANCH MEETING

The March meeting will take place on March 10th at 7 PM at the Hanover Library, 534 Hanover Street, Rte. 139, Hanover.

This month's program will be a wonderful "get ready for Spring" program entitled, "Greening Your Home and Environment." Two local environmental experts, Debbie Cook from the North and South River Watershed Association and Jon Belber from Holly Hill Farm in Cohasset will speak to caring for your home and garden without the use of harmful chemicals.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Meet me in St. Louis! Our National Convention is being held there on June 26-28, 2009. Ruthanne and I want to thank you for voting us as your delegates. It is quite an honor to represent you at the convention. We hope you will join us there. Also I want to mention the State Convention that will be held in Marlborough on May 8-9, 2009. If you cannot join us in St. Louis we hope you can join us in Marlborough. I will have more details next month to share with you.

Our next Branch Meeting is about "greening" our homes and environment. A new venue has been chosen, The Hanover Public Library; we hope to see you there on March 10th. On a sad note, Sema Faigen's husband Ivan passed away. Sema was a past State President and the Sema Faigen International Fund was named in her honor. Ivan and Sema have been very generous supporters of AAUW. We send our condolences to Sema and the entire Faigen family.

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group will meet on Tuesday, March 3rd at Lynn Howard's house at 4 Judson Road in Weymouth. We will be discussing the book *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks. Inspired by a true story, *People of the Book* is a novel of sweeping historical grandeur and intimate emotional intensity, an acclaimed and ambitious work from a Pulitzer Prize winning author. Everyone is welcome to join the Book Group.

WRITERS' GROUP

Congratulations to Beatrice Kelly whose article, *Burning wood warms the heart as well as the hearth*, was published in the *Hull Times*.

The writing group has decided to meet twice a month. In March the meetings will be on Monday, March 2 at 9 AM and on Thursday, March 26 at 7:30 PM. Both meetings will be at Brewed Awakenings in Hingham.

LEGAL ADVOCACY FUND

LAF Case Support

Information about LAF's expanded case support program is available on the [AAUW website](#). If you would like to make a case recommendation, please contact laf@aauw.org to receive a Case Recommendation form. Forms are accepted on a rolling basis. If the case meets the initial criteria, applicants will receive a more thorough application to complete and submit. The LAF review process will determine the case's suitability for support.

In 2008, AAUW signed amicus curiae, or "friend of the court", briefs in support of Vicky Crawford in her sexual harassment case, *Crawford v. Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County*, and in support of the Fitzgerald family in their Title IX case, *Fitzgerald v. Barnstable School Committee*. Both cases were heard before the U.S. Supreme Court in fall 2008. In January 2009, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in both

Amicus Brief Victories cases. To learn more, read the blog entry "[Two Good Rulings from the Court](#)" co-written by LAF and public policy staff. These are major victories in the fight against sex discrimination, and AAUW's involvement shows the respect the organization receives by decision makers.

LAF Pins

2009 LAF Pins are available for those who donate \$100 or more to LAF. The development staff sends the pins after the donations are received.

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW CELEBRATES SIGNING OF LEDBETTER LAW

Thanks to diligent efforts by AAUW Action Network members and coalition partners, President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law in a public ceremony held in the East Room of the White House. AAUW Executive Director Linda Hallman and Public Policy Director Lisa Maatz were both in attendance, along with Lilly Ledbetter, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and various other members of Congress and activists involved in the act's passage. View a photo slideshow of the bill signing on AAUW's Pay Equity page. This landmark legislation was not only an important step for American women; it will also go down in history as the first bill President Obama signed into law. "President Obama has put pay discrimination at the top of the agenda, right where it belongs. The wage gap doesn't just hurt working women, it hurts families as well," said AAUW Executive Director Linda D. Hallman, CAE, in a press release. "We are especially pleased that this measure is the first bill moved by Congress and signed by our new president, sending a strong message that economic issues and pay equity are a top priority." The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act came about as a response to a 5-4 Supreme Court decision that discrimination charges must be filed within 180 days of the original discriminatory decision. The new law restores the long-standing interpretation of civil rights laws and EEOC policies that allow employees 180 days to challenge any discriminatory paycheck they receive. AAUW's Capitol Hill Lobby Corps was also instrumental in this advocacy campaign, visiting many congressional offices to represent the support of AAUW members across the nation. "This victory has energized us," said Lisa Maatz, AAUW director of public policy and government relations. "President Obama and Congress have made a good down payment on their promise to close the wage gap, but we're not resting on our laurels. The House also passed the Paycheck Fairness Act, a bill which would close loopholes in the Equal Pay Act, and AAUW and our allies are determined to see the Senate do the same."

President to Address Joint Session of Congress: In response to an invitation from Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), the Obama administration announced that the president would address a joint session of Congress on February 24. This will be President Obama's first formal congressional address - it has recently become a tradition for newly-inaugurated presidents to make such a speech during their first few weeks in office. While not a State of the Union address per se, it will largely be in that mold, with the president outlining his priorities domestically and abroad. The Republican Party has announced that their formal response will be delivered by Governor Bobby Jindal (R-LA), who is expected to focus on the economic crisis and the federal budget.

In response to this news, AAUW sent a letter to the president and requested that during the address, President Obama urge the Senate to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. The Paycheck Fairness Act, which passed the House earlier this year, will strengthen the Equal Pay Act - passed more than 45 years ago - and as a result improve that law's effectiveness. It will also build on the successful, AAUW-led effort that resulted in the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act being signed into law two weeks ago. AAUW recently convened the first meeting of the Paycheck Fairness Act coalition, which will fight for quick Senate passage of this vital legislation.

The Fight for Civil Rights Continues: At a recent event in Washington, 96 year old civil rights pioneer Dr. Dorothy Height provided her many insights on how young people today can continue to make positive changes in society and reflected on the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Height has spent her entire life advocating for the benefit of greater society, is Chair and President Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women, and earned a coveted Congressional Gold Medal in 2003. She is also the author of *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* and a resident of Washington. Read more about Dorothy Height's outstanding history of civil rights activism, and hear Height's talk online.

Milwaukee Paid Leave Law Enjoined: The movement for family friendly workplaces suffered a setback recently in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Last November, Milwaukee became the third city in the nation to pass an ordinance to require companies to provide a minimum standard of paid sick days to their employees. While the ordinance was approved with support from 69 percent of voters, an opponent, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, challenged the legality of the measure, also calling it a potential job killer, according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Milwaukee Circuit Court Judge Thomas R. Cooper granted temporary injunction to prevent enforcement of the measure just four days before it was supposed to take effect. A hearing to decide permanent injunction against the ordinance has been scheduled for May 11.

FMLA Extended to Previously Excluded Group: The House passed (voice vote) legislation to extend coverage of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (PL 103-3) to a group who had previously been excluded: flight attendants. The law, which provides up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for workers to stay home sick or care for a sick child or relative, requires the employees to work at least 1,250 hours per year. As flight attendants' paid hours are only calculated by time

spent in flight, it is nearly impossible for a flight attendant to meet the requirements for FMLA coverage during any given year. The flight attendants' union has long lobbied Congress to remedy the situation. The Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act (HR 912) revises the oversight in the original law by only requiring flight crews to log 504 hours in flight per year to be eligible, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families.

Boxer Starts New Subcommittee on Global Women: Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) will be chairing a new Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues. This is the first ever subcommittee to encompass a specific focus on global women, the New York Times reported. In a similar vein, Senator Boxer introduced the International Women's Freedom Act of 2009 (H.R. 606/S. 230) last month. Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) sponsored the act in the House. The bill would create a new State Department office to focus on international women's rights. An ambassador-at-large and a federal commission would lead the new department and inform Congress and President Obama about the status of women's rights abroad according to Women's eNews.

National Girls and Women in Sports Day Celebrated: AAUW members and coalition partners celebrated National Girls and Women in Sports Day to recognize the athletic achievements of girls and women and to continue advocating for expansion of opportunities for girls to play sports and live physically active lives. Even though Title IX, passed in 1972, protects against discrimination in college and high school athletics, research shows that girls have 1.3 million fewer athletics participation opportunities than do boys, and evidence suggests that the money spent on girls' sports programs lags significantly behind the money spent on boys' programs.

Family and Medical Leave Act Turns 16: 16th anniversary of the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, a law that AAUW advocated on behalf of for over a decade. FMLA provides employees of businesses with 50 or more workers with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a new child; to care for a sick child, spouse, or parent; or to recover from personal serious medical issues. Click [here](#) to read more about the recent anniversary. AAUW believes creating work environments that help employees balance the responsibilities of work and family is good public policy - good for workers, good for families, and good for business. To learn more, read AAUW's position on family friendly workplaces.

First Lady Visits Department of Education: Michelle Obama paid a visit to the Department of Education. The First Lady is making trips to every cabinet agency during the early weeks of the administration, and the Education Department was her first stop. During her remarks to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and the Department's staff, the First Lady talked about the importance of education and how it will be central to the Obama administration. She highlighted various education-related provisions in the proposed economic recovery package, including the modernization of 10,000 schools, increasing Pell grants, and giving millions of college students tax credits towards their tuition payments - priorities shared by AAUW. In the long-term, she discussed the importance of early childhood education, teacher quality initiatives, and other innovative programs designed to aid the nations' students and teachers.

Justice Ginsburg Hospitalized: U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the only woman currently sitting on the court, was hospitalized for surgery relating to pancreatic cancer. This is Justice Ginsburg's second brush with cancer, having survived treatment for colon cancer in 2000. There is no word yet on how this will affect Justice Ginsburg's ability to serve the Court, which opens once more for public oral arguments on the 23rd of this month.

Women in the Workforce: In the face of current economic troubles, women are now poised to become the majority in the American workforce for the first time, the New York Times recently reported. The percentage of women who work has remained fairly constant since the beginning of the recession, while 82 percent of recent job cuts have befallen men. Men comprise vast segments of some of the hardest hit industries such as construction and manufacturing while women are still more likely to work in education and healthcare, industries less reactive to the economic roller coaster. Unfortunately, job security for women does not mean a lack of economic concerns. The same NY Times article quoted Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project as saying, "A lot of jobs that men have lost in fields like manufacturing were good union jobs with great health care plans....The jobs women have - and are supporting their families with - are not necessarily as good." Heather Boushey, a senior economist at the Center for American Progress, said "Women are now bearing the burden - or the opportunity, one could say - of being breadwinners."

New Book Focuses on Minority Girls and Science Education: A new book, *Swimming Against the Tide: African American Girls and Science Education*, takes a look at how a race-biased education systems and low expectations of African American women and other minorities in classroom settings, particularly science classes, translate into negative effects on self-confidence, attitudes and achievement. In an interview with *Inside Higher Ed*, author Sandra L. Hanson, a professor of sociology at Catholic University, explains how the unequal distribution of educational resources to different schools also has limiting effects on the ability of students to achieve.

President Signs SCHIP Legislation: President Obama signed the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2) into law, allowing seven million children to continue to receive government health insurance coverage and extending coverage to an additional four million children. The *Washington Post* reported that President Obama sees SCHIP as a down payment on his commitment to provide health coverage for all Americans. During the Bush Administration, former President George W. Bush vetoed two similar SCHIP bills.

White House Task Force on Middle Class Launched: President Obama unveiled the new White House Task Force on Middle Class Working Families. Vice President Joe Biden, who will lead the task force, outlined his plan for the program in *USA Today*, calling the program 'distinctive' because it will combine efforts from the agencies with the most capacity to help the middle class enjoy fruits of their own economic growth. These agencies will include the Department of Education for college and training accessibility, the Department of Commerce for business progress, the Department of Health and Human Services for child care reform, and the Department of Labor to improve labor laws. Other members of the task force will include the Directors of the National Economic Council, the Office of Management and Budget, the Domestic Policy Council, and the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors.

The task force plans to carry out reforms for the American middle class with unprecedented transparency. A task force webpage has already been created so Americans will be able to get updates on the progress of the program. In the spirit of political engagement, the page also includes a form to submit your own ideas to the group. The task force will meet monthly, with the first meeting scheduled for February 27 in Philadelphia. President Obama also used the occasion to sign several pro-labor executive orders, the *Washington Post* reported.

Supreme Court Rules in Sexual Harassment Case: the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that workers cannot be fired or otherwise retaliated against for cooperating with internal sexual harassment investigations that arise under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Court's ruling in *Crawford v. Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County* represents a major victory for protecting the scope of protection afforded under Title VII to persons subject to sexual harassment.

The case involved Vicky Crawford, who was fired for her remarks describing several instances where she personally was subject to sexual harassment during an internal investigation of a coworker. In response, Ms. Crawford filed suit with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. However, a federal district and an appeals court both upheld the firing, claiming that Title VII's anti-retaliation protections did not extend to individuals who reported harassment during the course of an internal investigation, instead of filing charges of their own accord.

Affirmative Action Ban Upheld in Nebraska Court: Attempts by Nebraskans United to overturn a constitutional amendment ban on considering race in hiring and admissions decisions by public state institutions and state agencies were unsuccessful. This ban made the Nebraska the fourth state to ban affirmative action. While Nebraska voters soundly approved the ban, opponents questioned the legality of the petition drive that put the measure on the ballot in the first place. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported that District Judge Karen Flowers disagreed, ruling that proper protocol was obeyed.

Real Relief and Financial Security Tools from Divided We Fail: In today's troubled economic times, many Americans are in need of sound financial advice and fiscal assistance. AARP's 'Divided We Fail' campaign has launched two sites designed to help Americans who are uncertain of their financial futures. The first site, *Real Relief*, provides advice on how to make ends meet. It contains literature on various ways to get financial assistance from the government, Medicare, Social Security, money management, reverse mortgages and more. The second site, *Financial Security Tools* provides information on safe ways to manage money, the impacts of bankruptcy and layoffs, and retirement planning, among other topics. AAUW understands the importance of solid financial education, especially in such the turbulent economy of late.

Girl Scout Study: Young Girls Energized by Presidential Campaign: Teenage girls are more plugged into civic participation and community service than ever before following the recent presidential campaign season, a Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) study reports. The surveyed group included a cross-section of young people, girls and boys,

girl scouts and non-girl scouts, of various ethnicities. The study, 'The New Leadership Landscape: What Girls Say about Election 2008,' also reflected a greater recognition by this age group of the barriers women still face and a greater hope that roadblocks can be overcome. While girls are aware that women face challenges, they have also gained confidence and were energized by the 2008 election," noted Judy Schoenberg, Director of Research and Outreach for GSRI. [Click here to read about AAUW's 2008 study on education issues for girls.](#)

President Obama Acts Quickly to Halt Bush Midnight Regulations : President Obama wasted little time once sworn in to go about the nation's business. One area of immediate concern was the "midnight" regulations put forth by the outgoing Bush administration in its final days that would have far-reaching policy implications on a wide variety of issues. AAUW took exception to several of the regulations, including one that would negatively impact workers attempting to take family and medical leave and another that would limit the scope of reproductive health information women could receive. According to the Federal Times, White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel released a memo on Tuesday that effectively freezes a wide variety of proposed or finalized regulations. While the regulations AAUW opposed have already gone into effect, and thus are not affected by this freeze, AAUW is hopeful that this sends a signal that the Obama administration will address all such regulations at a later date.

Roe v. Wade Anniversary Marked by Marches, Overturning of Global Gag Rule: Reproductive rights supporters and opponents marked the 36th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark Roe v. Wade decision with marches and rallies, both in Washington, D.C. and across the nation. An ABCNEWS/Washington Post poll showed that public opinion of abortion is highly conditional based on varying circumstances, but in general, 57 percent of people say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases and 54 percent favor the 1973 Roe v Wade decision that made it so. On the other hand, 42 percent of those polled believe that abortion should never be legal.

President Obama signed an executive order overturning the global gag rule, CNN reported. This restriction prohibits overseas organizations that receive U.S. international family planning funds from providing abortion services, and from advocating for changes in abortion policy—even with their own private funds. The gag rule also bans free speech, including making public statements, drafting and distributing material, and sponsoring conferences pertaining to abortion law and policy. AAUW opposed the global gag rule because it forces family planning providers to choose between providing a full range of reproductive health information and services or receiving vital U.S. family planning funds.

The global gag rule was originally implemented by the Reagan administration in 1984 at the United Nations International Conference on Population in Mexico City; however, it had been repealed by President Bill Clinton in 1993. President George W. Bush reinstated it in 2001. By overturning the global gag rule, President Obama will be allowing critical services to reach millions of women and families around the world that provide access to reproductive health care and the information needed to plan the timing and spacing of pregnancies. Family planning programs help women make informed decisions, which in turn help to reduce the incidence of maternal and infant mortality and improve the overall health of women and families worldwide. International family planning also fosters self-sufficiency, promotes preventative health care, and educates people on ways to protect themselves and their families from the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Supreme Court Unanimously Rules in Sexual Harassment Case: the U.S. Supreme Court delivered a ruling that strengthened the legislative and legal protections available to victims of sexual harassment and gender discrimination. In *Fitzgerald v. Barnstable School Committee*, the Court ruled unanimously those persons who sue under the landmark Title IX statute may simultaneously do so under another civil rights statute known as Section 1983. As Justice Samuel Alito's opinion stated, "We conclude that Title IX was not meant to be an exclusive mechanism for addressing gender discrimination in schools, or as a substitute for Section 1983 suits as a means of enforcing constitutional rights."

The case was brought by the parents of Jacqueline Fitzgerald, a kindergarten student in Massachusetts who was forced repeatedly by an older boy to remove her clothes during bus rides to school. Upon hearing this information from their daughter, Jacqueline's parents asked school officials to intervene, proposing either that the harassing student be transferred to a different bus or that the school assign an adult monitor to ride the bus. The school board declined both options, and took no disciplinary action against the perpetrator. The Fitzgerald family then sued the school district alleging violations of both Title IX and the Equal Protection clause of the Constitution. The latter is enforced by Section 1983 of the United States Code, a statute put in place by the 1871 Civil Rights Law, which in some cases offers additional protections not included under Title IX.

Report Shows Continual Undermining of Educational Equity: Inside Higher Ed announced that the Association of American Colleges and Universities released a new study that documents strides that have been made toward education equity as well as highlights lingering issues. "A Measure of Equity: Women's Progress in Higher Education," shows that,

although Title IX bars gender discrimination in education programs receiving federal aid, equal education opportunity is continually undermined by the courts, legislatures, state referendums, and on college campuses themselves.

Recession Report Supports Need for Pay Equity: With more women becoming responsible for the financial future of their families, pay equity and the health of the American economy is becoming more of a women's issue than ever before. Since the start of the recession, female unemployment increased by 1.6 percentage points to 5.9 percent, while male unemployment has increased 2.8 percentage points to 7.2 percent, according to a new study by the Center for American Progress. As the recession plods along, the incomes women are earning are becoming rapidly more critical for sustaining the financial well-being of families. When the 1980s recession began, women made up just 41.2 percent of the work force. By 2007, that figure had risen to 48.7 percent, nearly half of working Americans. During that timeframe, homes relying on one female income also rose from 18 to 25 percent. Read the full Center for American Progress report [here](#).