



AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education and research.

Website: <http://marquette-mi.aauw.net>

Facebook: [AAUW Marquette Branch](#)

Happy Spring



AAUW Members!

We have locked arms and sustained one another through a full year of a raging COVID-19 pandemic. We have every reason to be proud of our efforts to stay safe, obtain vaccinations, attend meetings, and keep in touch. Congratulations to all of us for our collective support and camaraderie.

The AAUW-Marquette board held their first Zoom meeting one year ago on March 26, 2020. We have become Zoom experts. Our AAUW programs have been relevant and stimulating. Our next program addresses critical values within our organization. The topic makes my heart beat faster, and I am *not* the only AAUW member to have an emotional reaction to the issue.

A board member will call you to encourage your participation in our Zoom program meeting on **Thursday, April 8 at 7:00 P.M.** I hope you will attend and share your views on a significant topic of potential influence to the membership of our organization. The topic is a proposed change to the AAUW membership bylaws. I have agreed to facilitate the meeting. I will strive to maintain a neutral stance and keep the discussion at the level of the AAUW mission and values. All voices need to be heard, pro and con. Everyone will have an opportunity to speak.

We will address fundamental issues related to diversity, membership, and the AAUW mission, bylaws, and values. Members can decide privately how much weight to give each argument. The

purpose of the April 8 program meeting is to inform your individual vote. AAUW voting opens on April 7 and closes at 5:00 P.M. on May 17, 2021.

AAUW bylaws require an affirmative (yes) vote of two-thirds of the votes cast to amend the bylaws. AAUW has tried at least three times to change the membership bylaws. Strong arguments exist on both sides, but the imminent clash of values is distressing. I will try to find common ground. I trust that reasoning together will encourage all members to continue to work within our organization. Please be sure to attend the meeting.

*Judy Puncochar,
AAUW-Marquette President*

Next Meeting

Thursday, April 8, 7pm

CONSIDERING OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Please plan to join us at 7:00 pm on April 8 for a special program focused on AAUW-National's proposed change to eliminate degree requirements for new members. We will have the **opportunity to discuss** an issue that is important to the future of AAUW as an organization.

[AAUW's Open Membership Toolkit](#) discusses the proposed change and its rationale. **Also see the article from AAUW National on page 3.** We recognize that this would be a significant change to the organization and that members will have different opinions on the proposal. Our April meeting takes place early in the voting period. This will give us time to discuss the proposal before we have to vote.

All members of the AAUW-Marquette are invited to participate in this town hall-style program. Dr. Judy Puncochar will facilitate the discussion.

Voting on proposed bylaws changes will begin April 7, 2021 and close May 17, 2021, at 5:00 PM ET. Please note that we will vote individually. **The Marquette branch does not vote as a group.**

*Leslie Warren
Vice President, Programs*

PUBLIC POLICY

We are living in frightening times.

Our democracy is at stake. We are still living with the aftermath of Trump's false claims of wide-spread election fraud. Thus far there have been 253 bills proposed in 43 states restricting voting access. In Michigan 39 bills propose an "election reform plan" which includes strict photo identification, limits absentee drop boxes, and a ban on the Secretary of States sending out absentee ballot applications. Governor Whitmer promises to veto any bill making it harder to vote. The Republicans are working on a petition drive to circumvent the governor. What is clear is that these voter suppression bills are disproportionately disenfranchising the elderly, people of color and the poor. Michigan voters voted in record numbers, 3.3 million by absentee ballot. HB4127 removed voters on the qualified voter file with unknown dates of birth. The Auditor General recommended notifying the voter in question, but a substitute bill was introduced which is unhelpful to these voters. This bill passed the Michigan House. HB4128 removes voters who have not recently voted. These voters have to verify their address and have their signatures match the ones on file. The Secretary of State opposes this bill. AAUW supports HB4229 which requires the Secretary of State to post a list of local clerks who are not current with continuing educations and training on the Department's website. HB4134 increases precinct size and requires clerks to maintain permanent absentee voter list. AAUW opposed precinct size expansion.

These voter suppression laws could be challenged in state court. The real remedy is the For the People Act (HR1) which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on 3/03/21. It was sent to the Senate on 3/11/21. The For the People Act (S1) would be the greatest civil rights legislation in decades. This bill sets national standards. It would make automatic voter registration, which already exists in 19 Republican and Democratic states, the law of the land. It would ensure early voting and voting by mail. It would restore the right to vote to citizens returning after incarceration. The bill addresses campaign finance including prohibitions on campaign spending by foreign nationals. It addresses ethics in all branches of government. It requires the President, Vice President, and other candidates to provide 10 years of tax returns.

Please call our senators and urge them to support and co- sponsor S1. Ask them to do everything in their power to secure the Republican votes needed to pass this legislation. We are in such troubling waters and the "For the People Act" (S1) is a life boat for our democracy.



U.S. Senator Gary Peters 202 224 6221.

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow 202 224 4822.

Heads up.

The Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) will hold public hearings. Sue Hammersmith, the Executive Director of the MICRC attended AAUW's Virtual Lobby Corps meeting. The Marquette public hearing is scheduled for May 6, 2021 at NMU, but the time has not yet been determined. The concept of "communities of Interest" will be discussed during these hearings in an effort to assure that proposed boundaries reflect these communities of interest.

*Karlyn Rapport,
Public Policy Representative*



Sandra Neibaur died March 22, 2021 after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease. She was active in the Marquette Community for many years. She was recently remembered by a colleague and AAUW member Elsa Clement as a MAPS high school librarian who did not fit the

stereotype often associated with this role. She loved students and prioritized their needs recognizing the need for magazines for those needing a quick break. She facilitated student research projects without a lot of formality. She worked well with students and faculty alike. She was warm and welcoming.

Sandra wore many hats. She volunteered for the Marquette County Alzheimer's Association, was an active member and volunteer librarian for the First Presbyterian Church as well as a member of the Marquette Branch of AAUW to name a few. It was recalled by AAUW member Meredith Kulisheck, that Sandy was on the scholarship committee for our branch for some time.

Ruth Ziel



AAUW Open Membership Vote

AAUW's annual election will start on April 7. Included in the vote is a proposal to open membership, which requires a change to AAUW's national bylaws through member vote. A description of the proposed bylaws changes can be found [here](#).

HOW MIGHT THIS BYLAW CHANGE AFFECT MY BRANCH?

It will help protect the future of AAUW by opening up opportunities for funding. Because our current educational degree requirement can be deemed discriminatory and not in keeping with our mission, some foundations and corporations will not donate to our organization since it is counter to their criteria of equity. This disadvantage, along with the now 400-plus organizations competing with AAUW on women's equity issues for funding, greatly affects National's ability to get much needed funding. Declining membership, now at 50,000, only provides 15-20% of the annual budget. This is not enough to support branch and member services.

It will make it easier for your branch to recruit a more diverse membership, including those who did not have the opportunity to attend college 30, 40 or 50 years ago. In addition to possibly increasing membership, these new members may bring new energy and viewpoints critical to your branch's ability to meet the needs of your community through our mission. It will also remove the embarrassing situations when you must tell someone they do not qualify, such as a government official, a non-profit leader or even a Tech Trek parent. Remember, Eleanor Roosevelt and Lily Ledbetter would not qualify for AAUW membership with our current educational requirement.

It will update the relevance and image of your branch as the world reckons with inequality and systemic racism, much of which disproportionately affects women. It might open up more opportunities for collaboration. Having a limiting membership requirement can be considered

discriminatory and off putting to other local like-minded groups. When speaking at community functions, it demeans the branch to say that not everyone can be a member.

It will no longer limit your membership by penalizing women who cannot attain a degree due to today's skyrocketing educational costs, childcare, elder care, transportation, working multiple jobs and language barriers. Today, there are more alternatives to college degrees which have burdened women with two-thirds of the national college debt. With more careers open to women, i.e., firefighters, pilots, entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, manufacturers, retail managers, and more, your branch may have the potential for a variety of new members.

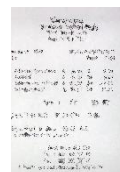
WHAT WON'T CHANGE IF THIS PASSES?

It will not affect AAUW's status as one of the leaders in graduate grants and fellowships. Due to the generosity of our members our fellowships and grants are fully endowed and will continue in perpetuity.

It will not affect the name – AAUW. Like the YWCA and NAACP, much of the original meanings are no longer accurate. For example, we are international, not just American. We have been open to individuals with associate degrees, not just degrees from universities, since 2005 and open to men since 1987.

It will not affect the honor of having earned a degree in times when so few women attained this achievement. Today, with women outpacing men in earning all degrees for decades, we can be proud that we were instrumental in breaking down the barriers for women who followed us.

Article from AAUW's Open Membership Toolkit



Can you Help?

Econo receipts NEVER EXPIRE

Please continue to save your Econo receipts and *mail them or drop them off* to Meredith Kulisheck, 617 W Hampton

St, Marquette bring them in the fall to the next meeting we can all attend in person. In the past, they brought in hundreds of dollars for us. During this time of the pandemic, we, like everyone and every business, are finding our funds down, while needs are increasing.

As the pandemic continues, please remember...

OUR LOCAL FRIENDSHIP FUND

As AAUW members, our advocacy and support for women has many faces in our community, statewide, nationally, and internationally. We are called to action to make a difference for positive change.

There are times when the intended face for our advocacy and support can be seen in our own membership's mirror. Circumstances may put a member in a position of unforeseen need. This need may also have many faces.

Our Friendship Fund is available as a resource to bring confidential financial support to our member in need. Being a friend just might be one of the strongest examples of advocacy and support. Contact any Board Member for more information.



Even More Help

to increase Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A current goal of AAUW-Marquette is to increase diversity in its membership. To support that goal, a local donor has offered to pay half of the dues (local, state, and national) for the first year for any Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) new members.

Anyone who would like to take advantage of this offer or would like to recommend others who might benefit from this, should contact **Les Bek or Susan Shaver, Membership Co-Vice Presidents.**

susaneshaver@yahoo.com (note the e)
720-425-2539 text.

African Sketches at PWPL

The Peter White Public Library will be doing a scaled down display of AAUW member Elsa Clement's African wildlife sketches and trip memories during June and July. This display has been delayed from last year due to the pandemic. There will be no "meet the artist" but simply the artwork.

Elsa, a lifelong Marquette resident and retired science educator, utilized her naturalist's eye to create free hand wildlife sketches inspired by experiences during a Kenyan photography safari. See page 4 of our [newsletter from April 2020](#).

