

Notes on the 2009 AAUW Convention

See materials posted at www.aauw.org/convention/conv2009/

Speakers

Lilly Ledbetter was the keynote speaker. Her courage and willingness to spend years of her life fighting a pay equity battle that was finally resolved with the first piece of legislation signed by President Obama was inspiring to all. She spent hours autographing signs, programs, and more for members of AAUW to remember the event.

Some videos of the speakers and more about the others on the program are posted.

Workshops

Workshops were relatively limited due to the shortened schedule and the need for extra plenaries to discuss the bylaws, but Friday morning was packed with information. Topics ranged from salary negotiations to grassroots organizing to fundraising. Slides and handouts from many of the sessions are posted. [My presentation on Facebook is posted as part of the [Website Roundtable powerpoint](#) presentation with more information at wiki.bbvix.org.] One on “creating a healthy branch culture” will be reprised by two attendees at the AAUW NC Fall meeting in Boone next month.

Briefings

I attended the Finance Briefing: bottom line – due to adjustments made earlier in the decade and additional adjustments, particularly to the 2009-2010 grants, the organization is surviving the economic downturn in good shape.

Elections

Nine board members were elected to the 2009-2011 AAUW board. They appointed five others to serve with them, including AAUW NC President Millie Hoffer-Foushee who was appointed to the position of AAUW Finance Vice President. This year, I was one of the organizers of an online voter guide, election2009.bbvix.org, to encourage better voter education about the candidates and the issues.

New bylaws

Much of the convention was devoted to discussion of the new bylaws. The bottom line is that we left St. Louis with a set of bylaws that matches the new combined structure that was approved in 2007.

The debate on the bylaws was, at times, rancorous. Some proposed amendments and rationales showed a deep distrust of the leadership of the organization and even a distrust of other members. [One of the most bizarre proposals was to increase the quorum to 50% for future votes – 50% of the members would have needed to return the ballot for a vote to be valid!]

The change to the degree requirement accounted for most of the debate. Since I represented the branch at my first convention in 1999, I've been a strong supporter of open membership, and I worked to get this change passed. I did speak to a couple of people who had carefully considered the change and deemed it unwise, but many of those attending their first convention to vote against this change did, I think, look at the issue from a local point of view rather than what was best for the organization moving forward. **Every member elected to the board supported open membership.** While several did say "whatever the members decide" in their campaign speeches, the fact remains that open membership was part of the recommendations that came out of the strategic process and it is yet to be seen if other structures (Leadership Corps, in particular) will make sense when we can't say "If you support equity for women and girls, join us!" If we can't invite Lilly Ledbetter to join us, how will we be handicapping the members of the Leadership Corps as they try to grow the organization? Expect to see more on this issue by 2011, and I sincerely hope that the board will take a leadership role in explaining why this is the right thing to do for the organization and its vision.

New public policy program

For those who ask "Without the degree requirement, how are we different from any other organization?" I ask you to read the public policy principles and priorities. This has few substantive changes from the earlier editions, but it has been rewritten to bring a laser focus on our work for education and equity.

This was approved by the members at Convention.

And more

Probably due to better than usual corporate sponsorship, we were fed well and so had the Friday reception and Saturday lunch as good networking time rather than trying to figure out where to eat. The web managers' lunch I coordinated came off well even though there were last minute changes in the venue.

Overall

I am very glad to see that one-member/one-vote passed, since I think I did a poor job of representing you at the convention. The bylaws debate and my many other AAUW roles took my attention away from what might have interested you all. But I hope the service I've performed does benefit you in some way:

- **AAUW voter education.** Technical support for election2009.bbvx.org. No matter what the bylaws say, it is the people who are elected to the board who will have the deciding voice on how the organization moves forward. Getting the best possible board members depends on treating the recruitment and selection of excellent candidates.
- **AAUW technology advocate.** Completing four years of service on the Technology Usability Advisory Group, donor/manager of wiki.bbvx.org, primary convener of the web managers' listserve, administrator of the [AAUW Facebook group](https://www.facebook.com/AAUWFacebookGroup), coordinator of the use of twitter for AAUW news about the convention.
- **Branch without borders champion.** NC BWOB co-founder, a model that interested many attendees. See tarheel.aauwnc.org.
- **Blogger on AAUW issues.** See change.bbvx.org for more articles about the convention.

2011: Thursday, May 8 – Sunday, May 11 in DC!

AAUW PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM, 2009–2011

The public policy program underscores AAUW's mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research and speaks to women's needs, aspirations, and concerns across the life span. The work of AAUW builds upon more than 125 years of responsible public participation, and the following principles provide a basis for AAUW members' actions at the local, state, national, and international levels. Implicit in each of our principles is support for government agencies administering programs, including adequate appropriations, effective and accountable administration, and provision for citizen participation. We advocate public discussion to ensure enlightened decisions on these principles. We work to increase the number of underrepresented populations, including women, in policy- and other decision-making positions. AAUW is committed to working in partnership with diverse allies and coalitions to break through educational and economic barriers for women and girls.

PUBLIC POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

Basic to all of AAUW's public policy efforts is the understanding that true equity requires a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the community. AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals.

AAUW believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. We advocate equitable and harassment-free climates, academic freedom, civic education, protection from censorship, bias-free education, and responsible funding for all levels of education, including early childhood education. We advocate increased access to higher education, especially for women in poverty. We promote equitable efforts to close the persistent achievement gap that disproportionately affects low-income children and students from minority communities.

AAUW promotes the economic, social, and physical well-being of all persons. Essential to that well-being are an economy that provides equitable employment opportunities, a livable wage, reduction of poverty, quality affordable dependent care, paid family and medical leave, decent and affordable housing, quality affordable health care; and a clean and healthful environment. We support a Social Security system that provides inflation-protected, guaranteed lifetime benefits with a progressive benefit formula, spousal and widow benefits, and disability and survivor benefits.

AAUW believes in the right to privacy, freedom from violence, and choice in the determination of one's reproductive life. We firmly believe in the separation of church and state. We support a fair, balanced, and independent judiciary. We support public budgets that balance individual rights and responsibility to the community.

AAUW supports affirmative action to improve racial, ethnic, and gender diversity and affirms our commitment to passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. We support meaningful campaign finance reform and voter education efforts that will promote equitable political participation and representation. AAUW values and is committed to the arts and humanities, which develop and enhance our pluralistic cultural heritage.

AAUW believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our commitment to the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We support international family planning programs that are consistent with AAUW policy.

BIENNIAL ACTION PRIORITIES

Biennial priorities for federal action are chosen according to the criteria of viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive AAUW contribution or leadership.

To support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity, AAUW advocates

- Adequate and equitable funding for quality public education for all students
- Opposition to the use of public funds for nonpublic elementary and secondary education
- Protection of programs that meet the needs of girls and women in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education, including vigorous enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education
- Increased support for and access to higher education for women and disadvantaged populations
- Increased support for programs that break through barriers for women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields

To achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women, AAUW advocates

- Pay equity and fairness in compensation
- Equitable access and advancement in employment, including vigorous enforcement of employment antidiscrimination statutes
- Greater availability of and access to benefits and policies that promote work-life balance
- Programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the workforce, including nontraditional occupations and women's entrepreneurship
- Strengthening programs, including welfare and vocational education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development, and earning potential
- Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting Social Security from privatization

To guarantee equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse society, AAUW advocates

- Vigorous protection of and full access to civil and constitutional rights
- Choice in the determination of one's reproductive life
- Freedom from violence and fear of violence in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities
- Increased access to quality, affordable health care and family planning services, including expansion of patients' rights
- Support for U.N. programs that address human rights and women's and girls' concerns
- Freedom in definition of family and guarantee of civil rights in all family structures