



Kensington-Rockville Newsletter

American Association Of University Women

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Special Summer Edition of the Branch Newsletter

Sharing National Convention 2017

While we step away for our seasonal hiatus from formal branch activity, please bend your thoughts to these reflections on AAUW's memorable biennial¹ National Convention, held at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, 14-17 June 2017. Joyce Graf, Tracy Lantz, Margie Sullivan, and I represented Kensington-Rockville Branch, as did Anita Rosen, Erin Prangley, and Maritsa George, who joined us for AAUW Lobby Day on Capitol Hill.

Since 1989, conventions held in DC have included bussing en masse to the Hill to lobby Members of Congress on selected issues of importance to women and families. We (more than 700 of us) first absorbed detailed training on Title IX (new when I was an AAUW lobbyist in 1975 and now, 45 years later, still less than secure) and student debt (proportionally worse for women). We were inspired by two female Representatives. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), moved Maritsa with the "simplicity and truth," of her eloquent response to "our current climate of discourse," which reduces people to problems. "We must replace anger with courage, with patriotism, with caring, and with knowledge," she urged to a standing ovation.



We Marylanders split up to visit Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen (well, their capable staffs) as well as all eight of our Representatives—the latter thanks to the prior arrangements of Anita and Erin, outgoing and incoming state public policy vice presidents respectively. All went smoothly. Erin felt "overwhelmed by the positive responses" AAUW MD received. It was "clear that most members and staff were genuinely interested" and supportive of our issues. Some of our friends from other states got rather cooler receptions, as sadly expected. But AAUW is respected on Capitol Hill, and we were all heard.

Fortunately, we had a beautiful day for our exhilarating, empowering efforts. We who were there for the first convention Lobby Day in 1989 remember the temperature nearing 100° with humidity soaking us

¹For financial reasons, but also to celebrate the centennial of Women's Suffrage, guaranteed by the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, AAUW's next national convention will be held three years from now, in 2020.

through as we “rallied” on the west lawn. Carolin Head, then the implementing staffer, remembers that four participants fainted! I don't recall specifically what I wore that day, but I know it was a dress, or quite possibly a suit, with high heels and pantyhose—as we all did then. This time we went forth in AAUW T-shirts—if not exactly dignified, comfortable and effective for proclaiming our massive presence.

On opening night NPR's Judy Woodruff, who anchors the PBS News Hour, spoke extemporaneously about the challenges of planning broadcasts in these chaotic times when provocative tweets interrupt at any moment. She told of being well into one evening's airing when the prepared outline had to be scrapped to address some new crisis. It's obviously exhausting, but everyone just works that much harder to get to the truth, she said. Fake news accusations, and the ubiquity of truly fake news, obviously make the job more difficult. She's an impressive professional.



Political pollsters Celinda Lake and Linda DiVall, Democrat and Republican, respectively, shared their variant views—and their improbable friendship, derived from working together on women's issues. Both called for civility and compromise in these challenging times. Laura Dunn, this year's Eleanor Roosevelt Fund awardee, told her painful story of college rape. Now a lawyer, she has founded SurvJustice Inc, a nonprofit that provides nationwide legal assistance, advocacy, and training to help survivors and combat campus sexual violence. All were outstanding speakers, but easily topped by the two honored at the closing banquet.

This year's Achievement Award winner (AAUW's highest honor) is Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. At the pre-dinner reception, I seized a chance to greet her, and she warmly took my hand. I expected to offer a quick welcome and thanks, but surprisingly heard me say how much I enjoy talking about her portraits (two, one with the other three women justices) at the National Portrait Gallery, where I am a docent. A delightful personal conversation ensued, including her thoughts on the qualities of the likenesses and her pleasure at hearing of their popularity.



(In the attached photo [thank you, dear Tracy], all those dark suits—including the woman with her back to the camera—belong to Secret Service personnel, at least half a dozen, who are practically smothering her, though she seemed oblivious and later lauded their work.)

After the dinner, our new head of staff, Kim Churches, introduced and then interviewed Justice Sotomayor, who presently announced she did not like sitting. Then, leaving everyone breathlessly wowed, she departed the stage and, with Secret Service in close pursuit, strolled among the tables from one end of the huge, crowded ballroom to the other, shaking hands and graciously accepting a few hugs, all the while responding at learned, thoughtful, humorous length to Kim's continuing questions. "Unbelievable," wrote Margie.



(I do not recall any such protection for either previous justice we have honored—Sandra Day O'Connor in the 1980s and Ruth Bader Ginsburg in the '90s. Even President Bush 41 had seemingly fewer agents, and at greater distance, when he addressed the 1989 AAUW convention. What have we come to?)

The other honoree of the evening was Dr. Tererai Trent, who received the AAUW Alumna Recognition Award. She blew us away with her amazing story, gratefully and spellbindingly told. She grew up herding cattle in rural Zimbabwe, unable, as a girl, to attend school. So she studied her less-eager brother's books. Concluding that education is the path of escape from poverty, she dreamed of going to college, in America. But she was married off at 11 years of age, to a man who would prove abusive, and bore five children. She did, finally, somehow, get to the University of Oklahoma, earning a bachelor's degree, but it was an AAUW International Fellowship that allowed her to stay and pursue her longed-for doctorate. Today, she is an inspirational, motivational voice for women's education internationally. Oprah Winfrey, on air, has given Dr. Trent \$1.5 million to continue her work in African schools. Happily, her adoring current husband (American, who was there) fully supports her passion-driven mission.

Margie was "excited that our branch was recognized as a leader" in the successful *Charting the Course* million-dollar gift campaign and pleased that AAUW will collaborate with the Newseum to identify fake news. She highlighted worthy workshops on student debt and nonpartisan political advocacy, appreciating the wealth of material available to help us make a difference locally and nationally. She learned that AAUW's Start\$mart and Work\$mart salary negotiation workshops are slated to reach "hundreds of thousands of women." "What a powerful two-hour commitment for the future." I was happy to again help present AAUW's archiving workshop: "What Stories are under Your Bed?"



Of course, one of the great pleasures of convention is reconnecting with old friends from all over the country and meeting new ones. For me, it's no wonder that in forty years I have missed but two!

Dian Belanger
Immediate-past President, Kensington-Rockville Branch

Upcoming Events

July 29 AAUW Maryland Summer Leadership Conference, in Frederick
Kim Churches new Chief Executive Director AAUW will be the keynote speaker
Let's Carpool

September 16 Kensington-Rockville Branch Fall Kick-Off Meeting for 2017-18, Catherine Hill will be the speaker.

October 21 AAUW Maryland Fall Conference, in Gaithersburg

New AAUW Leadership

AAUW members have elected national leaders, to serve two-year terms, 2017-2019, who together offer geographical, racial, ethnic, age, and professional diversity. Board Chair Julia T. Brown, from New Mexico, is of African-American heritage. Others hail from Vermont, California (two), Colorado, Hawaii, Missouri and Florida, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Virginia. They bring a welcome variety of backgrounds, skills, and experiences.

Eileen Menton, AAUW Maryland president, joins this group as an appointed board member. Congratulations, Eileen! What a fine choice.

As of June 1, AAUW also has a new Chief Executive Officer, Kimberley (Kim) Churches, who comes to us from the Brookings Institution with evident smarts and enthusiasm. She brings academic, nonprofit, public policy, and fundraising experience.

Kensington-Rockville Branch's new leadership team includes:

Kate Campbell-Stevenson and Erin Prangle, co-Presidents

Jane Gentleman, Sylvia Crowder, Virginia Collins, and Monique Briand-Walker, Program Team

Ella Iams and Gail Greenberg, Membership Co-Vice Presidents

Ruth Spivack, Treasurer

Joyce Graf, Secretary

Margie Sullivan, Newsletter Editor

Join the AAUW Archives Corps!

Does the Past stir your juices? Are you curious about what AAUW has done to keep women loyal and committed for 136 years, and counting? Have you ever wondered who all those thousands of women were, and would become, that we have supported with AAUW fellowships and grants since 1888? Do you enjoy piecing together long-forgotten stories from fragile, faded papers?

Join the AAUW Archives Corps to work with other local members, under staff direction, to rediscover, process, and preserve for future use the documentary record of AAUW's extraordinary history. Archives volunteers commit to one partial day per month, usually the first Monday or Tuesday. Intrigued? Query Dian Belanger, dobelanger@comcast.net.

Join the AAUW Lobby Corps!

Does the Future push your buttons, especially the future for women and girls? Do you care about Title IX, sexual harassment, pay equity, voting and human rights? Does today's political atmosphere keep you up at night? Would you like to rationally promote and influence nonpartisan progress at the highest level?

Join the AAUW Lobby Corps on Capitol Hill to inform and urge legislative action for a more just world. Volunteer lobbyists, trained and briefed by AAUW public policy staff, commit to Thursday mornings when Congress is in session. Impassioned? Query Erin Prangle, erin.prangle@gmail.com.

Deadline for the September Newsletter is August 20. Thank you to all who have submitted material for the Newsletter. The more the pictures ... better the newsletter.

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

AAUW has been empowering women as individuals and as a community since 1881. For more *than 135 years, we have worked together as a national grassroots organization to improve the lives of millions of women and their families.*

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research.

AAUW 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.

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