

## **AAUW Kensington-Rockville November Program**

**Saturday, November 15, 2025, 10:30 to Noon**

**Ingleside at King Farm—Derwood Room  
1615 A Piccard Drive or  
701 King Farm Blvd., Rockville, MD 20850  
(Map and Parking Information on Page 5)**

### **Human Spaceflight – Earth Orbit and Beyond**

**A** AUW member Yvonne Simms will share her experience working as an engineer beginning in 1982 on NASA human spaceflight programs. Women comprised less than six percent of the engineering workforce in the U.S. at that time. She designed hardware that flew on twelve Space Shuttle missions. Yvonne was at the Mission Control Center in Houston for the forty-ninth Space Shuttle mission, STS-46. She wrote procedures astronauts used to assemble the International Space Station. Yvonne worked with international partners to ensure user-friendly experiments were developed for astronauts to conduct on the space station. She led preparation of the first US biological payload to fly on a Russian vehicle. Yvonne led the human factors team during the development of the Core Stage of the Space Launch System. Artemis I, the uncrewed first flight, successfully launched an Orion capsule in November 2022. Orion went around the moon and returned safely to land in the Pacific Ocean. Yvonne will also share her insights regarding current activities pertaining to the Moon and Mars.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn what goes on behind the scenes in planning and executing a risky space mission, from someone who was there and experienced the tension and apprehension leading up to a launch and the exhilaration that results when it succeeds.



## From the President

Thank you for Kensington-Rockville's impressive turnout for our October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting which was, as you know, the AAUW Maryland fall conference hosted by the Anne Arundel Branch in Severna Park. Charlene Currie's carpooling arrangements made for efficient, sociable travel.

In my five-plus-plus decades in AAUW, I don't recall another program at any level like "Maryland's Native Americans, Past to Present." It was pertinent, professional, persuasive. We learned from enthusiastic anthropological archaeologist Katherine Sterner, PhD, that native Americans lived in Maryland 13,000 years ago. She has traced their history forward from found artifacts, structural remains, stratigraphy, and radio-carbon dating, describing settled communities well prior to European arrival.

Attorney Caroline LaPorte, JD, passionately addressed Tribal Law and the Abuse of Indigenous Women from her background as a trial court judge and elected Ottawa Indians tribal official, university professor of Native American Studies, and federal policy advisor on safe housing. She cited chilling statistics showing the murder rate of native women 10 times the national average and causes of gender-based violence against them such as land dispossession, notorious boarding schools, the US failure to honor treaties. And guns, of course.

Education leader Donna Brown, PhD, a member of North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, shared her personal story of struggling (and failing) to "fit in" at a white college. Later earning an associate degree from Sitting Bull College, she confidently went on to a PhD from the University of North Dakota. Today she is president of the Turtle Mountain Community College, like Sitting Bull a TCU (for Tribal Colleges and Universities), mostly two-year programs that focus on preserving tribal culture and promoting self-determination while preparing students to transfer to schools offering higher degrees. Wow! So important, all.

Most of us stayed for the afternoon state board meeting, at which we:

- ♦ Approved a \$4 increase in annual state dues, to \$14;
- ♦ Learned that in 2024 AAUW Maryland contributed \$24,000 to the (sadly last) National Conference for College Women Student Leaders' Women of Distinction Fund, and have set a new

goal of \$10,000 for AAUW's Public Policy Fund, given current threats to women's rights and education;

- ♦ Heard confirmed that the American Bar Association has declared that the legal requirements for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment have been met. It *should now be* the Constitution's 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment. But, there's always one more "but."

Dian Belanger

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## Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women Update

The 2026 agenda process for Maryland women and AAUW Maryland has begun taking shape. On November 1, the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) began the process of creating a list of bills for focused advocacy during the 2026 legislative session. MLAW is a unique, statewide coalition of groups and individuals "that advocate for progressive legislative initiatives that promote the well-being of women and families in Maryland." MLAW success over its 31-year history has resulted in 124 pieces of supported legislation passed.

AAUW was well represented at the legislative agenda conference, with our own branch and several others, plus AAUW Maryland as co-sponsors that were acknowledged at the meeting. Conference speakers were powerful and articulate promoters of women and families, headlined by Maryland Delegate Dana Jones (District 30A, Annapolis and Anne Arundel County), President of Women Legislators of Maryland, and Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth representing Maryland's 3<sup>rd</sup> District since 2024 and formerly the youngest elected Maryland State Senator.

Twenty-one bills were presented for consideration that will be prioritized by MLAW members and organization sponsors soon to choose the final MLAW Agenda. The 21 bills covered a variety of important and sometimes surprising issues. A sampling of the well-presented bill topics includes:

- ♦ Preventing criminalization of pregnancy outcomes;
- ♦ Creating additional protections from retaliatory litigation for sexual assault survivors;
- ♦ Closing a loophole in Maryland's sexual

offense statute by prohibiting sexual conduct between school resource officers and students;

- ♦ Addressing female mutilation/cutting in Maryland;
- ♦ Requiring earlier relinquishment or removal of firearms in domestic violence protective orders;
- ♦ Allowing abused persons to be freed from abuser-coerced debt (e.g. credit cards);
- ♦ Preventing landlords of single-family rental properties from rejecting a family child care home from operating in the unit;
- ♦ Protecting out-of-state abortion providers by shielding their identities (by allowing pharmacies to withhold a provider's name or identifying information);
- ♦ Adding "caregiver status" to Maryland law prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, etc.;
- ♦ Modernizing the procedure for both parents of minor children and transgendered persons to update their birth certificates;
- ♦ Requiring higher education institutions receiving public funding to provide menstrual products free of charge in campus bathrooms;
- ♦ Preventing sale of handguns that can easily be converted into fully automatic machine guns;
- ♦ Creating a substitute child care provider-pool pilot program;
- ♦ Requiring MD Department of Human Services to complete a feasibility study on providing direct stipends to family caregivers.

As your AAUW public policy representative, I will be alerting you to the final bills for advocacy from MLAW and AAUW. When the 2025 legislative session begins you will be getting alerts to call or email legislators to ask for their support. If you wish to vote on the choice of bills for the final 2026 agenda, join MLAW as an individual at:

<https://mdlegagendaforwomen.org/join-mlaw/>

Anita Rosen  
Public Policy Chair  
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## From AAUW National

Shameful News. In 2024, women on average were paid just 76 cents for every dollar paid to men! The pay gap, after years of slowly improving, is *worsening*, thanks to current federal dismantling of protections designed to ensure workplace fairness. In response, AAUW has launched a Fight for Pay Equity Flash Campaign, to expand AAUW's salary negotiation and financial literacy training. How can we help?

Consider Montgomery College. Might this challenge be a pathway to bring such skill training to the women we help educate via scholarships at MC? We have access to AAUW's \$tart\$mart Training.

Prideful News. "Branches in Action: A Century of Advocacy, Fundraising, and Impact," an AAUW webinar on October 23, featured Jessica Miller, our enthusiastic archivist, who presented highlights of AAUW's amazing, effective history gleaned from our preserved records. It says something that no matter how fast she excitedly spoke, she ran out of time around 1972! More to come, I hope. Meanwhile, our national webinars, on numerous timely topics, are recorded; I urge you to select and partake.

Dian Belanger  
[dobelanger@comcast.net](mailto:dobelanger@comcast.net)

## Interest Groups

### Great Decisions

Our final discussion for the year will take place on Friday November 21<sup>st</sup> at 10 am in the Derwood Room at Ingleside King Farm. We will be discussing Chapter 8 of *American Policy in the Middle East: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead*. This is quite a timely topic to end our year. New books and discussions will begin in January. Feel free to join in the discussion. All are encouraged to join us for lunch at the Ingleside Café afterward. The Video Master Class will be on Zoom, Thursday, November 20 at 7:30 pm. A URL for the Zoom will be sent prior to the showing. If you wish to join on Thursday or Friday, contact Anita or Bobbe.

Anita Rosen [anitarosen123@gmail.com](mailto:anitarosen123@gmail.com)

Bobbe Minz [bobbeandherb@comcast.net](mailto:bobbeandherb@comcast.net)

## 2026 AAUW Atlantic Regional Conference

The Program Committee is putting together a dynamic lineup of speakers for this event, to be held at the Lancaster, PA, County Convention Center and Marriott Hotel, September 25-27, 2026. The event builds on last year's wonderful conference in Virginia. Stay tuned for program details as they are finalized. Reserve your room now at:

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1758841025555&key=GRP&app=resvlink;!!FOfmI8qiWcWBHqypJtzENF0!ytBxRkqyN8HUmUjfnYj3moemAZaTWjQRS8ylLvsg5HlJcjlSQoNemYhWUuKVYvRN22-qcBnONMlkkCharFX4r224chUkg\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1758841025555&key=GRP&app=resvlink;!!FOfmI8qiWcWBHqypJtzENF0!ytBxRkqyN8HUmUjfnYj3moemAZaTWjQRS8ylLvsg5HlJcjlSQoNemYhWUuKVYvRN22-qcBnONMlkkCharFX4r224chUkg$)

## AAUW National Public Policy Events

AAUW National invites you to attend these significant virtual events this week! Register now with the links below:

- ♦ AAUW Advocacy Training – *Working in Coalition: Building Power through Partnerships*. Thursday, November 6 at 7 pm ET.

<https://my.aauw.org/event-information?id=a0IQr000001fgZpIAI>

- ♦ Lobby Corps Orientation for anyone interested in joining who is not currently part of Lobby Corps. Friday, November 7 at 11 am ET.

<https://my.aauw.org/event-information?id=a0IQr000001erHxIAI>

## Upcoming Events: Mark Your Calendar

January 31, 2026

Women's Legislative Briefing (Saturday this year), Universities at Shady Grove, 9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, afternoon. The WLB has been sponsored for more than 40 years by the Montgomery County Commission for Women. Come to meet elected politicians, learn about issues needing advocacy, and network with other passionate advocates. (Stay tuned for updates.)

## November Webinars

Dian's Challenge/Invitation for all KR members and friends: Choose and view one of the following virtual AAUW Webinars to watch and report back to the branch:

### **AAUW Work Smart: Know Your Value and Get Paid**

Wednesday, November 5, 2025 | 5:00 - 6:00 pm ET

<https://my.aauw.org/event-information?id=a0IQr000001RBWfIAO>

### **AAUW Start Smart**

Thursday, November 13, 2025 | 5:00 - 6:00 pm ET

<https://my.aauw.org/event-information?id=a0IQr000001RBbVIAW>

### **AAUW Money Smart: Smart Future**

Tuesday, November 18, 2025 | 3:00 - 4:00 pm ET

<https://my.aauw.org/event-information?id=a0IQr000001RBd7IAG>

## Equal Rights Amendment: Status and Action Needed

The ERA has met all requirements for a constitutional amendment, but the public is generally unaware and Congress is dormant. You can help establish its public recognition and promote implementation by the federal and state governments by advancing the following actions:

- ♦ Call or email the four remaining Democrats in Congress who have not yet co-sponsored House Joint Resolution 80 to establish the ratification of ERA! Here is the list:

[HJ-Res-80-Democrats-Need-to-Cosponsor-10-19-25-MDNOWSite.pdf](https://www.hj-res-80-democrats-need-to-cosponsor-10-19-25-MDNOWSite.pdf)

- ♦ Ask leaders of women's organizations to feature the Sign4ERA petition in their newsletters & social media, and also urge family, friends, and new acquaintances across the country to sign it:

<https://www.sign4era.org/>

**AAUW empowers women and girls by  
championing their success in higher education  
and pushing for policy solutions to create  
lasting change.**

*AAUW 2025 Strategic Plan*



Free parking is available on both sides of King Farm Blvd. near Ingleside King Farm, as well as in the rear parking lot behind the building. Enter either the King Farm Blvd. entrance or at the back (Piccard Dr.) entrance near the rear parking lot. As you enter, ask the concierge for directions to the Derwood Room. (Or, see “CLASSROOM,” mid-map.)

