

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025



President's Message

Janine Greenwood

I have been an active political advocate since 1968. Many of the things I have advocated for have succeeded, some have remained unchanged, and others have regressed. It is sometimes easy to get tired. When your champion legislators are in the majority, it is tempting to just assume they will get on with the work without you. When your champions are outnumbered, hopelessness can easily set in. I will not give up.

I use the word "champions" very deliberately. Our lawmakers are our knights, and their staff are our squires. They do battle for us every day. The staff members groom the legislative steeds that will carry our knights into battle. They polish the armor of the words in speeches, and they sharpen the lances of bills. Battles cannot be won without them. But staffers are not showered with flowers and cheers when the battle is won.

Today, I am a member of AAUW's National Lobby Corps. We visit legislative offices in the Capitol and the Virginia Statehouse. We are assigned a number of legislators and visit their office on an agreed agenda. Recently in the US Senate, a colleague and I visited three offices and were only allowed to drop off advocacy materials because no one could meet with us. At the fourth office, we were told that a junior staffer would be available if we waited 15 minutes. Finally, Dave emerged into the waiting area.

"There are no offices available, but we can talk in the hall," he apologized. We walked to the end of the corridor, and he introduced himself and his role. We explained the reason for our visit and discussed the subject at hand -- our group's opposition to the confirmation of a Cabinet nominee. It was an easy guess that his Senator agreed. Unfortunately, there was little his Senator, in the legislative minority, could do.

We wrapped up our meeting with an exchange of some personal anecdotes and then Dave concluded: "You have no idea how much it means to me to talk with you right now. Somedays it's hard and it's good to hear a calm and supportive voice."

Dave was an early twenty-something who like most staffers arrives with idealism and enthusiasm and come up against the hard realities of Capitol Hill. I once met with a young, sleep-deprived staffer in the middle of a long, contentious budget fight nearly cry when I thanked him for his hard work. I suspect I reminded him of his grandmother.

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025

As I write this, I just received an email from another member of our lobbying group noting that several staffers had mentioned how grateful they were to hear constituent stories. These stories not only armed them for battle, but the human stories made the battle worthwhile.

A few months ago, I had scheduled a Zoom meeting with our local Congressman to speak to my branch of our organization. Unfortunately, he had to limit his schedule because he was suffering from cancer. His Director of Constituent Services spoke in his place. She was an articulate young woman about the age of my own daughter, and she gave us a detailed analysis of what they expected in the upcoming session. During the question period, I asked her how she and others in her office felt about the emails and phone calls from constituents, particularly when the constituents agreed with the Congressman's position. She asked that we keep the calls and emails coming. In most congressional offices, there is someone who, at a minimum, keeps a tally of "for" and "against." Messages of special interest are passed along up the chain of command. No politician can afford to ignore the thoughts of his or her voters.

But advocacy is not just about supporting those who support our own ideas. Even in these contentious times, when everyone seems to be in a huddle at their own corner of the battlefield, it is important to continue to speak to the "other side." I do not delude myself to believe that I will change the vote of a legislator who is deeply opposed to my position. But if I can make them pause, just for a moment, and think about something I have said, I feel that I have done my job.

One of the most valuable trainings I ever took was Harvard University's "Getting to Yes" negotiation training. Part of that training is a concept called "going to the balcony." It is learning to take yourself away from your own perspective and to calmly look at an issue from the perspective of the other side. To figure out their needs and motivation. If a lawmaker is opposed to paid family leave as a waste of money and socialism, a passionate social justice speech would probably not make a difference. But that lawmaker may be interested in a study of how paid family leave reduces costs for employers by lessening turnover and training costs. The argument will probably not change their vote in the moment but may make them amenable to compromise down the road.

I will continue to click the box in the email box marked "tell your member of congress" and I will pick up the phone and leave a message. I will show up at the town hall on Zoom or in person. And I will continue to walk the halls of Congress and the Statehouse. I will talk to staffers younger than my grandchildren and, when the opportunity presents itself, corner a congressman in an elevator. I will not give up. And I hope you will not give up too.

**Stay strong,
Janine**

If you are interested in joining Lobby Corps reach out to me or to Mary Zane.

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025



Public Policy

Shyamali Hauth, Chair

February 22 marked the end of regular the Virginia Legislative Session. The three amendments to the Virginia Constitution all passed: guaranteeing reproductive freedom, restoring voting rights after completion of a sentence and changing to definition of marriage to include same sex unions. All three will face a vote again in the next legislative session and, if passed, will go to the voters. Three other bills that reflect AAUW Public Policy Priorities passed: a right to contraception, a salary history ban and paid sick leave. These three have gone to the Governor for signature and could be vetoed. A budget passed with several provisions that will help our local public schools; however, this could also be vetoed.

The General Assembly has left open the possibility of reconvening to deal with issues that could arise from current actions by the Administration in Washington. They could also consider any vetoes or amendments from the Governor.

AAUW National has strongly opposed the nomination of Linda McMahon as secretary of education citing concerns over her lack of experience in public education and commitment to students' rights. AAUW is also concerned about the attacks of the Administration on Title IX which ensures that all students receive a fair and equitable education, free of bias or intimidation. We are also lobbying against the SAVE Act, which would restrict voting rights.

On the local front, the Fairfax and Loudoun school districts are pushing back against the attack on Title IX and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives. The US Education Department is investigating whether Fairfax, Loudoun and three other Northern Virginia school districts violated Title IX and one of President Trump's recent executive orders by allowing transgender students to use their chosen name and pronouns at school and access restrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity.

WEBSITE RESTON-HERNDON BRANCH

Dianne Mero

Our branch website can be found at <https://restonherndon-va.aauw.net> (or by searching *Reston-Herndon AAUW* using your web browser). This site is a great "back-up" to this newsletter and the weekly branch update (thanks to Roberta and Janine) while also presenting additional information, photos and resources. The website also has a restricted "*Members Only*" section accessed through the "button" on the website Home Page. Click the link, then enter using our branch password code [VA3035]. This section includes members' individual contacts, email addresses and other branch information. Please review this section and let Janine know if any of your information is incorrect. Thanks for using the website and for your help in keeping everything up to date. Dianne

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025
Our Members in Action



Reston-Herndon members were incredibly generous with their donations for our collection for Women Giving back. This was part of our statewide effort for each Branch to donate 100 or more of an item to a local nonprofit in celebration of the 100th anniversary of AAUW-VA. A picture of our donations will be included in the display at the Centennial Conference in Alexandria at the end of this month. Through your generosity, we donated over 200 articles!!! We received a lovely thank you note from Women Giving Back. Way to go ladies!

Unfortunately, registration for the Centennial Conference is now sold out.



BOOK GROUP Alyse Goldman and Carla Heymsfeld

Our book group meetings are the fourth Wednesday of each month at 2PM the Reston Used Book Store. Usually, we meet for lunch beforehand at 12:30 PM at Café Montmartre in Lake Ann center next to the Reston Used Book Store.

March 26 **The Art of Power**, by Nancy Pelosi

April 23 **The Music of Bees**, by Eileen Garvin

May 28 **Lovely One**, by Ketanji Brown Jackson

June 25 **The Secret Life of Sunflowers**, by Marta Molnar

July 23 **The Elements of Marie Curie**, by Dava Sobel

August 27 **The Indigo Girl**, by Natasha Boyd

September 24 **The Education Wars**, by Jennifer C. Bershire and Jack Schneider

October 22 **Tell Me Everything**, by Elizabeth Stout

December 3 **Be Ready When Luck Happens**, by Ina Garten,

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Patty Hagan, Chair **March April DEI Article**

As we've all heard, DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) is under attack in our country with the new administration. There is discussion within AAUW about possibly changing the name; the emphasis will remain the same though. There's no decision yet. Until there is, we'll continue using DEI to express our belief that our organization, community and country are better with members from different backgrounds; that all people are equal; and that all people are welcome and included in what we do.

Many people don't know, or understand, what DEI means. They wrongly believe that people are getting jobs only because they aren't white males. Actually, white males are included in DEI though. There's the invalid assumption among many conservatives that unless someone is a white male, standards must have been lowered for them to get a job. We heard the president say that the day after the horrific, mid-air collision near National Airport. He stated, with no evidence, that the crash was the result of DEI hiring of air traffic controllers at FAA under Democratic presidents. In reality, air traffic controllers are one of the hardest jobs to fill in the government. Only 10% of the people who apply even make it into the strenuous training program. And of those, 40 – 50 % do not complete it. ([://www.faa.gov/newsroom/faa-hits-1500-controller-hiring-goal-2023](https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/faa-hits-1500-controller-hiring-goal-2023)) To imply that any air traffic controller is not well-qualified is ridiculous.

March is National Women's History Month. The theme for 2025 is "Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations." This theme is a perfect match with AAUW's mission! Many of our members are or were teachers and educated so many young people during their careers. And we can continue 'educating and inspiring generations within our own families, our communities, our religious affiliations, and many other ways. Many younger women don't understand how recently women got the right to have credit in their own names, buy houses, get birth control, participate in team sports, and so many other rights we now enjoy. Educating them about this and emphasizing the importance of voting to make sure they and future generations retain these hard-fought rights, is something all of us can do.

March 8 is International Women's Day which has been celebrated since 1911. This global day celebrates the numerous achievements of women in social, economic, science and political life.

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025

It's also a day that is a call to action for women everywhere to help create a world that is open and inviting to all women in the world. Some of our sisters in other countries no longer have the right to get an education beyond primary grades, simply because they are women. Some women in other parts of the world live in countries where female genital mutilation is still practice. The World Health Organization states that "More than 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is practiced." (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>) Even in our own country, many of our sisters struggle to get reproductive health care, to provide for their children, live in safety.

April is National Arab American Heritage Month. This year's theme is "Celebrating Arab American Resilience and Diversity." Begun in 2017, this celebrates the many contributions of Arab Americans dating back to our Revolutionary War. We honor the rich cultural heritage and invaluable contributions of the Arab American community. Not all states recognize this month yet but Virginia does.

This year, April is also the celebration of two major religious holidays in the Judeo-Christian community. This year, Passover begins before sundown on April 12 and ends after sundown on April 20. Easter is celebrated on April 20.



Join us for an unforgettable event on **Saturday, March 15, at 10 a.m.** at the North County Government Center in Reston! We welcome Rev. Sherrie Quander, a remarkable storyteller whose family is recognized as the oldest recorded African American family in the United States. Hear her share the inspiring journey of her ancestors, who were captured from present-day Ghana and enslaved at Mt. Vernon. Despite these challenges, the Quander family has uniquely traced its lineage back to Ghana. Rev. Sherrie will captivate you with stories of resilience, heritage, and the power of understanding one's roots. With over three decades in Hollywood as a producer, actress, singer, and HR consultant, Rev. Sherrie offers a rich blend of history, entertainment, and wisdom. She will explore themes such as: - Tapping into the strength of your ancestry - Embracing diverse cultures and beliefs - Pursuing what brings you joy. Don't miss this chance to be inspired by Rev. Sherrie's powerful stories and insights. We look forward to seeing you there!

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025

Let's Do Lunch!



We are so happy that our last two lunches were a big success. After a bit of confusion, our January lunch was held at Outback in Herndon. In February, we had lunch at Lakeside Bungalow in Sterling. This month we will be in Reston. We will be meeting at Gregorios Trattoria in North Shore Shopping Center – 1428 North Point Village Center, Reston on Wednesday, March 19 at noon. If you can make it, please RSVP to Roberta Sherman at shermanrs1@aol.com. Looking forward to seeing you then.

AAUW of Virginia Reston Herndon Branch

March, April 2025

2024-25 Reston Herndon Area AAUW Board of Director

Administrator	Janine Greenwood
VP Finance	Ruth Ruttenberg
VP Membership	Vacant
VP Program	Vacant
Secretary	Stephanie Abbott
AAUW Funds	Stephanie Abbott
Adopt-a-Spot	Fran Lovaas
Cultural Arts	Carol Flicker, Joyce Senger, Roberta Sherman
Book Group	Alyse Goldman & Carla Heymsfeld
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging	Patty Hagan
Newsletter	Roberta Sherman
Public Policy	Shyamali Hauth
Website	Dianne Mero
Zoom and Updates	Janine Greenwood

AAUW Diversity Statement: *In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.*

Vision: *Equity for all.*

Values: *Nonpartisan, Fact-based, Integrity, Inclusion and Intersectionality*

Branch Website: <http://restonherndon-va.aauw.net> VA3035

AAUW VA Website: <http://aauw-va.aauw.net> **AAUW Website:** www.AAUW.org **Branch**

Facebook Page: *Reston-Herndon Branch of AAUW*