



BADGER BRIEFS

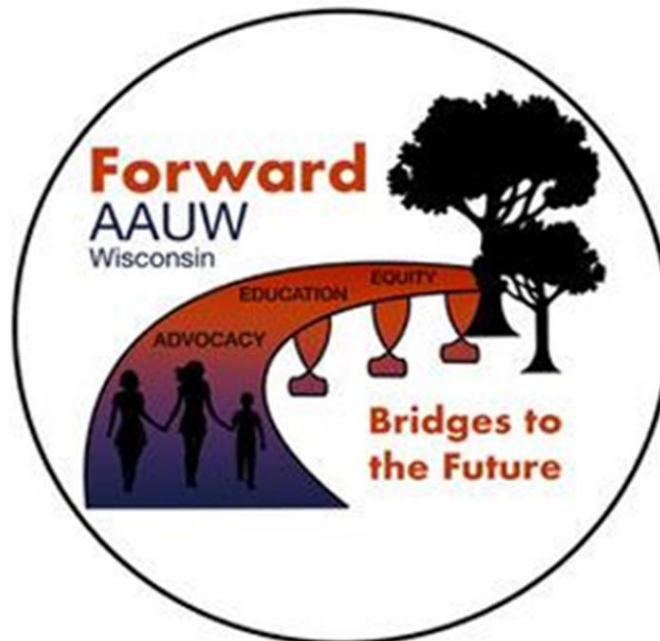


February Winter/Spring issue 2025



104th Wisconsin State
Convention

25-26th of April 2025 at
Stoney Creek Hotel
Onalaska - La Crosse



Created by Cassidy Riemer, UW-La Crosse Student

The 2025 AAUW-WI Convention will be held at the Stoney Cree Hotel in Onalaska on Friday, April 25 and Saturday, April 26. It opens at 1:00 p.m. on Friday and ends at 3:30p.m. on Saturday. For additional information, please click on this link: <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/convention/> . The registration form will be live on the site. Convention registration will be done online, with a choice of paying fees either online, or by sending a check in the mail.



“Welcome to the Struggle...”

Amanda Florence Garcia
Goodenough:
Educator and Consultant
Works to elevate historically marginalized voices and advance racial justice. She has been awarded

the MLK Leadership Award, the Black Excellence Award and the Wisconsin Tourism Trailblazer Award, among others.



“Uncovering the Lost Histories of Women”

Lynda Drews:
Writer and Researcher
is the author of *The Maid and the Socialite: The Brave Women Behind Green Bay’s Scandalous Minahan Trials*, giving these brave women a

voice to expose their closet abuser, the city’s famous surgeon. Midwest Bood Review says, Lynda’s book is “written with the drama of fiction and the compelling research of fact.”



“National AAUW Public Policy”

Meghan Kissell
Senior Director of Public Policy and Member Advocacy at AAUW National.
Meghan has more than 20 years of nonprofit policy and issue developing

and implementing targeted social impact strategies designed to engage key stakeholders and policy maker to advocate for positive policy outcomes.,

The convention planning committee is pleased to announce that Wisconsin State Representative Jill Billings, of the 95th Assembly District (La Crosse County and half of Monroe County) will provide the welcome at the event. Concurrent sessions will feature topics such as the differently able, artificial intelligence, big money and politics, the Holocaust, reproductive health, and local African American history.

Traditional convention activities, such as tri-board displays from each branch and a fundraising silent auction, will be included. Branches are encouraged to donate baskets for the auction. A submission form for posting photos and descriptions of auction donations is available on the convention website. The deadline for entries is March 29. A Silent Auction Gallery of baskets and other donations will be posted on the convention site in early April. All bidding will take place at the convention, with winners being announced after lunch on Saturday, April 26. The Friday evening “Sweet Suite” will again be offered, as well.

On Friday morning, two free activities are offered. A Guided tour of Mary of The Anels Chapel at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, founded by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in 1878, will be from 9am-10:30am. The showing of the movie *Decoding the Driftless* will be from 11am-noon.

It's time to SHOUT, HOLLER, GET LOUD... about our 2025 Convention SILENT AUCTION!!!

The annual Silent Auction will open at 1:00 PM on Convention Opening Day, April 24th and end on the 25th around Noon. Winners will go home with many lovely items.

Our Wisconsin branches have been asked to contribute a basket or item, valued at \$50 or more, for this fun event. Individual members may, of course, also contribute an auction item.

As those contributions come in, you will be able to get a sneak-peak at them on the AAUW-WI website (<https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/>).

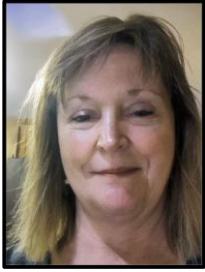
We are looking forward to a lively AAUW Wisconsin fundraiser for National's Greatest Needs Fund.

Have questions or submissions?

Contact: Chris Taylor, Wisconsin V.P. Funds Development
taylor.christine50@gmail.com



Look for more convention information ahead in this issue of Badger Briefs



Deb Thiel, President's Message!

During these times, the opportunity to be fully engaged and active in AAUW Wisconsin's issues, programs and work is the best elixir imaginable! I thank you for letting me be president! My hope is that you feel just as energized by your efforts on behalf of women, girls and the future.

Recalling our apposite 2019 convention theme, "All Hands-on Deck", reminds us that all of us working together equals collective power, the real engine of change.

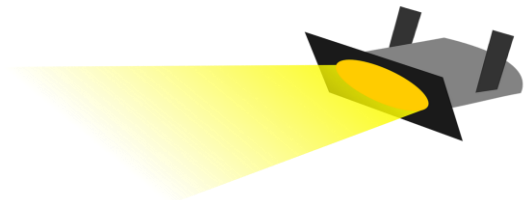
Consider that call, then decide to take up one action today to make the world better. Let's build upon many actions cooperatively. Last year's theme, "Architects of our Future", expresses that we must fashion the change we want to see! This year, "Forward AAUW Wisconsin – Bridges to the Future" is our call to action. If you need to spark an idea of what you can do, find who stands with you, and/or recharge your energy, come to convention. You won't regret it!

Please explore this informative newsletter. It's important to stay in touch and seek information to remain relevant and engaged. And don't forget to exercise your civic rights. Vote on February 18th and April 1!

Spotlight around Wisconsin – Assuming Leadership in Public Offices **By: Deborah J Thiel**

Fortitude, commitment, and service are observable qualities in AAUW Wisconsin members! And here's recent proof. Did you know that 3 of our members are part of the 2025-2026 State Legislature?

Let me introduce you to:



Representative Brienne Brown (D) of the 43rd District and AAUW Janesville member



Before her recent election Brienne served on the Whitewater Common Council, Whitewater Community Foundation and Library board among others. She highly values telling the truth and earning respect. She wants to work across the aisle to address the issues of small towns and communities.

From her website, Brienne supports:

- Quality education and fair pay for teachers
- Investing in small businesses and family-owned farms, including access to broadband
- Investing in public safety
- Women's freedom to plan families without government interference
- Empowering local government to make local decisions and access their share of tax revenue
- Economic security for veterans
- Upholding access to and integrity of the electoral system

Representative Ann Roe (D) of the 44th District and AAUW Janesville member.

Ann shared that for her gratitude is a huge piece of the puzzle in deciding to serve. She credits former AAUW State President, Judi Kneece (1989-1991) * for encouraging her to join AAUW and for inspiring her to run for public office and not just sit on the sidelines. She strongly advocates that all voices need to be heard and belong at the table, even the ones she doesn't always agree with. Lucky for her, she also has built-in consulting experts in pediatrics, immigration law, and community health within her immediate family.



Ann Roe's priorities are:

- Education (pre-k through high school focused)
- Reproductive Rights
- Child Care
- Health Care (Access and Cost)
- Fair Wages
- Affordable Housing
- Clean Water

Representative Nancy VanderMeer (R) of the 70th District and AAUW Tomah member



Nancy VanderMeer was first elected to the Wisconsin State Legislature in 2014 and is beginning her sixth term representing Wisconsin's 70th Assembly District. She is the Chair of the Transportation Committee in the Assembly. Nancy shares that she's excited and grateful to serve another term in the Wisconsin State Legislature. One of the most rewarding parts of her work is being able to help local community organizations. Last session, she worked on legislation to provide more funding to mental health enterprises and coalitions for the purpose suicide prevention. Local mental health groups provide critical help and resources to those experiencing mental health issues and suicidal thoughts. She believes local mental health organizations have great potential to be a frontline resource for individuals struggling throughout our communities. Her goal for this legislation is to provide more localities with the opportunity to start a mental health organization or strengthen existing ones, to further eliminate stigma and save lives. She was inspired by the Monroe County Mental Health Coalition and their partnership with local government, education, health, and law enforcement.

We aren't done folks! Did you hear that Beaver Dam has a new mayor!

Mayor Bobbie Marck, AAUW Beaver Dam member remarks: "My involvement in local government is tied directly to strong women in my life who led the way. My mom and aunt were leaders in their local League of Women Voters and community activists. I became an alderperson simply because I was asked by our serving mayor. She and the other women in city government were welcoming and supportive. As I get to know city staff and departments, I am impressed with their knowledge and professionalism. I think most people, and recently myself included, have no idea what it takes to keep a community operating. I learn something new every day about how our city functions. While I realize I'm in the honeymoon phase of my term, I've been met with nothing but respect from the public, which, I'll admit, was a bit of a concern for me going in. We'll see how long it lasts."



**It's obvious AAUW is all about supporting education!
Three of our members currently serve on School Boards.**

Mary Lynne Donohue of the Sheboygan Branch received the 2024 Leonard L. Loeb Award from the Senior Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Wisconsin in part for her community services, including serving as President of the Sheboygan Area School Board.



Congratulations to energetic **Sheboygan member, Leah Hibi**, a newly elected school board member for her district. In addition, she serves school kids under 18 years, as a mental health counselor through the Aurora Medical Clinic.

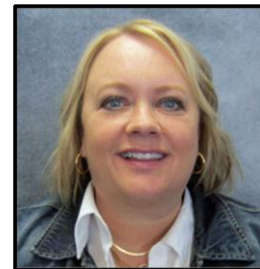
Alison Page, River Falls Branch is a current school board member. After an illustrious career in healthcare management, she actively contributes to her community. Alison ran unsuccessfully for the 30th District seat in the Wisconsin State Legislature this year. Tenacity rules, and there's always more opportunities! So, you have our support, go Alison!



Then there's opportunities to make a difference in local government!



Connie Russell, Eau Claire branch, is a long-serving member of the Eau Claire County Board. Her voice at the table adds to the conversation, helping to improve their decisions moving forward.



Erica Boehlke, Janesville branch, serves as District 26 Supervisor on the Rock County Board of Supervisors. Erica has work experience in the Department of Corrections.

These are just a few of the folks I heard about from the various branches who supplied me with information. I apologize to anyone I may have missed. We would love to add an addendum to our next Badger Brief!



***Judi Kneece (1989-1991)** - Past State Presidents, Cheryl Anderson, Pam Thiel and Dido Nash confirmed that Judi was "the best of the best", served on several AAUW National Committees and was always fun to be around! (Wouldn't it be fun to spotlight our AAUW Women's History a bit more!?)



Leadership Report

Carole Salinas, Leadership VP



Five Star Recognition Program

The goal of the Five Star Program is to help branches align with AAUW national's objectives. Alignment ensures that national, state and branches all work toward the same mission, vision, and goals. This creates a unified front. Every year, the requirements are revised. Go to www.aauw.org/resources/member/initiatives/5-star-program/ for the FY2025 Criteria & Resources.

Stay tuned to *Membership Matters*, AAUW's emailed newsletter for branch leaders, as well as AAUW.org for important updates on the **FY25 Annual Branch Survey**, which will take place before **June 30, 2025**. This timing ensures that current branch leaders can provide input on their activities and achievements for the Fiver Star Recognition.

Take Action, Action Network, and Two-Minute Activist

You will see all three of these terms on AAUW.org.

Take Action is on the menu bar on the home page. By clicking on Take Action, you will be directed to the following menu selections: [Two-Minute Activist](#), [Policy Center](#), [Advocacy ToolKit](#), and [Support AAUW](#).

When you click on **Two-Minute Activist**, you will see: **Join Our Action Network** which is where you can sign up to get regular alerts on how and when to engage. AAUW provides all the tools you need to call or send messages to your members of Congress, contact your state legislators about pressing issues, and more. When you sign up, you will start receiving emails from **Action Network** with the link to **Two-Minute Activist**. Many of you may already be signed up for these alerts. They truly take less than two-minutes to complete! If you have not signed up, please consider doing so. It is a great way to easily have your voice heard on current issues pertaining to women.

News about NCCWSL (National Conference for College Women Student Leaders)

For 39 years, AAUW has sponsored NCCWSL. The following information is now on AAUW.org: Please visit NASPA's [NCCWSL website](#) for the most up-to-date information about NCCWSL. When you click on this link you will see:

The National Conference for College Women Student Leaders unites college womxn (intentional misspelling?) and gender non-conforming students from across the nation for a transformative experience in leadership development, networking, and inspiration.

Tailored for undergraduate students who identify as women or outside the gender binary, NCCWSL provides a welcoming and empowering space to build leadership skills, connect with peers, and find inspiration to drive change.

[To receive information as soon as it becomes available, please submit this form.](#)

Webinars from AAUW National

Recently, there have been a number of educational webinars being offered by AAUW. The emails come from any of the following names: Shannon Wolfe, Meghan Kissell, Katrina Sun Breese, Gloria Blackwell, etc. It is safe to open these emails and signup to watch a webinar.

AAUW WI Public Policy

Stephanie Malaney and Barb Peterson

Important: If you have signed up for 2-Minute Activist, AAUW is now sending it as Action Network.



Stephanie



Barbara

There is a February 18th, 2025, primary between three candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction. You may also have some local office primaries.

Check your ballots at MyVote.we.gov and know your candidates. There are two candidates for the WI Supreme Court; no primary so they will be on the April 1st ballot. These are nonpartisan races. Our local School Board races are also important, and we advise that you get to know the qualified candidates,

With the potential shift from national government on AAUW issues we can control outcomes by being very well informed on the candidates, vote, and get others to the polls. Look to organizations like the League of Women Voters who can give you good information on the candidates. League has a staff member who is focused on disinformation and misinformation, and this may help you sort through issues. Spring elections are nonpartisan so WI Public Policy can, according to AAUW, support by name good candidates that represent our issues. More info to follow.

The AAUW WI Public Committee welcomes your input. We have monthly (2nd Mondays at 4:00) Zoom meetings. Notices are sent to branch Presidents and Public Policy Chairs with a link to our Zoom meetings. Contact them for the link. Interested members are welcome to join us.

From National AAUW Headquarters:

Social Security Fairness Act passed- important for civil servants included in the group- teachers, college professors, nurses, firefighters, etc. These groups have paid into social security but have not always received the benefits they deserve. It has impacted women more disproportionately than men.

AAUW opposing selection of Secretary of Education Linda McMann. Lack of experience in education or management. Reasons:

- * Opposition to Title IX
- * Shift to close public schools in favor of charter
- * Increasing voucher money
- * Sees education as a career education focus and devalues the arts and other programs.

The Wisconsin Primary Election is Tuesday, February 18, 2025

• **On the ballot**

Superintendent of Public Instruction and possible primary for your school board candidates.

What does the Superintendent do?

Supervises WI public schools per legislative mandates and administers DPI staff.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e-y_yef5JMN9895A9a13cU4S2h1LVPdy/view <https://my.lwv.org/wisconsin/state-superintendent-public-instruction>

What the Superintendent candidates' have to say in their words.

<https://www.vote411.org/ballot> Click on each candidate to see their answers to the League's questions.

• **Here are some of our AAUW WI Public Policy statements on public education.** <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net/policy/>

• **Possible primary for County officers and judges**

AAUW-WI advocates for

- Opposition to diversions of public funds to non-public elementary and secondary schools, e.g. tuition tax credits, vouchers, etc.
- Equitable and adequate funding to promote excellence and quality public education
- Vigorous enforcement of Title IX and other civil rights laws
- Education program to address equity issues
- Comprehensive and medically accurate health and human sexuality programs, research-based science, the arts, humanities, multicultural studies, and world languages in elementary and secondary schools
- Increased level of participation for girls and young women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in elementary and secondary schools

This can be a real threat to public schools. Indiana already has a proposal to close the Indianapolis public school, the largest in the state.

AAUW will dust off their position on vouchers but will focus on issues not state. They also see higher education and K-12 as the same issue.

AAUW is still advocating for the Equal Rights Amendment and hoping that by some miracle President Biden will authorize the publication of the amendment as the last step to its ratification and becoming part of our U.S. Constitution AAUW will dust off their position on vouchers but will focus on issues not state. They also see higher education and K-12 as the same issue.

Join us at the AAUW Convention in La Crosse in April.

Helpful Hint: To go to websites that are in blue, put your cursor over the website, and a box will pop up with the following instructions: **Ctrl + Click to follow your website. In a PDF, you should be able to just click.**

BYLAWS CHAIR REPORT: Sara Ramaker



IMPLEMENTING PAST AAUW CHANGES TO YOUR BRANCH BYLAWS: Thank you to all branches that have made the necessary changes to their bylaws and are in compliance with the 2023 and 2024 changes to the national bylaws. Some of you are still working on them. If you have completed all your amendments to your bylaws and they have been approved by your membership, if required, please send a copy to me so that I can file them in the state's Google Docs as required by the AAUW WI Policies. Unless you advise me you have already submitted them, I will also see that the bylaws are submitted to national. If I can help in anyway, please contact me. I will try to answer all questions quickly.

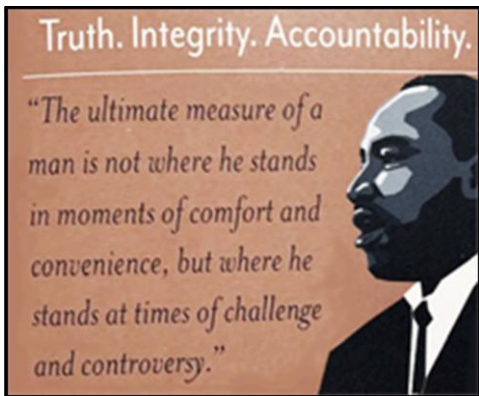
SPRING 2025 - PROPOSED NEW CHANGES TO NATIONAL'S BYLAWS: We will again be asked to vote on changes to the national bylaws. The good news is that these are minor changes and, if passed, will not require any changes to branch bylaws. This does not mean you can ignore voting. In order to effect any change to national's bylaws, we need "two-thirds vote of five percent (5%) of individual members voting." Thus, VOTING IS IMPORTANT, because if we do not meet the necessary number, no change.

1) The first proposed change allows the board to extend a board member's term for another year if the board member becomes the chairman after serving two years of the board's normal three-year term. The chairman position is the only officer that serves a two-year term. This allows a person two years on the board to learn and two years to be chairman. Otherwise, if the goal is for the chairmen to serve two years, then no one who has served on the board for two years would be eligible. I think the more experience the better one can perform. A sensible change to support.

2) The next proposed change allows the board to create and vote for two new officer positions: a Vice Board Finance and a Vice Board Secretary. These officers would serve on, but have no voting rights, on the Executive Committee. Additional officers allow assistance, flexibility and succession planning. Another sensible to support.

3) The final proposed change merely removes July 1 as the date for appointed committee members to begin their terms on the committee. Instead, committee members would begin their terms on the day of their appointment. This allows for greater flexibility and smoother transitions and is a sensible change.

I urge all to vote "YES" on the proposed changes to the bylaws to be voted on this spring. If you have any comments or disagree, I would love to hear from you.



Keeping DEI Alive

We've been struggling with the backlash against Diversity Equity & Inclusion that has been happening in our country. The current federal government is shutting down DEI efforts in all areas of government including the military. Our State Legislature is working to rid our University System of DEI programming. Several large corporations are backing off of their DEI efforts with their employees.

At AAUW we are not backing off, we will continue to promote diversity, equity and inclusion with our members, in our programming, projects and collaborations in our communities. Recently we celebrated in Janesville the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Many of you probably attended something similar in your communities.

At our event the keynote speaker, Amiee Leavy, spoke on the theme, "Truth, Integrity, Accountability" and the truth in Dr. King's quote:

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Below is a link to the YouTube video of the entire event which is less than an hour. Ms Leavy's speech begins at 25:25 and runs for 21 minutes. It is so powerful and will give you hope in the future. It made my day. I hope it makes yours too.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/ZGAXN54y3F4?feature=share>

Resources for Branch Leaders Coming Soon

Carol S. Surges
Membership - VP



You will soon find resources on the State's website designed to help Membership VPs. Look for the information under the 'Membership' drop-down menu in the state's website banner area. There you'll find answers to common questions and examples that various Wisconsin branches have developed and are using. The list of resources was assembled using the most frequent questions from branch leaders as a guide to their needs.

Resources include examples of application forms, Shape the Future information and forms, 50 Year Honorary Membership application form, and background information and details for doing an exit interview with non-renewing members plus more.

This list will be fluid and change as dates, codes, and membership fees change over time.

If you see a gap that needs to be filled or information that needs further detail, please give that feedback to the State's Membership VP. If you have supplementary forms and information, please don't hesitate to forward it to the State's Membership VP for future inclusion.

Thank you to the branches who generously shared their ideas and forms for this effort.

AAUW – West Suburban Milwaukee Spring Fling Style Show

Saturday, April 12, 2025
The Wisconsin Club

Invite your friends and family to join you for a delightful time of fun with raffles, silent auction, wine pull, luncheon, and style show featuring the newest spring fashions and accessories. You won't want to miss this fun event which is our main fundraiser for scholarships to support women's education!

Watch the mail for your invitation which will be sent out in early March or contact Marty or Sandy for more information.

Questions, contact Co-chairs

Sandy Abraham 414-659-0849

ladyinred49@sbcglobal.net

Marty Gholston 414- 339- 7710

martygholston@gmail.com



CONVENTION 2025 REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!!!

Welcome to the city of La Crosse on the mighty Mississippi. You can now register for Convention 2025 on April 25-26, and we encourage your friends who are not AAUW members to join us.

Just click this link to the AAUW WI website <https://aauw-wi.aauw.net> and then click “State Convention” on the horizontal menu at top of page and you will find:

Convention Registration:

- **Everyone will need to register online.**
- Registration fees are \$107 for only Friday, \$85 for only Saturday, or \$135 for both. Your meals/beverages/snacks are included in your registration fees.
- After you register, you can pay online or by check. **No service fees are charged for online payments.**
- **Late registration charge of \$10 after Monday, March 24.**

Hotel Registration:

- We will meet at Stoney Creek Hotel in Onalaska/La Crosse. We have a special rate, and you can book your room online at our website or use the phone number that is provided. <https://www.stoneycreekhoteles.com/hotel/la-crosse/>
- **2025 Hotel rooms \$104 + 13% tax = \$118.04**
- Hotel registration includes self-serve breakfast.
- **Last Day to Book at special rate: Monday, March 24, 2024.**
- Check around with your friends and find someone with whom to share a room.

As you scroll through our convention page on the AAUW WI website, you can also find out about our optional Friday morning activities, silent auction, and the entire schedule of convention activities/speakers.

Register today to visit the city of the Mississippi River, to hear ideas from speakers, and to visit with old friends and meet new ones.

Attention Branch Presidents and Newsletter editors!!!

Please copy this information and include in your next branch newsletter.

The following 2 Resolutions will be presented and voted on during the business meeting at convention.

January 2025

**Proposed AAUW Wisconsin Resolution
Constitutional Amendment to Eliminate Big Money in Politics**

Whereas, AAUW National Public Policy Priorities oppose all forms of discrimination and support constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals, and

Whereas, AAUW National and AAUW WI both believe that AAUW must advocate for equity, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse society, and

Whereas, AAUW WI recognizes an obligation to advocate for campaign finance reform that will promote equitable representation and equitable participation, and

Whereas, AAUW WI believes free and fair elections are essential to democracy and effective self-governance, and

Whereas, interpretation of the U.S. Constitution by appointed Supreme Court Justices included corporations in the term “persons,” and

Whereas, in the 1976 *Buckley v. Valeo* ruling, the Supreme Court changed the course of American elections and established the doctrine that spending money to influence elections is a form of speech, and,

Whereas, on January 21, 2010, in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court overturned a century of precedence by ruling that corporate spending on elections cannot be limited under the First Amendment, and

Whereas, AAUW WI believes the above decisions (i.e., allowing corporations to act as persons to influence politics, that spending money is a form of speech, and allowing unlimited spending by corporations and wealthy donors) lead to the diminishing rights of individuals and inequitable * representation in elections, and

Whereas, AAUW WI members recognize the need to engage in constructive acts to make a meaningful difference towards societal change, and

Therefore, be it resolved that AAUW WI will pledge to seek to reclaim democracy from the corrupting influence of unlimited political contributions and spending by standing with women across the country to support passage of an amendment to the United States Constitution stating:

- 1) Only human beings are endowed with constitutional rights – not corporations, unions, nonprofits or other artificial entities; and**
- 2) Money is not speech, therefore limiting political contributions and spending is not equivalent to limiting speech.**

Note: We added a footnote at the bottom that is missing from all saved copies.

* **Inequitable** actions or situations are those considered unjust or unfair, often viewed through a lens of moral or ethical judgment. This term suggests a deviation from what is right or just in a societal context, where the focus is on the fairness of outcomes or processes.

On the other hand, **unequitable** pertains to the absence of equality or equity, primarily in terms of distribution or allocation. It indicates a scenario where resources, opportunities, or rights are not distributed evenly, but it does not necessarily carry a moral judgment.

AAUW Janesville (Leslie Brunsell, Wendy Tupper)
AAUW Tomah (Cindy Zharte)

Proposed AAUW Wisconsin Resolution Upholding the Civil Rights of Americans who Identify as LGBTQ+

Whereas, AAUW Public Policy Priorities advocate for freedom in definition of self and family, including protection from discrimination and a guarantee of civil rights for all family structures, and

Whereas, for too long the civil rights protections guaranteed to millions of Americans have been denied to those who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and those identities who may not fit into the acronym), and

Whereas, no one shall be denied the full range of civil rights and liberties due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, and

Whereas, AAUW WI has the privilege and responsibility to acknowledge and uphold these principles for all citizens of Wisconsin, and

Whereas, unless and until LGBTQ+ people are able to enjoy the same rights and freedoms as their fellow Americans, the nation's promise of equal justice under the law will remain unfilled, and

Therefore, be it resolved that AAUW WI will advocate for the full range of civil rights and liberties for all who identify as LGBTQ+. Such rights and liberties include freedom from discrimination in schools and the workplace, the guarantee of spousal/partner benefits – including the ability to care for dependent children, the ability to serve one's country in uniform, and the ability to serve as an elected official of the government

Chris Ebert
AAUW Northwoods

AAUW Nominating Committee Slate of Officers for 2025-2027

The Nominating Committee is thrilled to announce our slate of candidates for 2025-2027. Each nominee has been extensively involved with AAUW at both their local and the state levels. They will bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to our board.



President-Elect

Carole Salinas is a member of the AAUW Janesville branch where she served two terms as branch co-president. She is currently their Membership VP, Communications, and STEM co-chair. She joined the state board in 2022 as the District One Coordinator. She is currently serving a two-year term as Leadership VP.



VP Leadership

Jan Eriksen joined AAUW-La Crosse in 2006 and has held a variety of positions including: Secretary, VP-Programs, President-Elect, and President. She has also served on many committees. Her work, before retiring in 2016, was in higher education with four different institutions.

VP Membership

Judy Hangartner is a member of the Sheboygan branch. She was the past chair of the state nominating committee.

Another Exciting and Successful STEM Day

Lori Bryne, AAUW Sheboygan Branch

The Sheboygan Branch held its 7th annual STEM Day for middle school girls on November 2, 2024, with 64 girls participating.

The first STEM Day was organized by AAUW members and UW–Sheboygan staff in 2017. It has grown each year and was only canceled one year during the Covid pandemic. Because of reorganization in the system, UW Sheboygan is no longer involved with the project. STEM Day is now held at Sheboygan High School, using labs and technology equipment as needed.

This year girls registered for 3 out of 10 workshop choices including robotic surgery, EMT experiences, chemistry experiments, crime scene investigation methods, the science of color, medical devices made from pigs, bovine reproductive dissection, hydroponic gardening, architecture designing, and environmental testing of soil, water, and air. Most of these workshops are repeated year after year because they are popular, and the presenters want to come back. Presenters are staff from nearby universities and high schools and area businesspeople, as well as local police and EMT personnel.

Local businesses generously sponsor STEM Day and most of our volunteer assistants are local branch members plus a few volunteers from the businesses. Participants can register online through a system created by one of our members or by mail. Brochures are distributed through local schools, libraries, churches, and businesses. We provide string-bag backpacks for the girls with donated snacks, water, notebooks, and pens.

STEM Day is one of our biggest efforts. Our goal is to encourage girls between the ages of 11 and 14 to feel confident in their STEM interests and skills. It is always a joy to hear their enthusiasm at the end of the sessions.



Tech Savvy sponsored by Fort Atkinson and Janesville branches is coming to UW-Whitewater on April 5, 2025.

AAUW visitors and observers welcome.

The Current Landscape of Artificial Intelligence: How does AI work?

Pat Phillips, STEM Chair

I hope your branch has found a way to incorporate STEM topics into your programming calendar. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is both fascinating and critically important for all of us to understand. With that motivation, this is the second of a three-part series to pique your curiosity and encourage you to plan a branch program to learn more.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the field of computer science that focuses on creating machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation. At its core, AI is powered by algorithms, which are sets of rules or instructions that machines use to process data and generate predictions, recognize patterns, and take actions. Here's a closer look at how AI works, from data collection and processing to model training and decision-making.

1. Data Collection and Processing

Data is the backbone of AI. AI systems require large datasets to learn from, which may include images, text, audio, or sensor data. For example, to develop an AI that can recognize faces, a dataset of millions of labeled images (with each face identified) is needed. This raw data often undergoes preprocessing, where it is cleaned, organized, and standardized to eliminate errors, inconsistencies, and outliers that could skew the learning process.

Once data is collected and prepared, it is divided into two or more sets: a **training set** used to "teach" the AI model and a **test set** for validating its performance. Some complex AI models may also use a third set, the **validation set**, to tune parameters during training.

2. Machine Learning Algorithms

Machine learning (ML) is a subset of AI that enables machines to learn from data without being explicitly programmed. Machine learning algorithms use statistical methods to "train" on datasets, recognizing patterns and forming relationships within the data. There are three main types of ML algorithms:

- **Supervised Learning:** In supervised learning, the dataset is labeled, meaning each input has a known output. The model learns to map inputs to the correct outputs by finding patterns in the training data. Supervised learning is used for tasks like image classification, sentiment analysis, and medical diagnostics.
- **Unsupervised Learning:** In unsupervised learning, the dataset is unlabeled, so the model must identify hidden patterns or structures within the data. Clustering and association algorithms, which group similar data points, are examples of unsupervised learning. This approach is used for tasks like customer segmentation and recommendation systems.
- **Reinforcement Learning:** In reinforcement learning, the model learns by interacting with an environment, and receiving rewards or penalties based on its actions. This trial-and-error approach is commonly used in robotics, gaming, and navigation systems, where AI agents learn optimal strategies over time.

3. Neural Networks and Deep Learning

Neural networks, inspired by the human brain, are at the heart of many modern AI systems. They consist of layers of interconnected "neurons," each performing simple computations on the data they receive. These layers are structured as input, hidden, and output layers. Data flows through the layers, and each neuron applies a mathematical function to adjust its weight, eventually leading to a final prediction.

Deep learning, a subset of machine learning, uses large, deep neural networks with many layers, allowing AI systems to tackle complex problems, like recognizing speech or understanding natural language. Each layer in a deep network refines the data to capture intricate patterns, enabling the system to make accurate predictions in highly complex tasks.

4. Training the Model

During the training phase, the AI model processes the training data, adjusting weights and parameters to minimize errors in its predictions. This is done using optimization algorithms, such as gradient descent, which

iteratively fine-tune the model by reducing the difference between its predictions and the actual results. The objective is to reach a point where the model can make accurate predictions on new, unseen data.

5. Testing and Deployment

Once trained, the model is tested using the test dataset to ensure its accuracy and reliability. Metrics such as accuracy, precision, and recall are used to evaluate its performance. If the results are satisfactory, the AI system is deployed in real-world applications. For example, a trained facial recognition model might be deployed in security systems, where it can identify individuals in real-time.

6. Continuous Learning and Improvement

AI models often undergo continuous learning, through which they are updated with new data to improve accuracy and adaptability over time. This ensures the AI remains effective, as environments and data may change.

Conclusion

AI systems use algorithms, neural networks, and massive datasets to recognize patterns, make decisions, and learn from experience. While AI systems are capable of impressive feats, they rely on carefully curated data, intricate architectures, and precise training to achieve accuracy and reliability in real-world applications. As AI continues to evolve, it holds the potential to transform countless industries by automating tasks, solving complex problems, and supporting human decision-making.

In the spirit of full disclosure, this article was written with ChatGPT with the prompt, "Write a 500-word article on how AI works."

In the next Badger Briefs, I'll explore some of the controversies revolving around AI.

What does AAUW National do?

Where should I start?!?!

AAUW has credibility regarding important issues. Why? We have a rich history of producing **in-depth studies** about topics such as gender pay gap and women in leadership roles. Recently we have updated our information about Latinas and the pay gap. Research has been crucial so we can plan our path as we support our mission. Lately our research is not happening as much as in the past. We need to fund research if we want to remain relevant.

Social media helps keep our brand prominent and effective. We have more than one million website viewers. There are tens of thousands following AAUW across all of our platforms. On more than three occasions recently Gloria Blackwell has been invited to White House events!

We have a presence at the **United Nations**. Our **CEO Gloria Blackwell** is our ears and voices. Do you feel the significance of us on that platform? Participation regarding global gender equity is crucial for the future of all of us.

Fellowships and Grants are awarded nationally. They are presented to hundreds of women in the United States and Internationally. AAUW National administers over *6 million dollars* in fellowships and grants *yearly!* And it doesn't end there. AAUW develops and shares Policy Advocacy, Financial Training, and Membership Services.

Public Policy focuses on national issues affecting women and girls as they form coalitions with other National organizations to work on our priorities. National provides us opportunities to interact with other states so we can share efforts as we work toward our mission. Working in numbers can be more effective in some instances. Public Policy shares information with all of our members.

Membership Services are a crucial support system for branches. Working to get feedback from members and using that to improve our relationship with local AAUW is crucial. We do really try to hear from members and improve technology support.

Training regarding **Salary Negotiation** and **Financial Literacy** are resources offered local branches for programming and reaching out to women. Training has been shared with thousands of women across the country. Our goal is for women to become economically empowered.

AAUW National is working to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. As they do this important work, they are also supporting you in your efforts to do the same.

Joan D. Schneider Wisconsin Representative, National Advancement Committee

AAUW WI State Board 2024-25

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