

# AAUW NEWS OF NOTE

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Mission Statement: AAUW advances equity for all women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

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.

**HINGHAM AREA BRANCH**

**OCTOBER 2011**

## CALENDAR

October 11, Tuesday	Branch Meeting, 7:00 PM Allerton House, Weymouth Jane Roberts, UN Population Fund
October 18, Tuesday	Book Discussion Group, 7:00 PM home of Nancy Yellin
October 20, Thursday	Writers' Group, 7:30 PM Brewed Awakening, Hingham
October 29, Saturday	Fall Conference Wylie Conference Center, Endicott College Beverly, MA Contact Pat Laidler for information.
November 3, Thursday	Declutter Bugs, 4:30 PM Panera, Derby Street Shoppes, Hingham

## BRANCH MEETING

The meeting of the Hingham Area Branch will take place on Tuesday, October 11 at 7 pm at Allerton House, 43 School House Lane, Weymouth (off Broad Street).

**“When the world takes care of women, women take care of the world. The United Nations Population Fund takes care of the world’s women.”** ([www.34millionfriends.org](http://www.34millionfriends.org)) These are words our speaker, Jane Roberts, an AAUW member from Redlands, CA, believes in so strongly, that in 2002, when the United States withdrew \$34 million approved for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), she was outraged and decided to take action. The 34 Million Friends campaign, a grass-roots movement began when Jane in California, and Louise Abraham in New Mexico independently of each other, organized an email campaign urging men and women across the US to donate \$1 or more to help bridge the funding gap. Their goal is to find 34 million friends to help UNFPA continue its invaluable work as the largest multilateral provider of family planning and maternal health care. So far, over 100,000 individuals and donors have contributed nearly \$3 million. Jane and Louise continue to maintain an active schedule of speaking engagements and other activities to rally support for UNFPA's work and continue the momentum of 34 Million Friends.

This fall Jane is on a whirlwind speaking tour of the Northeast. In fact, on October 11 Jane will speak at an AAUW-NY event at the United Nations in the morning and then drive to Hingham to speak to us. In her talk Jane will share some incredible population statistics with us (I know, I have seen the handout). Jane believes Millennium Development Goal #5, **“improve maternal health. Cut by three fourths maternal mortality”** is the key to the achievement of the seven other Millennium Development Goals. In the words of Dr. Baktunde Osotimehin, head of UNFPA: “The world’s 1.8 billion young people, between 10 and 24 years old, can contribute new ideas and approaches to solving our most pressing

problems. Especially important are the 600 million adolescent girls, (age 10-18) whose decisions can change our world. If every girl today could stay in school, have the number of children she desires, and live free from gender-based violence and discrimination, we would see an end to child marriage, improved health for children and families, and women taking their rightful place in society.”

Please join me on October 11 at the Allerton House in Weymouth as we welcome Jane and discover the power of two women, one idea and 34 million friends to better the lives of women and girls around the globe.

Hollie Bagley, Program Facilitator

PS: For those of you who have read Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn's book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, Jane Roberts and Her 34 Million Friends is a big part of Chapter Eight.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

It was great to see you all at Potluck. While summer is a wonderful time of year, it's always great to get back into the swing of the year's activities. Thanks so much to all volunteers, especially our hosts Susan Mahan and Ginnie Giordano, for making our evening so enjoyable. Welcome to our newest members who joined at Potluck, Ginny Jensen, Carol DeSimone, and Cheryl Snyder, and thanks to those members who brought them!

You should have received your copies of the Bay Stater by now. Please take special note of the information on the Fall Conference: **Human Trafficking: What Can WE Do About It?** on Saturday October 29, 2011 at the Wylie Conference Center at Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts. To encourage attendance from our branch, we will be offering a small stipend to defray the costs of registration. If you'd like to attend but need transportation, please contact me and I'll organize carpools for the event. Women caught in this web of crime and abuse need our voices now more than ever.

In closing, if you have a chance please take a look at <http://capwiz.com/aaup/issues/alert/?alertid=53611511> on the AAUP National website and contact your legislator to urge his/her support of this important legislation. “The Keeping Our Social Security Promises Act (S1558) (which) would gradually lift the cap (on Social Security contributions) so that by 2033 the wealthiest 6 percent of Americans will be on an equal footing with everyone else. This plan would extend the full solvency of Social Security for the next 75 years, ensuring that the program continues to provide retirement security for future generations.” As so many of us are counting on Social Security, it's up to us to communicate our support of legislation to help it continue.

Pat

## **MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**

Don't forget, if you bring a guest to a meeting and the guest joins AAUP that night, the National membership will be half price. It's a good deal for the Hingham branch and for the member.

Deanne

## **BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP**

The next meeting of the Book Group will be at the home of Nancy Yellin at 7:00 PM on October 18<sup>th</sup>. The book to be discussed is Zelton by Dave Eggers.

Carol

## **DECLUTTER BUGS**

We will meet on Thursday, November 3, at Panera at Derby Street in Hingham.

Deanne

## WRITERS' GROUP

Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> is the date of the next meeting of the writers. We will be at Brewed Awakening in Hingham.

Beatrice

## PUBLIC POLICY

### NEWS

**Special Elections Strengthen GOP Majority in House:** a special election was held in New York's Ninth District to fill the vacancy created after the resignation of former Rep. Anthony Weiner's seat (D). Businessman Bob Turner (R) defeated David Weprin (D) with 53% of the vote. The district, which contains portions of Queens and Brooklyn, *has not elected a Republican in over 80 years*. In Nevada, Mark Amodei (R) defeated Kate Marshall (D) to fill the seat vacated when former Rep. Dean Heller (R) was appointed to replace former Sen. John Ensign (R) after the latter resigned. These victories now further strengthen the GOP majority in the House of Representatives, 242-192.

**Progress Made toward Ensuring Workers' Access to Earned Sick Days:** Seattle became the third U.S. city to pass legislation requiring employers to provide earned sick leave to workers. Philadelphia's City Council is currently considering a similar measure that provides paid sick leave for all city workers as well as workers of contracting firms hired by the city. This measure follows Philadelphia Mayor Nutter's veto of a more comprehensive paid sick leave bill this summer.

Millions of Americans still do not have the option of taking a sick day to care for family members or themselves without putting their jobs, their healthcare benefits, or their family stability at risk. Two-thirds (64 percent) of women with children under six are in the labor force. Nationwide, 22.9 million families provide care for an adult family member or friend, and nearly 80 percent of those care recipients are over the age of 50.

**New Reports Highlight How Families Save and Pay for College:** Sallie Mae, the financial services company specializing in education, has released a new report on how Americans pay for education. How America Pays for College 2011 shows families paid nine percent less for schooling than they reported in the previous year. Families reported that grants and scholarships accounted for thirty-three percent of their college expenses. Grants increased for middle to high-income families while remaining constant for low-income families. Seventy percent of students and parents feel strongly that a college education is essential, compared to fifty-nine percent in 2010. The most significant findings, however, are rising tuition costs and differences in spending behavior among different income groups.

Another study, this one from the National Center for Education Statistics, found that the degree to which parents of would-be college students save for their children's postsecondary costs varies significantly by race. The study, which provides data from a longitudinal study of American ninth graders, shows that among those students whose parents expected them to enter postsecondary education and planned to help pay for their education, 41 percent of the parents of Asian-American ninth graders and 23 percent of the parents of white ninth graders reported saving more than \$25,000 for their child's postsecondary education, compared to 12 percent of the parents of black ninth graders and eight percent of the parents of Latino ninth graders. Many students take out loans in order to pay for the high price of schooling. According to data released by the Department of Education, 8.8 percent of borrowers overall defaulted in the fiscal year that ended last September 30, compared to 7 percent in the previous year. Student borrowing has been increasing in recent years, as tuition has grown faster than family income.

**Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals Rejects Virginia Health Care Challenge:** The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Commonwealth of Virginia does not have standing to challenge the federal health care reform law. The lawsuit, brought by Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, challenged the constitutionality of an individual mandate established in the federal law that requires individuals to purchase insurance. Considering the individual mandate to be an issue of taxation, the court ruled that it could not decide on the issue until after the taxes go into effect in 2014. Similar cases challenging provisions of the health care law in lower appellate courts across the country indicate that the Supreme Court will likely address this issue within the next few years.

**The Latest on Michigan's Anti-Affirmative Action Laws :** the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit vacated a July ruling which overturned Michigan's five-year-old ban on considering race and ethnicity in the admissions process for universities. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission argued that the July decision, which would have allowed schools to consider these factors, should be allowed to stand and stated, "Preventing a university from ensuring diversity comes at

the expense of every student who is admitted. And not only do they lose the educational setting, they are at a disadvantage when seeking employment and advancement."

**Obama Appoints More Women, Minorities; Senate Stalls Judicial Nominations:** President Obama is the first president in history to appoint a majority of non-traditional federal judges. Three out of four appointees to the federal bench during this administration have been women or minority jurists. The president's most notable contributions to the diversification of the federal judiciary include the nominations of Sonya Sotomayor, the first Latina confirmed to the Supreme Court; J. Paul Oetken, the first openly gay man to serve a federal judgeship; and Elena Kagan, whose appointment increased the number of women on the Supreme Court to three for the first time in history. Despite some progress in diversifying of the judiciary, inaction and obstructionism on the part of the Senate is creating a vacancy crisis in federal courts across the country. *Due to unprecedented slow confirmation rates and stalling tactics*, one in seven federal judgeships are currently vacant, resulting in legal crises for individuals and businesses whose cases remain on hold and whose livelihoods hang in the balance. The Senate has confirmed just nine judges in the past three months, a rate which, if continued, will result in more vacancies at year's end than when the current Senate session commenced.

**Women and Children Hit Hard by Increased Poverty Rates:** The Census Bureau, reported that 2010 saw a decline in median household income and the highest increase in the poverty rate since 1993. The number of individuals in poverty rose to 15.1 percent from 14.3 percent in 2009, while the number of families living below the poverty line increased to 9.2 million, up from 8.8 million in 2009. Increased poverty rates particularly affect women and children; in 2009 adult women were 32 percent more likely to be poor than adult men, with the poverty rate for single mothers reaching its highest rate (38.5 percent) since 1998. 2010 saw women lose health insurance at the highest rate in more than a decade and the rate of impoverished children reach 22 percent.

**We Can Do More to Stop Violence Against Women, Says Vice President Biden:** In a video released on the 17th anniversary of the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Vice President Biden calls for renewed efforts to prevent dating violence and sexual assault on teens and college students. "Speak up and act and make it clear that violence against women will not be tolerated at your school, on your campus, at any time, for any reason," says Biden. While violence against women has decreased since VAWA's implementation, reports of dating violence and sexual assault have increased among women ages 16-24. The Obama Administration's new 1 is 2 Many campaign calls on teens and students to participate in generating ideas to make their campuses safer through a new Twitter handle devoted to the issue and an "Apps Against Abuse Challenge," a national competition to develop software that young adults can use to report and help prevent sexual assault in real time.

**First Female Prime Minister of Denmark:** the people of Denmark elected their first female prime minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Denmark, which is generally governed by coalition governments made up of several like-minded political parties, has been led for the past ten years by a group of conservative parties. Schmidt is the leader of the Social Democrats, a moderate-left leaning party, and is expected to form a government with two other center-left parties.

**In a Hockey Video Game, Some Equity -- Thanks to a Teenage Advocate:** Although approximately 100,000 Canadian women play hockey, you'd never know from the video games. In games like the EA Sports NHL series, players can fully customize their avatars or virtual representatives -- as long as they don't mind that the avatar is a man. Thanks to 14-year-old Lexi Peters, however, this is all about to change. Lexi, a hockey fan and gamer, wanted to know why girl gamers couldn't create avatars that actually looked like them. She decided to take action and wrote a letter to EA Sports to find out. Her letter pointed out that it is "unfair to women and girl hockey players around the world, many of them who play and enjoy your game. I have created a character of myself, except I have to be represented by a male and that's not fun." Her letter worked its way to the top and now EA Sports will add female avatars to NHL 12. NHL Lead Producer David Littman called the letter a "wake-up" call for the business that was completely ignoring a growing female gamer audience, let alone the growing number of female hockey players.

**President Obama's Job Speech:** President Obama addressed a joint session of Congress, calling on them to look past the politics and pass the American Jobs Act -- a \$447 billion package of tax cuts and new government spending, designed to revive a stalling economy. The administration's bill focuses on multiple, interconnected policies and programs aimed at putting Americans back to work. If the bill is passed, tax cuts will be implemented to help small businesses hire and expand. Programs will be put in place aimed at putting Americans back to work while modernizing our infrastructure. This involves a hiring tax credit for veterans, funding to prevent up to 280,000 teacher layoffs, modernization for public

schools, investments in infrastructure, and expanded access to high-speed wireless nationwide. The administration's plan also offers an extension of unemployment benefits and work-based reforms to prevent layoffs in the private sector. Payroll taxes would be cut in half for 160 million workers in the upcoming year. Finally, the president has stated his intent to work with the bipartisan debt reduction super committee to ensure the act is fully paid for.

**National Women's History Museum Moves Closer to Becoming a Reality:** Legislation which would allow for the creation of a National Women's History Museum on the National Mall passed out of committee in the House of Representatives yesterday. The museum, which would be paid for entirely through private donations and which would have to pay fair market price for the land it would occupy, would be the only museum specifically about women and their contribution to American history in the nation's capital.

**California Governor Set to Sign Partial DREAM Act:** The California State Assembly passed the second half of California's Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, sending it to Governor Jerry Brown (D) for signature. This second portion of the DREAM Act expands on the initial law passed in July. Upon Governor Brown's signature, the California DREAM Act will allow undocumented immigrants access to \$120 million in state scholarships through both private and public grants. California's law would join similar partial DREAM Acts in eleven other states. Proponents of the federal version of the DREAM Act hope that California's enactment will put additional pressure on Congress and the administration to push for a federal law that creates a path to citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants through higher education or military service.

**Earned Sick Days are Bipartisan Issue, Survey Shows:** A survey released by the National Partnership for Women and Families shows that earned sick days requirements are a critical issue for Connecticut voters across the political spectrum. The survey was conducted following the July signing of Connecticut's earned sick days law. The law is the first of this type which requires companies to provide their workers with earned sick days. According to the research, Connecticut's law is supported by an overwhelming 73 percent of the Connecticut electorate, including 61 percent of registered Republicans, 70 percent of independents, and 83 percent of Democrats. In addition to viewing the new law as vital for families' economic security, voters also indicated that in the upcoming election, a legislator's support for or opposition to earned sick days policies will be a major factor in his or her reelection. The Seattle City Council is set to vote on a similar bill.

**Tammy Baldwin Announces Senate Run in Wisconsin:** Representative Tammy Baldwin from Wisconsin announced earlier this week that she will be running for U.S. Senate. The seat is due to be vacated by Democratic Senator Herb Kohl. In an opinion editorial in the Huffington Post, Baldwin stated "I can't wait to take my fight to the Senate: a fight to grow our economy, protect seniors, force Wall Street to clean up its act, and bring our troops home from Afghanistan. And I can't wait to see you on the trail as we bring our campaign to every corner of Wisconsin." The article points out that if she wins in 2012, she will be the first U.S. Senator who is openly gay. Representative Baldwin has the support of Emily's List and is predicted to have the support of other women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organizations.