

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

JANUARY 2012

CALENDAR

January 10, Tuesday

Branch Meeting, 6:30 PM

Casual supper and book discussion

Allerton House, Hingham

Casual Winter Supper and Book Discussion

The annual soup & salad supper will take place on January 10, 2012 and will again be held at the Allerton House in Hingham, at 6:30 pm. A discussion of the book *Russian Winter* by Daphne Kalotay will follow.

We need volunteers to bring soups, breads, salads and desserts. Please RSVP your attendance and what food you can bring to Social Committee member Susan Mahan at poetesssusan1@verizon.net or 781-335-6912. Don't forget to bring your own place setting! I hope to see you!

Susan Mahan

Social Committee

Directions to Allerton House:

Allerton House, 15 Conditto Road, Hingham, MA 02043

From Route 3 South:

Take Route 3 South to Exit 14 (Route 228). At the end of the ramp, turn left and follow Route 228 approximately 4 miles to a red blinking light. Continue straight through the light and follow Central Street through yellow blinking light in Hingham Square. Directly after the yellow blinking light, turn left onto North Street, and then right at the Lincoln Statue onto Lincoln Street. Follow Lincoln Street to intersection of Route 3A and bear right onto Downer Avenue. Take the first left onto Conditto Road. Allerton House at Harbor Park is directly behind Harbor House Rehabilitation and Nursing Center.

Take Route 3 North to Exit 14 (Route 228). At the end of the ramp, turn right. Proceed on Route 228 as instructed above.

And just to get everyone thinking, we will have our "Bring a Book/Buy a Book" table at the January meeting. All donations will go towards the Lincoln Recognition Award. So scour your bookcase and save your singles to help From Route 3 North:

(another!) good cause.

Many thanks, Beatrice

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year everyone!

I hope you've recovered from your holiday celebrations and are ready for 2012. Our branch ended last year with a wonderful and very successful fundraiser/holiday social organized by Lynne O'Brien and Susan Mahan. The support of many branch members in working on the committee, donating auction items, and purchasing items made this event a fun and special evening. Thanks to all who worked so hard on this important project for our branch.

If you haven't had a chance to read it yet, please take a few minutes to go to the AAUW site to review the new report on sexual harassment in schools. The report entitled *Crossing the Line (2011)* presents the results from a nation-wide survey done in May and June of last year and documents the prevalence of sexual harassment in grades 7-12 for both girls and boys. While the statistics present a picture of an often challenging environment in which our children and youth must endure taunts and bullying, it also presents a number of excellent suggestions for alleviating the problem and changing the culture. It's good to know our organization is taking such a proactive role in improving this situation.

Next up is our Soup and Salad/Book Discussion evening on January 10th. Hope to see you there.

Pat

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

To help with your reading schedule, the book club is planning to discuss these books on these dates:

January 10 -- *Russian Winter* by D. White (Soup & Salad night)

Feb 21 -- *People of the Book*** by G. Brooks

March 20 -- *Forgotten Garden*** by Kate Morton

April 12 -- *Paris Wife* by Paula McLain

May 15 -- *Invisible Bridge* by Julie Orringer

For the ** books I will have 10 copies from the Cohasset Library to loan out (30 days before the meeting). Let me know if you'd like one.

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PUBLIC POLICY

NEWS

A Force of Nature: Please find three articles from different web sites below which concern Meryl Streep and her appearance on the January cover of Vogue. The articles are noteworthy not just because Meryl Streep is 62 years old and possibly the oldest Vogue cover girl ever. Detailed coverage is also given to Meryl Streep's enthusiastic support of the National Women's Museum, which still is lacking approval from Congress to begin building on federal land adjacent to

the Mall. Her upcoming appearance in the “Iron Lady”, representing Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of Great Britain is also discussed.

<http://www.vogue.com/magazine/article/meryl-streep-force-of-nature/>

<http://www.fashionfoiegras.com/2011/12/meryl-streep-and-national-womens.html>

<http://nymag.com/daily/fashion/2011/12/meryl-streep-is-anna-wintours-oldest-cover-girl.html>

After Health Care Reform, Millions More Young Adults now have Coverage: Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sibelius announced that the number of young adults with health insurance has increased by 2.5 million since 2010. According to an analysis by the National Center for Health Statistics, this increase in coverage was due to the provision of the health care law that allows young adults to remain on their parents’ plans until the age of 26. The administration states that the number of young adults with health care coverage will continue to increase when the law is fully implemented, as it will become illegal for insurance companies to deny coverage to people with preexisting conditions.

Obama to Give State of the Union Address January 24, 2012: House Speaker John Boehner invited president Obama to give his State of the Union address on January 24 before a joint session of Congress. The Constitution requires that Congress formally invite the president to give this annual address. The State of the Union is an opportunity for the president to address the challenges the nation faces as well as outline his policy priorities for the coming year. The White House accepted the date, which falls between the South Carolina and Florida Republican primaries.

Student Loan Debt has Ballooned Since 1990: In the last 20 years, the amount of debt that college students have had to take on to pay for their education has skyrocketed. In 1990, public college debt averaged \$9,798, while private debt averaged \$15,054; today, average student debt tops \$25,000. This graphic shows the expansion in student loan debt from 1990 to 2011. Many of those seeking to understand the motivations of Occupy Wall Street demonstrators consider the troubling and growing burden of college loans debt as a major contributing factor.

“The Protester” Named Person of the Year: Time Magazine selected its annual person of the year, naming “the protester” the most influential person of 2011. Sparked by a fruit vendor in Tunisia, protests in 2011 have done everything from oust authoritarian dictators to draw attention to economic and social inequality around the world. From those in the Arab Spring uprisings to those in Greece and Russia to those participating in the Occupy Wall Street movement, protestors of 2011 “didn’t just voice their complaints,” says Time. “They changed the world.”

Congressional Holiday Spirit Crosses the Aisle: More than half of the U.S. Senate reached across the aisle to spread holiday cheer, participating in the first ever “Senate Secret Santa.” Initiated by Senator Al Franken (D-MN), the exchange of \$10 gifts to be exchanged between senators of different parties was aimed at helping members of Congress briefly set aside partisanship in favor of the holiday spirit.

Administration Plans to Establish Protections for Home Care Workers: The Obama Administration announced that it will propose establishing federal protections for home-care workers. Home-care workers have been exempted from the Fair Labor Standards Act, which ensures minimum wage and overtime, since the bill passed in 1974. While most home-care workers today receive above minimum wage, they are often not paid overtime and not compensated for their time spent traveling between patients’ houses. Currently 92 percent of home-care workers are women. In a statement, president Obama stated that “in-home care workers across the country should not have to wait a moment longer for a fair wage.”

High School Students Underprepared for Workforce: A new study has found that, upon graduation, two-fifths of high school students are not prepared for traditional college or for career training. The study, “The Underserved Third: How Our Educational Structures Populate an Educational Underclass,” from researchers at Johns Hopkins University and the

University of Arizona, indicates that “one-third of high school students complete the modern college-preparatory track, and another one-quarter graduate from career-preparatory programs. The remaining high school population, an estimated 40 percent, do neither.” The researchers report that this unprepared group is “a virtual underclass of students,” many of whom finish high school with a transcript full of general education courses and few prospects for success either in traditional college or in professional training.

Women’s Labor Participation Rate Lowest in Almost 20 Years: Women continue to struggle more than men in the post-recession job market. Bureau of Labor Statistics data released last week showed that the unemployment rate decreased in November – to 8.6 percent – and that women gained more than half of the 120,000 jobs added. Yet the Institute for Women’s Policy Research analyzed the new data and found that the job gap between men and women remains significant at 1.5 million jobs. Of the 1.6 million jobs added between November 2010 and November 2011, IWPR found that 474,000 were filled by women and 1,126,000 were filled by men. In addition, the female labor force participation rate fell from 58.2 percent in October to 57.9 percent in November – a decrease of more than 300,000 women and the lowest female labor force participation rate since September 1993. Female dropouts have exceeded male dropouts recently in part because state and local government layoffs have disproportionately hit women.

Education Department Releases Data on Bullying Laws, Policies: A new U.S. Department of Education report shows that from 1999 to 2010 more than 120 bills were passed by state legislatures to either introduce or amend statutes that address bullying in schools. Twenty-one new bills were enacted in 2010 and eight additional bills were signed into law through April 30, 2011. The report, Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies, summarized current methods in the 46 states with anti-bullying laws and the 41 states that have created anti-bullying policies as models for schools. AAUW submitted comments to the Department of Education that helped shape the survey.

FBI Board Votes to Broaden Definition of Rape: An FBI advisory board voted to update their narrow definition of rape, which defines rape as “carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will.” This definition – in place since 1929 – is narrower than the one used by many police departments around the country, and women’s rights advocates say it leads to the under-counting of thousands of sexual assaults each year. The new terminology voted on by the board says rape is “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.” FBI Director Robert Mueller now has to approve the definition change.

U.S. Foreign Aid to Promote Gay Rights: President Barack Obama announced that the United States will begin to use foreign aid to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights around the world. Agencies such as the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development are to direct foreign aid to assist gays and lesbians facing human rights violations and to protect gay and lesbian refugees and asylum seekers. The administration’s announcement marks the first official U.S. policy to fight gay and lesbian human rights abuses abroad.

Report: For-Profit College Students Less Likely to Succeed: A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report showed that for-profit college students have lower success rates than students at nonprofit and public colleges. The report controlled for socioeconomic status and other characteristics. Only 4 percent of for-profit college students receive a bachelor’s degree, and the students have higher rates of unemployment and earn less post-school, the report said. For-profit college students also borrow more and default on their loans at higher rates. The GAO report supports results found by a Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee investigation of for-profit colleges.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY UPDATES

House approves \$1 Trillion Omnibus: the House approved the \$1 trillion omnibus with a 296-121 vote. The bill will now go to the Senate, and then to the White House and avert a government shutdown. After debate, the House approved the bill, funding most areas, including spending for Defense, Energy and Water, Financial Services and General Government, Homeland Security, Interior, Labor/Health and Human Services, Legislative Branch, Military Construction/VA, and State/Foreign Operations through the 2012 fiscal year. The House failed to vote against some areas,

such as standards and bans the use of District of Columbia funds for abortion. AAUW will continue monitoring this process for its impact on AAUW priorities and programs that serve students, the elderly, and working families.

Senators Call on Sebelius to Explain Plan B Ruling: Fourteen U.S. Senators sent a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, urging her to provide the specific scientific basis for her decision to overrule the FDA last week and keep Plan B behind drug store counters. The senators wrote, “On behalf of the millions of women we represent, we want to be assured that this and future decisions affecting women’s health will be based on medical and scientific evidence” as opposed to politics.

Secretary Sebelius stated earlier this week that she would be willing to reconsider making Plan B more widely accessible if Teva Pharmaceuticals, the pill’s producer, provides additional data showing that girls as young as 11 can safely understand and use the emergency contraceptive. The medical and women’s communities remain baffled by Sebelius’s decision, as Plan B’s extremely mild potential side-effects make it safer to use than Tylenol, Advil, Prilosec OTC, Benadryl, and Robitussin – all available without a prescription.

As a strong proponent of women’s reproductive rights, AAUW is extremely disappointed in the administration’s decision to restrict access to Plan B. AAUW encourages efforts to increase education and access to emergency contraception for all women, including minors, and believes emergency contraception should be available without a prescription or restriction. Greater awareness of and improved access to emergency contraception could help reduce the rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion in the U.S. AAUW supports the right of every woman to obtain medically accurate information about and access to safe and comprehensive reproductive health services. This is also why AAUW supports comprehensive sex education programs.

Hearing Examines Federal Grant-making Standards for Programs Serving Human Trafficking: The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing to examine the process by which federal grants are awarded to institutions providing services to victims of human trafficking. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) currently receives \$2 billion a year in federal grants, but objects to the government’s requirement that institutions receiving grants provide information and referrals on the full spectrum of reproductive health services to victims.

Catholics for Choice provided testimony, urging the Department of Health and Human Services not to award federal grants to institutions that favor religious ideology over comprehensive reproductive healthcare for victims. “Women who have suffered the incomprehensible physical and emotional abuses of human trafficking should be assured they may access the best possible care for combating the myriad healthcare problems that can result from continued abuse,” said Jon O’Brien, President of Catholics for Choice. “Therefore, it is in the best interests of all that only those social service agencies committed to providing access to the full range of healthcare services do so. Women need support and compassionate care when they seek reproductive healthcare services, not judgment and disdain.”

AAUW provided written testimony for the hearing, expressing our commitment to ensuring that all women -- particularly those who are most vulnerable -- have access to comprehensive reproductive health care information, referrals, and services that meet their unique needs.

Senate Blocks Obama’s Appointments: the Senate blocked the confirmation of two Obama administration appointees. Caitlin Halligan, who was slated to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals in DC, and Richard Cordray, who was to be the first director of the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, both failed to get the 60 votes necessary to avoid a filibuster. The Obama administration expressed its frustration following Cordray’s failed confirmation, stating that opposition to the nominees, both seen as highly qualified, “makes absolutely no sense.”