

AAUW NEWS OF NOTE

President: Sheila Doherty (781) 848-8122
Membership VPs: Patricia McKay (781) 337-3375 and Hollie Bagley (781) 749-6274
Program VPs: Diane Morash (781) 749-749-8756 and Jane Moore (781) 659-9443

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 May 2008

CALENDAR

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| May 2, Friday | Deadline for reservations for annual celebration dinner
Contact Lynn Howard or Sandy Carle |
| May 13, Tuesday | Celebration dinner, 6:30 PM
Granite Grille, Granite Street, Braintree |
| May 15, Thursday | Girls Game Night, 7 PM
Home of Sandy Carle
RSVP to Sandy , scarle@aol.com , (781) 340-6281 |
| May 22, Thursday | Adventures in Dining, 6:30 M
Blue Pointe Bistro, 61 Washington Street, Weymouth Landing,
www.BluePointeBistro.com
RSVP by May 18 to Hollie, hollie@gallivan.org , (781) 749-6274 |
| May 22, Thursday | Declutter Bugs, 4:30 pm
Panera's, Derby Street Shoppes, Hingham |
| June 10, Tuesday | Board Meeting, 7:00 PM
Home of Patricia McKay |
| June 17, Tuesday | Program Planning Meeting, 7:00 PM
Home of Jane Moore |
| June 19, Thursday | Girls Game Night, 7 PM
Home of Chrisanne Gregoire
RSVP to Chrisanne, cgreg@comcast.net , (781) 749-5493 |

AUGUST BOARD MEETING TO BE ANNOUNCED

BRANCH MEETING

Reminder: Please email your reservation for the AAUW banquet on May 13 at Granite Grill by May 2. The choices are: Statler Chicken or Baked Haddock. The cost is \$35. Hope to see you then. Sandy and Lynn

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a convention! As first time attendee, Deanne Noiseux remarked at the annual meeting "It was more than she thought it would be". As we made our way south to Hyannis we were thinking about the wonderful speakers and were not disappointed - they were great. The keynote speaker Annie Houle who is a coworker of Evelyn Murphy, spoke about wage equity. Together they present "Start Smart Workshops" to college women. Our State President elect, Beryl Domingo, gave a bar graph presentation of wage equity "pictures sometimes speak louder than words." Deborah Peckham, a patent lawyer, explained the importance of copyrights and patents. Diane Flaherty discussed identity theft and how to avoid it. Our own Sharon Lemoff was also a guest speaker. On Saturday night LAF litigant Michael Burch spoke to us about his case against the University of California. At the Annual Meeting on Sunday the Hingham Area Branch received a Membership Award and a Recognition Award for our growth in membership and our mission-driven meetings and events. Pat Bologna was congratulated on her term as State President. Beryl Domingo (Taunton Area Branch) will be our next State President.

Our last meeting this year will be our 40th Anniversary Dinner to be held at the Granite Grille in Braintree. We hope to see you all there on May 13th. As the year ends I want to thank my board members for their efforts and time spent this year on Programs and Membership. Thanks to all of our members also. I'm looking forward to another great year. Sheila

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group would like to invite everyone to join us on Tuesday May 6th at 7PM when we will be discussing *Tall Grass* by Sandra Dallas. We'll be meeting at Carol Sullivan-Hanley's home at 79 Turner Road in Scituate.

In addition to May's book selection, the group has selected the following titles for next year in hopes that members will have time during the summer to read one or more of them and join us for discussion throughout the fall and winter. We'll be meeting on the first Tuesday of each month.

October – Snow Flower and the Secret Fan by Lisa See

November – Dead Man Walking by Sister Helen Prejean

February - Saving Fish from Drowning by Amy Tan

March – People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks

April – American Bloomsbury: Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau: Their Lives, Their Loves, Their Work by Susan Cheever*

*For this month's discussion, we're hoping to organize a Saturday trip to Concord to visit the Concord Museum and have lunch at the Colonial Inn to discuss the book.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

At the AAUW-MA Annual Meeting the Hingham Area Branch was the recipient of two awards which really belong to you, the branch members. The Hingham Area Branch was recognized as an outstanding branch with the Branch Pride Recognition Award and our branch was honored with a membership award for membership development. Thanks to all of you for your work to make these possible. Our model of working together as a team is one that deserves replicating. Please be sure to enroll all 2008 graduates of a two or four year degree program as AAUW members using the **Give-a-Grad-a-Gift** application found online at www.aauw.org. Log in to the Member Center and choose Membership Campaigns from the dropdown menu under Member Center. "**Expose her to the power** that comes from belonging to a national women-led organization of more than 100,000 members who believe in and advance equity and education for women and girls. **Expand her networking opportunities** through career development opportunities and community action projects. She will experience the rewards of working with and learning from successful AAUW mentors. **Keep her current on the events and people that affect her life** as she receives *Mission in Action*, *AAUW Outlook*, Action Network alerts, and more. **Increase her buying power** with access to discounted health and dental insurance, auto insurance, AAUW research reports, education loans and other members-only benefits." The membership is **FREE** and you can enroll as many graduates as you want. AAUW-MA and the Hingham Area Branch will waive dues for Give-a-Grad-a-Gift enrollees, but you must notify the branch. Your recent graduate isn't in the Hingham area? No problem, she will be enrolled at the Association level and can then join any branch in the country. And speaking of across the country, if you know of anyone who belongs to Facebook, tell them to join the AAUW group online. AAUW needs to continue building visibility with the younger generations.

Remember, **by joining AAUW you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so all women have a fair chance.**

Patricia McKay and Hollie Bagley

A note from Hollie: It is with mixed feelings that I step away from my position as Co-Membership VP, but I am termed out and it is time to let new blood take over. I am proud of our membership growth and know we will continue to grow under the able leadership of Patricia McKay and Pat Laidler. A personal thank you to all of you who took to heart our message month after month by recruiting a new member or two. For the rest of you, it is still not too late. And a special thank you to Sheila for nominating me as an Outstanding Branch Leader. It was a true honor to accept the award at the annual meeting. It has been an honor to work with all of you and I will continue to do so in whatever capacity is needed. AAUW is indeed worth it and I am the better because of it.

Chit Chat: First there were two, and now there are five. **Chrisanne Gregoire's** fifth grandchild, a girl, arrived early to daughter, Gail. **Pat Granahan** is finally back in her renovated Hingham house. And look what appeared in the March 13, 2008 Yesterday column of the *Hingham Journal*: "**1983--** Fourteen members of REACH (Responsible Energy Alternatives Committee of Hingham) met with the light board this week to ask it to divest Hingham's share of the Seabrook N. H. nuclear plant. REACH chairman Patricia Granahan pointed out the escalations in construction costs of the plants which will result in increased power rates and increased funding costs to cover construction. Pat Granahan of Croydon Rd., a longtime critic of nuclear power, has announced her candidacy for the Hingham Municipal Light Board. Mrs. Granahan, a graduate of Regis College, is an active member of AAUW, and the League of Women Voters." And now, 25 years later, Pat is still working for responsible energy alternatives! The wheels of progress move slowly. Good thing Pat is persistent. Another of our members also received newspaper coverage. **Shirley Rydell** was seen in several photos of the Hingham Garden Club as they prepared an exhibit for the Flower Show at the Boston Expo Center. And talk about newspaper coverage, **Gwen Sayian's** latest AAUW Corner column was a masterpiece combining information from both our March and April meetings. You may read it elsewhere in this newsletter or online on the Hingham Area Branch web page. Congratulations, Gwen! **Deanne Noiseux** has become the latest convert to AAUW-MA state meetings after **Ginny Giordano** invited her to attend. In Deanne's words, "It was much better than I expected. Everyone should attend." Joining Deanne and Ginny at the Convention were **Pat Bologna, Sheila Doherty, Hollie Bagley, Sharon Lemoff, Ruthanne Kennedy, Sandy Carle** and **Catherine Schindewolf**. A good time was had by all. Pat was ecstatic to be leading her last state convention and annual meeting while the Hingham Area contingent cheered her on. Thank you, Pat, for your outstanding role as AAUW-MA president. We are grateful and proud.

We note with sadness the passing of long time former member, **Janet Campbell**. Janet and her husband graciously hosted several of our holiday get-togethers in their unique Scituate home.

AAUW CORNER/ Women's wages have not caught up The Hingham Journal April 10, 2008

By Gwen Sayian History. Just the mention of the word is enough to strike... boredom in the heart of schoolchildren. I remember I had three questions after my fourth grade field trip to Paul Revere's house and the Old State House. Why did they paint everything brown? Who were all those old people with stern faced portraits wearing funny hairdos and clothes? And what does all this old stuff have to do with me anyway?

History, or social studies as it's now called in school, is hopefully a bit more interesting to children than it was when I was in fourth grade. Certainly the textbooks seem to have improved, or maybe that's me. Age tends to heighten one's interest in history, since at some point in adulthood one realizes that our predecessors did know a thing or two after all.

Dr. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, historian, author, and Executive Director of the Congregational Library in Boston, spoke at an AAUW meeting about the history of woman in the Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century. Unlike my fourth grade history class, I looked forward to attending her presentation, and wasn't disappointed. My reaction to the portraits hasn't changed. They are still stern faced people, with funny hairdos that make you appreciate your blow dryer and a good stylist.

I came away with a renewed sense of how far women have come in the last hundred years. Your great grandmother couldn't vote when she was your age. A woman's place was in the home. One hundred years ago, women were just getting the right to own property. Previously, property that would now pass to a woman instead became the property of

her husband, father, or closest male relative. This left women financially dependent. Today we have a woman candidate for president of the United States.

Socially, women were viewed as morally and religiously superior to men, but not suitable for the rough and tumble business world, and certainly not politics. The temperance movement of mid 1800's became women's first rallying cry for social change. Because of women's perceived moral superiority, it was acceptable for women to fight for temperance, though doing so wasn't easy. Back then, men were paid in cash. On their way home, they walked by multiple, strategically placed saloons. Unfortunately, after a hard week's work, and a stop or two along the way, many men came home drunk with little left in their pockets. We've all seen pictures of those brave bands of women camped out in front of bars, singing and praying for God's help in the war against the demon rum.

The Civil War and the abolishment of slavery became another and sometimes competing job for newly organized women's groups. The moral issues of slavery were accepted as part of women's sphere of concern. Yet this put women's groups in a clash with organized religion because women's organizations were becoming more controversial as they moved from issues of morality to human rights. It also made the leaders of these groups even more aware that if they were going to have a say in policy decisions and law, they were going to need representation in the government.

After the Civil War, suffrage for women became their main thrust. Then World War I put a temporary halt to the movement as women joined the work force, taking the places of men directly involved in the conflict. With the end of the war in 1918, suffragists as they were known then, actively marched and protested for the national right of women to vote. Many were arrested and jailed. And just to remind us all, the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote wasn't passed until 1920. It's less than 100 years since women in this country finally earned the right to national representation in our government.

Now most of us think the work of feminism is pretty much over. However, you may be as surprised as I was to learn how big an issue equal pay still is. A female high school graduate goes straight to work at \$20,000 a year. Over her lifetime, she will make \$700,000 less than her male counterpart. A female college graduate starts off with a \$30,000 starting salary. Over her career, she will make \$1.2 million less than the young man at her side. A young woman graduate in business, medicine or law and begins her first job at \$70,000. Over her lifetime she will make \$2 million less than her equally qualified male co-worker. Do you know anyone who will be affected, or has been affected by the wage gap? I'm sure you do.

Evelyn Murphy, former Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, now Director of the Wage Project, spoke about this topic at the most recent AAUW meeting. She is the author of "Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men - and What To Do About it." She is a compelling and persuasive speaker armed with facts derived from national employment data. She says the wage gap is insidious starting out with small differences that grow over time equaling "compound losses." "This is not men verses women," states Ms Murphy. "Men are in it with us as husbands, fathers, and uncles." She points out everyone in a family, male or female, is hurt by the wage gap. It's an issue of long-term pervasive discrimination. Fifteen years ago the wage gap was twenty-three cents, and it hasn't budged since. You can find more information at her web site www.wageproject.org, and ways you can become involved.

We may have come a long way in the last hundred years, but we aren't there yet.

Holders of associate's or bachelor's degrees who live in the South Shore towns from Plymouth to Quincy are welcome to join the Hingham Area Branch. To learn more about AAUW, call Patricia McKay at 781-337-3375 or email: hollie@gallivan.org. Visit the branch web site at aauw-ma.org and follow the links to the Hingham Branch.

Gwen Sayian is a Hingham resident and member of AAUW.

HINGHAM AAUW PUBLIC POLICY BULLETIN

Teen Pregnancy Rate Drops:

According the Center for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics, teen pregnancy, abortion, and overall birth rates have decreased from 1990 to 2004. Teen pregnancy has dropped 38 percent while abortion has dropped 50 percent, and the overall birthrate has dropped 33 percent. The NCHS pointed out that the teen pregnancy rates in 2004 were at a "historic low." In 1990, 90 percent of pregnancies were planned; in 2003, 86 percent were planned. The study

found these rates to be differing among white, black, and Hispanic women. Seventy-three percent of black women, 86 percent of Hispanic women, and 89 percent of white women in 2003 claimed that their pregnancies were planned. Suggestions for reasoning behind these discrepancies include differences in the usage and success rate of contraceptive devices among the three races and ethnicities. The study's leader, Stephanie Ventura, pointed out that 45 percent of planned pregnancies are by unmarried women, not necessarily teenagers. She suggests that women are less likely to have an abortion than they were in 1990 because it is more common to be an unmarried mother. She also noted that teen pregnancies have dropped, most likely because of the greater popularity of contraceptive usage.

Women Struggle in Economic Downturn:

The majority staff of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions released a report today outlining and quantifying the specific impact of the current recession on women. The report explains that, as a recession looms, families are concerned about the state of the economy. In fact, well over half of all men and women worry a great deal about the economy. Women have, in contrast to previous recessions, fared significantly worse than men in the current economy, having suffered more job losses and wage reductions. Furthermore, women feel the effects of economic downturn more harshly than men because they have fewer assets. In times like these many families are forced to draw on savings or rely on a government safety net. Women have fewer overall assets, a result of disparate wages between men and women, and so they are less secure in a recession.

Many Students Left Without Federal Education Loan Option:

A recent report by the Project on Student Debt, uncovered a startling reality: more than one million students in the U.S. are enrolled in community colleges that have opted out of the federal loan program. A Federal student loan is a positive option for students who struggle to afford higher education. The interest rate is low and fixed, fees are minimal, and the federal government pays the interest for most recipients while they are still in school, and afterwards if they face certain economic distress. And, as the Project explains, one of the most important aspects of federal student loans is that they are offered to students regardless of their income or credit history. Students without this option often borrow money in riskier and more expensive ways, such as credit cards or private student loans. As college costs soar, students are being left with fewer options to obtain the education they need in our economy.

Affirmative Action Challenges Continue in TX, Delayed in OK

A new lawsuit was recently filed against the University of Texas at Austin charging that, because the school has had such success in achieving diversity through its percent plan, it should not be permitted to consider race in admissions. According to Inside Higher Ed, the school has achieved diversity by admitting the top 10 percent of graduates from high schools, which are mostly segregated by housing patterns. However, the University has been trying to have the state repeal the 10 percent plan for years, saying that they now have the right to use affirmative action, under the ruling of the Supreme Court's decision in the University of Michigan case, and that the percent plan deprives them of flexibility. Affirmative action advocates in the state say the percent plan which was the states' response to a previous ban on affirmative action is still needed to ensure diversity. In Oklahoma, however, supporters of a proposed ballot measure to affirmative action in public higher education and employment have withdrawn the measure from consideration due to lack of the necessary signatures, the Tulsa World reported. While the petitions to put the measures on the ballot were submitted with more than the signatures needed, the Secretary of State's Office found many duplicates.

Citigroup Settles Sex Discrimination Lawsuit

Citigroup Inc. has agreed to pay \$33 million to settle the class-action gender discrimination lawsuit that came about in March of 2005, according to Reuters. The money will be distributed among the approximately 2,500 current and former female brokers from the Smith Barney unit who claimed they were not allowed to compete fairly for new accounts, promotions and pay, and were given limited training and sales support compared to their male coworkers. Both sides of the issue agreed to appoint an "industrial psychologist," who will ensure that changes are correctly implemented. They also agreed to designate a diversity monitor who, along with the industrial psychologist, must remain with the company for at least four years. The hearing for this proposed settlement will be held on April 30.

National Elementary Honor Society Launched

The National Elementary Honor Society, a program aimed to recognize the accomplishments of students in grades 4-6, has recently been officially launched. The National Association of Secondary School Principals—the head of the National Honor Society—worked with the National Association of Elementary School Principals to make this program a reality. They aim to recognize elementary school students' overall accomplishments, both inside and outside the classroom. NEHS honors those students who take part in community activities while performing well academically, in the hopes of developing children with strong leadership and service skills. The NEHS joins the already implemented NHS for high school students, and the National Junior Honor Society for middle school students, whose total membership exceeds 1 million. The NEHS plans spread their values and opportunities to a new age group.

Georgia School District Backs Away from Single Sex Classrooms, For Now

According to the Associated Press, Superintendent Shawn McCollough's plans to segregate schools in Georgia's Greene County have been dropped. The plan to create single-sex classrooms throughout the entire school district was developed in response to poor test scores, high dropout rates, and teen pregnancies. Although the plan was approved by the school board, parents fiercely opposed it. According to federal law, such single-sex classrooms are allowed, but only with the consent of the students' parents. Under this plan, however, the parents were not given the option of publicly funded coeducation for their children, thus making its implementation illegal. As reported in the Feb. 29 edition of Washington Update, even Leonard Sax, the head of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education, was not supportive of McCollough's plans. Although the initial plans have been aborted, there is still talk about creating some single-sex schools in the county. In a related story, the Arizona state legislature passed a bill last week reiterating a federal law that allows single-sex classrooms, but many question the need for such legislation and for the programs themselves, the Arizona Republic reported. A school district in Tucson last year abandoned their single-sex classroom program after determining that there were no significant advantages to it and that the classes "allowed for less flexibility and created scheduling conflicts for some students." Calvin Baker, the superintendent of the Vail Unified School District in Arizona, said, "The teachers reported that they did not notice a significant difference one way or another. While single-sex classes may be good for some students, it is not the no-cost silver bullet that will fix education."

Michigan High School Sports Group Pays Big in Discrimination Ruling

According to the Detroit News, a federal judge ruled Tuesday that the Michigan High School Athletic Association must pay \$7.4 million in legal fees racked up in a decade-long court battle to maintain a sports scheduling system that discriminated against girls. As reported in the April 7, 2007 edition of Washington Update, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to take on the case of Communities for Equity vs. Michigan High School Athletic Association. The lawsuit, first filed in 1998 by a pair of Michigan moms, claimed that Michigan's practice of slotting several girls' high school sports at different times of the year than high schools and colleges in the rest of the country was discriminatory. In December 2001, a U.S. District judge ruled the sports seasons discriminated against girls in violation of Title IX, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, and Michigan's Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act because, among other things, the current seasons were two to three weeks shorter than those of girls everywhere else in the country and of the boys' seasons. The switching of seasons last September for girls' basketball and volleyball and girls' and boys' tennis and golf affected nearly 56,000 girls and 16,000 boys in hundreds of school districts throughout the state.

ACTION: AAUW believes that Title IX's impact on women's athletic participation is one of the country's greatest success stories. It has changed the playing field dramatically for girls and women in sports. AAUW believes that expansion of athletic opportunities for girls and women must continue at both the high school and college levels. If you haven't yet done so, please use AAUW's Two-Minute Activist online to urge your representatives to cosponsor the High School Athletics Accountability Act (**H.R. 901**).

Report Shows Low High School Graduation Rates in U.S. Cities

A new report released by the America's Promise Alliance found that 17 of the country's 50 largest cities had high school graduation rates lower than 50 percent, the Associate Press reported. While approximately 70 percent of high school students graduate on time nationally, the report found that only about half of the students in public schools in cities do so. Several cities have much lower rates, including Detroit (24.9 percent), Indianapolis (30. percent), and Cleveland (34.1 percent). At the same time the report was released, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced that all states will soon be required to use one federal formula to calculate graduation and dropout rates. According to the New York Times, the requirement would be one of the most far-reaching requirements made by any education secretary, affecting all of the nation's 14,000 public high schools. The move to a standard graduation rate formula would address a weakness of the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act, which requires states to report high school graduation rates but lets each state set its own formula for calculation of the rates.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

House Passes Student Loan Legislation

The House passed (383-27) the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (H.R. 5717). The bill, introduced by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA), is designed to ensure the availability of federal loans for college students. The bill would raise the loan limit of students dependent on their parents from \$23,000 to \$31,000; independent students' limit would increase from \$46,000 to \$57,500. It would also allow parents that have taken out a PLUS loan to have a six month window of opportunity after their child's graduation to pay off the loan. Although the current financial crisis supposedly has not limited the loans students have access to, supporters of this bill are thinking preemptively, and hope that it's implementation will ensure that student loans continue to be available to any and all that seek them.

Under the bill, The Department of Education would buy loans from lenders in the Federal Family Education Loan program, giving them enough capital to make new loans. Already at least 57 lenders have dropped out of the federal loan program. In addition, Sallie Mae, the nation's largest lender of student loans, announced it lost \$104 million in the first quarter, and stated that almost all of its new loans will be made at a loss. Also, JP Morgan/Chase and Citigroup have said they will be more selective in choosing the schools they lend to. This likely means they will back away from lending to schools with high default rates, which tend to be community colleges and historically minority-serving institutions. However, this legislation ensures that all students have access to loans even if private lenders stop participating in the federal student loan program.

Congresswoman Sanchez Introduces PACT Act

Congresswoman Linda Sanchez (D-CA) introduced the Pathways Advancing Career Training (PACT) Act, aimed at helping states provide programs that train women for employment in occupations in which they are underrepresented. The act also provides states with help in creating programs for single parents looking to reenter the workforce. Female-headed families would benefit most from PACT, as almost 60% of impoverished children are a part of such families. ***A striking number of women in the U.S.—over 6.4 million single mothers and almost 4.3 million displaced homemakers—live in poverty. PACT would also benefit employers, by providing companies with the skilled workforce they need to compete globally.***

AAUW believes that career and technical education (CTE) is increasingly important for women and girls seeking to earn their way in a competitive marketplace. AAUW's 2007-2009 Public Policy Program states, "to achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women, AAUW advocates programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the work force, including nontraditional occupations."

House Holds Hearing on FMLA

The Workforce Protections subcommittee of the House Education and Labor committee celebrated "The 15th Anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act: Achievements and Next Steps" in a hearing held on April 10. One of the main points, brought up by Chair Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), was that America is significantly lagging in this area compared to other countries, and should be a leader in "family-friendly policies." Those in attendance did, however, acknowledge the FMLA's expansion which now provides leave for the family members of wounded service members. Although the FMLA has been successful in helping millions of Americans in the past 15 years, the 12 weeks of leave is unpaid which means many workers cannot afford to take it even when they need to. Right now, the Department of Labor is working on new regulations and will finalize them within the year. Some believe that changes do not need to be made to the law, but that it needs to be expanded so that more Americans can receive its benefits.

Congressional Employees May Get Paid Parental Leave

On April 15, the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia subcommittee of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act (HR 5781) in a 7-3 vote. This legislation would give federal employees four weeks of paid parental leave. This is half of the originally proposed 8 weeks paid leave. Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), the original sponsor and long time supporter of this bill, acknowledged the compromises that must be made in the process of policy making, and views the bill as a step in the right direction. Co-sponsor and committee Chairman Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif) pointed out that while this legislation is going to make America a leader in family-friendly policies, it is still "a fiscally sound amendment." ***But the subcommittee's ranking republican, Kenny Marchant of Texas, believes that while such legislation would be beneficial, it is not necessary—especially considering the government's economic situation. The main concern, shared among all republicans on the subcommittee, was the cost.***

ACTION: While the FMLA has been an enormous gain for millions of workers, it is unpaid and millions of Americans still do not have the option of taking time off to care for family members or themselves without putting their jobs, their healthcare benefits, or their family stability at risk. AAUW believes that creating work environments that help employees balance the responsibilities of work and family is good public policy—good for workers, good for families, and good for business. AAUW advocated for the FMLA for nearly a decade and has long supported flexible workplace policies to address the family responsibilities of employees. If you haven't already done so, use AAUW's Two-Minute Activist online to urge your representative to support the Healthy Families Act (**H.R. 1542**), which would provide full-time employees with seven paid sick days a year to be used for their own medical needs or to tend to the medical needs of a child, spouse or parent.

Senate Fight over Judicial Nominations Continues

According to Congressional Quarterly, the war over Senate confirmation of judicial nominations continues. Even as the Senate confirmed (voice vote) Catharina Haynes to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Senate Republicans threatened to block a patent bill (S. 1145) sponsored by Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) as a means of retaliating for what they claim is slow movement on appellate court nominations on the part of their Democratic

counterparts. Chairman Leahy has also mentioned invoking the “Thurmond rule,” a longstanding Senate practice whereby only non-controversial judicial nominations with the support of Senate leaders and top Judiciary committee members advance in the months preceding a presidential election. The Hill reported that Democrats maintain that Bush has won confirmation of more than 86 percent of his nominees, compared with 75 percent of Clinton judges who were confirmed and that more lower court judges were confirmed last year than in each of the previous three years under Republican leadership. *According to the Alliance for Justice, President Bush has appointed more than 30 percent of the federal judiciary, including nearly 300 judges to the federal courts, 57 court of appeals judges and two Supreme Court justices.*

AAUW monitors the judicial nominations process because so many of our fundamental rights and liberties have been established and are protected by the federal courts. The confirmation of extremist, activist judges to the federal bench undermines a fair, balanced, and independent judiciary and could turn back the clock on decades of progress for women and girls.

New Jersey Senate Passes Paid Family Leave Bill

Paid family leave cleared another hurdle as the New Jersey State Senate passed (21-15) a bill to provide paid family leave for workers in the state. The Family Leave Insurance Act (A. 873/S. 786) allows workers to apply for up to six weeks off to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, or a sick parent, spouse, or child, during which time they could collect two-thirds of their pay up to \$524 a week. The benefit would be funded by employee contributions through a mandatory employee payroll tax, estimated at \$33 a year. The bill, however, allows small business owners to fire and replace an employee who takes family leave if the company says it cannot operate without a key position filled. The New Jersey Assembly passed the bill in March, and while the New Jersey State Senate had passed an earlier version of the bill, they had to vote again on the final version. Gov. Jon Corzine (D) has said he will sign the bill. California and Washington have already passed similar paid family leave laws.

ACTION: AAUW has long supported flexible workplace policies to address the family responsibilities of employees. AAUW advocated for nearly a decade to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was finally signed into law in 1993. However, millions of Americans do not have access to the Act's protections, and millions more cannot afford to take advantage of them through unpaid leave. Use AAUW's Two-Minute Activist online to urge your senators to support the Family Leave Insurance Act (**S. 1681**), which will provide up to eight weeks of paid leave to workers needing time off due to the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a child, spouse or parent with a serious illness, or to care for their own serious illness.

National Women's History Museum Unveils New Lesson Plans

The National Women's History Museum has released new lesson plans for their CyberExhibits. Each plan contains detailed information regarding objectives, prerequisites, materials (including downloadable handouts), and procedures, as well as homework and assessment ideas. Currently, the lesson plans available include topics on female journalists, women's voting rights, American women in the Olympics, and women in the progressive era.

Congress Returns

Members of Congress returned to Washington, D.C. this week. Items on their agenda include the economy, housing, and financial markets legislation, as well as continued budget resolution conference work. Both chambers will be in session for the next seven weeks before breaking for a week-long Memorial Day recess.

UNIQUELY AAUW

Help Pass the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

The Senate is expected to vote Wednesday, April 23, on legislation to address the Supreme Court's decision in the Ledbetter v. Goodyear case. Due to procedural rules and the timing of the vote, they will be voting on the House companion legislation to the Fair Pay Restoration Act (S. 1843), the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (**H.R. 2831**). While AAUW thanks you for your efforts on this legislation in the past, **WE URGE YOU TO CONTACT YOUR SENATORS AGAIN TODAY** to show a critical mass of support and send a strong signal that, as we approach Equal Pay Day, pay discrimination will not be tolerated.

Support College Women Student Leaders

The 2008 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders will take place June 5–7, 2008, at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Find out about this year's offerings, Women of Distinction Awards, registration, and scholarship opportunities by visiting the conference website at www.nccwsl.org. You can register online and also spread the word about the conference by using the "Recommend NCCWSL" feature on the website. Scholarships to the conference are a great way for branches and states to support college women student leaders. Learn more about this exciting opportunity to encourage leadership development among women college students.