



## ***connection***

DECEMBER 2025

### **From the President**

I have spent too much time trying to keep up with National politics of late. I find it frustrating. I decided I needed a plan. I have State and Federal Legislatures that represent me on speed dial. I call and leave a message stating my opinion. Prior to doing this, I have to spend time thinking about what I want to say. This is calming. I was motivated to do this when I read that AAUW Lobby Corps was celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Lobby Corps was begun by Ellen McGovern who was the AAUW Director of Legislative Activities. In 1975, there was only one other National Organization that was advocating for women's issues. By the end of 1975, Lobby Corps had 29 local members advocating for Women in Washington. AAUW opened a new chapter in its history. Since then, it has partnered with like minded organizations to

strengthen its stand on issues that empower women and girls. AAUW speaks out. This formula has proven to be successful.

As Branches and Branch members, you can coordinate with organizations that support your views. Many Branches have connected with like minded organizations and have new members to show for this coordinated effort. I see this as a win-win for all!!

Laura Desmarais  
[aauwilpres@gmail.com](mailto:aauwilpres@gmail.com)

**2026 AAUW-IL Convention | Save the date!**  
[Hilton Garden Inn](#) (Hotel reservation information  
coming in January!)  
April 24-25, 2026 in Rockford, IL



It's official, we have a confirmed date and location! Mark your calendar now so you can join members from across the state.

- Interested in presenting, submit a proposal at <https://forms.gle/r2aHCEDTcPFZcsF19>
- Have a speaker you want to hear from, send us the name/info at [aauwilprograms@gmail.com](mailto:aauwilprograms@gmail.com)

Kathy Battee-Freeman (Springfield) & Jo-An Takamoto-Sabonjian (Waukegan)  
Co - Vice Presidents - Programs

### **Public Policy**

It was announced last month that AAUW would join the League of Women Voters as part of the Grassroots Power Partners initiative. This is a key component of the *Unite and Rise 8.5 Campaign*. This partnership uplifts AAUW's commitment to open and fair elections. Read more about it [here](#).

Also in the news, AAUW released a statement warning that the new "Merit Rule" that the Department of Justice is using undermines civil rights safeguards. Read more about that [here](#). To keep up with all the latest news from the national office, check back [here](#) frequently.

Last but definitely not least, the Naperville Branch has taken the lead in planning a State Lobby Day for AAUW-IL members. We have been working with them to hammer out the details. The lobby day will be held in conjunction with the Women Employed Time to Care Coalition Lobby Day. Mark your calendar for March 25th and plan to visit the Illinois State Capitol with us. Stay tuned for more details. Thanks for your support of public policy efforts.

**Your voice. Your power. Your impact.**

Ken Olson and Karen Kortsch, Co-Directors of Public Policy

### **CALLING ALL LEADERS!**

The AAUW-IL, Inc. State Board needs you! Recruiting is underway for the officers to be elected for the 2026-28 term, which are:

- President (needs prior AAUW-IL, State Board experience)
- Co-V.P.(s) for Programs
- AAUW Funds Chair
- Nominating & Recruiting Chair
- Bylaws & Policy Director

Officers will be elected by electronic vote prior to the State Convention; terms begin July 1, 2026.

Having served on the State Board in many different capacities, including as President, I can attest to how rewarding it is to be part of a dedicated group of people who work hard to advance the mission of AAUW by supporting local branches and promoting National AAUW priorities. Serving on the State Board as become a bit easier since many meetings are held virtually

and everyone pitches in to help each other.

In addition, I have made lifelong friends from across the state who share in the commitment to achieve equity for women and girls. Rewarding work and lots of fun – and we would love for you to join us!

Please contact me at [danishouse@sbcglobal.net](mailto:danishouse@sbcglobal.net) for more information about the state board and the office that appeals to you! OR if you can recommend someone that you think would be an asset to our board PLEASE let me know and I will be happy to reach out to them.

Thanks for your help!

Andi Danis, Nominating & Recruiting Chair  
AAUW-IL, Inc. State Board

### **AAUW Illinois Google Groups Updates**

Did you know AAUW Illinois manages two Google Groups to facilitate communication among Illinois AAUW members? If you want to subscribe or think you subscribed but don't receive emails -- please notify us.

NOTE: Google Groups works best with gmail addresses. If your email domain differs (e.g. AOL, ATT, etc.), we'll try to subscribe you. If that doesn't work we'll let you know; you may need to use a gmail address.

### **AAUW IL Branch Leaders Group**

- **For:** Branch presidents / administrators (added automatically if we know who you are); other board members as requested by the Branch
- **To:** Share resources, problem-solve, build coalitions
- **How to join:** Email Sue Topp, [aauwildist@gmail.com](mailto:aauwildist@gmail.com), or Kate Skegg, [kskegg@gmail.com](mailto:kskegg@gmail.com)

### **AAUW IL Public Policy Group**

- **For:** Any Illinois AAUW member interested in public policy updates, action and discussion
- **How to join:** Email Karen Kortsch, [kmkortsch@gmail.com](mailto:kmkortsch@gmail.com) or Ken Olson, [keolson@prodigy.net](mailto:keolson@prodigy.net)

---

Sue Topp, AAUW-IL Branch Liaison  
[aauwildist@gmail.com](mailto:aauwildist@gmail.com)

### Branch News

The **Jane Addams Branch** invites you to our online Holiday Book Chat on Thursday, December 18, at 7 pm Central Time; registration required.

Join us from home with your favorite festive beverage & tell us about **Books You Love**.

You can't decide which books? Here are some conversation starters:

- What was your favorite book when you were a child?
- Was there a book you felt you needed to hide from your parents?
- Name a book you've bought for the cover.
- Is there a book that changed your life?
- A book you're going to write?

Questions? Contact Kate Skegg at [aauwJaneAddams@gmail.com](mailto:aauwJaneAddams@gmail.com)

[Register](#)



**AAUW Wheaton-Glen Ellyn Branch Presents:**

***AAUW Public Policy Update 2026***

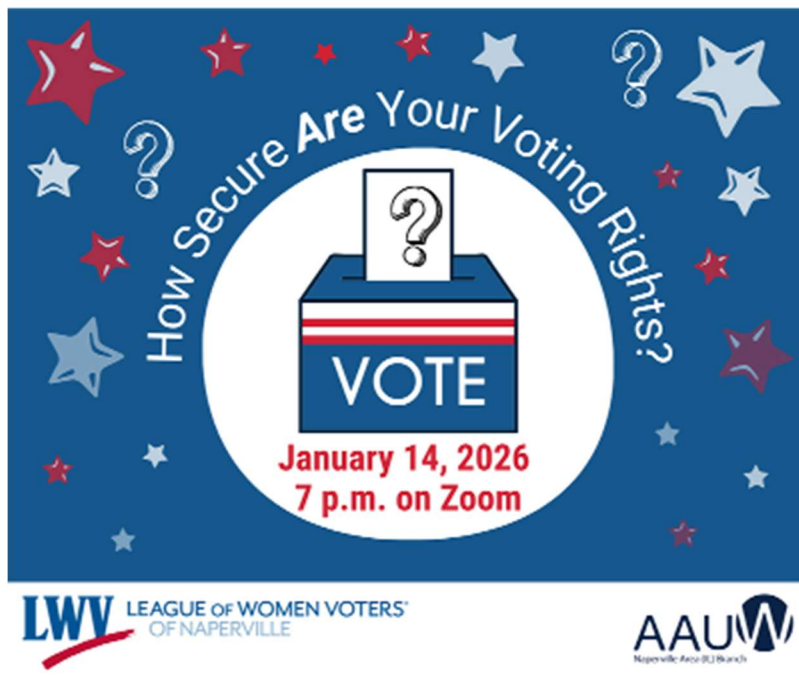
ZOOM Presentation – January 7, 2026, 7:00 PM

These are exceptionally challenging times for Public Policy, both nationally and statewide. Our speakers, **Ms. Karen Kortsch and Dr. Ken Olson**, AAUW-IL Public Policy Co-Directors, will discuss the AAUW 2026 initiatives for Public Policy nationally, as well as for Illinois. Along with the updates, these are some of the questions they will be addressing:

- What is Public Policy?
- Are there any upcoming state bills that may affect women's access to education and economic security?
- What can our local branches do regarding Public Policy?

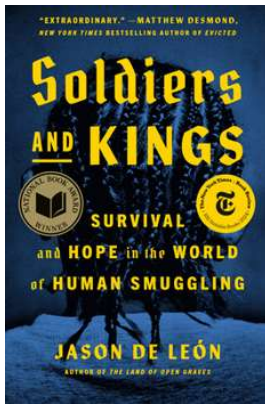
**How to Receive the Zoom Link**

Wheaton-Glen Ellyn Branch members will be sent a Zoom link via email a day or two before the January 7 event. Otherwise, contact the Branch at our email [WGE-AAUW@comcast.net](mailto:WGE-AAUW@comcast.net) and request that a Zoom link be sent to your email address.



Current pending legislation such as the **SAVE Act** (Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act), executive orders, and court cases could negatively impact your ability to vote and for your vote to be counted. Join League of Women Voters of Naperville and **AAUW Naperville Area** for a timely panel discussion on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 7:00 PM. Our panelists will share the possible effects and what can be done to counter these measures. Speakers include David Goldberg, PhD, Professor, Political Science, College of DuPage, and Brandy Johnson, JD, Asst. Professor of Law, Simmons Law School, Southern Illinois University.

[Register for Link](#)



Please join the **AAUW Jane Addams Branch and Northwest Suburban Branch** on Tuesday, January 27, at 4 pm for a discussion of ***Soldiers and Kings: Survival and Hope in the World of Human Smuggling*** by Jason de León, winner of the 2024 National Book Award for Nonfiction.

"Soldiers and Kings takes us deep inside the lives of smugglers guiding desperate migrants across Latin America. One breathtaking scene follows another, rendered in vibrant, unsparing prose documenting grinding poverty and violence, but also young love and redemption. It will shock you, move you, and leave you changed."

Please register to attend; guests are welcome!

Next book discussions:

Feb 24: The Wedding People by Alison Espach

Mar 24: Maus I: A Survivor's Tale by Art Spiegelman

Questions? Contact Kate Skegg  
at [aauwJaneAddams@gmail.com](mailto:aauwJaneAddams@gmail.com)

[Register](#)

***If your branch has a program or recognition or an idea you'd like to share, please [email Jennifer Urish](#) by the 14th of each month.***



Our Mission: Gender Equity & Economic Security

Our Values: Intersectionality Inclusive Intergenerational Empowering

Our Focus: Economic Security Education Advocacy



**Our mailing address is:**

[AAUWILConnection@gmail.com](mailto:AAUWILConnection@gmail.com)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).