

The American Association of University Women

The **TORCH**

March, 2024

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AAUW. Vol. 62, No. 7
Peggy Drennan Cihl, Editor.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March

I would like to use the remainder of President's Messages for this year highlighting some of the important opportunities available to AAUW Lee County members. It seems logical to start with one of the most important, yet often overlooked, committees: *Strategic Planning*. As its name implies the goal of strategic planning is to guide the actions of the Branch by establishing a plan that sets goals to be achieved in both the short and long term. These goals flow out of the broad goal established by AAUW National that can be summarized as advancing gender equality for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. This broad goal is then operationalized by establishing measurable smaller goals. For instance, a goal of funding scholarships to allow young women of promise to pursue higher education. Or, a goal of funding, and volunteering to assist with a girl-focused educational experience in engineering, math and science. How we choose to meet the broad goal set by National is up to us. This is a lot of responsibility!

Luckily for us, our strategic planning process has been guided by Kathleen Haibach and Tamara Pigott. The evidence of their hard work can be seen in this edition of the *Torch*. They have included the recently updated strategic plan and a notice informing the membership that we will all be receiving a survey to complete. This survey allows members to weigh in on what is important to them, what they would like to prioritize and how they would like to see the Branch's impact grow.

All of this takes a considerable amount of time and effort. In addition, the strategic planning process always benefits from new input. If you have an interest in strategic planning, please step forward and let me know of your interest. Members of the strategic planning committee are appointed by the Board, and we are always looking to involve as many members as possible in guiding our Branch. If you would like more information about what being on the committee would involve, contact Kathleen or Tamara—both of whose contact information is in the Directory.

Stay tuned. Next month I will highlight other opportunities to get involved in guiding our Branch.

Cecile Brennan

Fort Myers/Lee County Branch, Inc.



Ways and Means Board Member Needed!



**Board Member
Position Open:
*Ways and Means***



This is the position where the fun begins!

Ways and Means is a rewarding position where you and your team plan a gala to raise money for our scholarships. There is a committee already in place. There is a collection of documents to help you with guidance and planning. If you are interested in this position or joining the committee or being a co-chair, please contact:

**President Elect –
Nancy Schoenstein
nschoenstein@gmail.com**



We wish to thank Peggy Drennan, chairperson of Ways and Means, for her nine years of leadership in raising money for our scholarship funds. She was assisted in the planning and development of the fund-raising events by Kathy Jones and committees of dedicated members. Here is a look back at those events:

2023	Holiday <i>Bingo</i>	Landings Helm Club Main Deck
2022	<i>Bingo</i> For Scholarships	Landings Helm Club Main Deck
2020-2021	Cancelled due to Covid	
2019	Welcome to ScholarSHIP <i>Fashion Show</i>	The Marina at Edison Ford
2018	Light the Way <i>Fashion Show</i>	Crown Plaza at Bell Tower
2017	Give to Achieve <i>Fashion Show</i>	Legends at The Forest
2016	Growing in Style <i>Fashion Show</i>	The Club at Grandezza
2015	Tune Up for Giving <i>Fashion Show</i>	The Club at Grandezza

We will be voting on the following positions at our April meeting.

AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County Branch, Inc

President Elect

Elected Officer – Executive Board Member

The office of *President Elect* is the first year of a three-year term of office. The elected officer serves as *President Elect* the first year and as *President* the second year. In the third year, the officer serves as an *Ex-Officio* member of the Board.

Primary Function:

- The President Elect is charged with learning about all operations of the branch in preparation for serving as president.
- The President Elect serves as the parliamentarian – assuring that proper motions and votes are taken and recorded at all branch meetings.

Skills:

- Oral and written communication
- Technology and management
- Team building, consensus building, coalition building
- Public relations and fundraising
- Ability to meet deadlines imposed by outside agencies and within the organization

Treasurer

Elected Officer – Executive Board Member

Term: Two years

Overview: The scope of responsibilities includes, but is not limited to management of branch finances, board's review of and action related to the board's financial responsibilities and serving as designated signing officer on behalf of branch.

Skills:

- Knowledge of accounting for non-profit, financial controls and GAAP or willingness to learn
- Oral and written communication skills
- Technology skills to utilize accounting and office software
- Ability to meet deadlines imposed by outside agencies and within the organization

Vice President Membership

Elected Officer – Executive Board Member

Term: Two years

Overview: The scope of responsibilities includes but is not limited to development and implementation of plans to increase and retain membership.

Skills:

- Knowledge of Word, Excel, and email blasts.
- Knowledge of broadcast emailing
- Oral and written communication skills

**Our March topic:
Recent Youth Migration to Florida.**

Our March speaker is Dr. Maria Barbero, Assistant Professor of Integrated Studies; Associate Director, PAGES: Liberal Arts Education at Work; and The ROCK Center, Roots of Compassion and Kindness at Florida Gulf Coast University. Dr. Barbero's areas of interest include integrating liberal arts studies into preparation for the modern workplace; youth and child immigrants entering Florida; race and nationalism.



PAGES is a program that aims to support liberal arts majors as they pursue diverse career paths. Some of the ways this is accomplished is by staging mock interviews, elevator pitches, and networking opportunities while they are still taking classes. The point is: pursuing a liberal arts degree is not necessarily a ticket to difficulty obtaining a job.

The ROCK Center, founded in 2020 at FGCU, includes a curriculum which has as its goal promoting compassion through research, education and action. Through an inter-school program involving five local public schools, FGCU students join pupils by participating in integrative activities such as planting a garden, role playing, journaling and theatre.

Our speaker holds a 2019 Ph.D. in Philosophy from Florida International University, a Masters degree from Ohio State University and a Bachelors degree from Florida Gulf Coast University.

To make reservations follow instructions on p.5 of the TORCH

Article from Daytona Beach News-Journal:

**Is Florida, the land
of retirees and snowbirds, getting
younger?**

The number of children and teens in the country are dwindling, according to U.S. Census data. Birth rates have been falling, partly due to the pandemic but also with many young Americans choosing to remain child-free in the face of the rising costs of living, housing, college loans and child care. The average woman in the U.S. has about 1.6 children; in 1950 she would have had three. Overall the United States population grew at about half the

worldwide rate last year, according to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. Currently, 10% of the world is 65 or older and that percentage is expected to double by 2060.

A total of 40 U.S. states saw their under-20 populations decrease between 2020 and 2022, Census data shows.

But they're coming to Florida. Of the 10 states that saw their child and teen populations rise during that time period, 62% of the total child population gains were in Texas and Florida. Florida gained 42,370 children under 18, according to census data analysis by Brookings Institution demographer William Frey

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/news/state/2024/01/19/florida-growing-youth-population-children/72279402007/#>



Join us for
Our Luncheon and Program
The Landings Yacht, Golf & Tennis
Club, 5200 South Landings Drive

OUR MEETING DATE:
Saturday, March 16, 2024
Gathering: 11:30 A.M.
Location: The Helm Club



Rolls, Coffee, Tea

*Choice 1: CORNED BEEF CABBAGE,
Potatoes, Chef Vegetable*

*Choice 2: CAPRESE SALAD With
GRILLED CHICKEN, Basil-Olive Oil
Reduction, Vine Ripe Tomatoes, Sliced
Fresh Mozzarella, Bermuda Onions on Baby
Spinach & Romaine Mix*

Choice 3: VEGAN MEAL, Chef's choice

Dessert: Chef's Choice or Fruit Cup

*Beverages are available.
Wait staff will accept charge cards for
beverages.*

Luncheon reservations are required.

Please title your contact information:
AAUW Reservations

1. **Please indicate choice of menu**
by contacting Carolyn Nance:

cnance5240@gmail.com

or at
(239) 785-9993

or at
**11674 Lady Anne Circle
Cape Coral, FL 33991**

2. **Pre-Payment Is Expected**
Cost for the luncheon is \$30.00.
to insure your reservation.

Your check, made out to AAUW,
can be sent to Carolyn, along with
your menu choice.

You can also pay with PayPal.



is available on our Branch
website: **<https://fmhc-fl.aauw.net>**
(See page 6 for more information.)

Reservations can be made no later than
Monday, March 11
Cancellations must be made no later
than Tuesday, March 12

**(Meetings begin the third Saturday in
September and end in May.)**

Woman of Interest

Marie-Sophie Germain was born in a house on Rue Saint-Denis on April 1, 1776, in Paris, France. She was a French mathematician, physicist, and philosopher. Germain was a remarkable mathematician whose contributions to the field went largely unrecognized during her lifetime. Germain faced numerous obstacles as a woman in a male-dominated profession. Nevertheless, she persevered and made significant strides in number theory and mathematical physics.

Despite her lack of formal education, Germain taught herself mathematics using books from her father's library. She not only solved complex mathematical problems but also corresponded with some of the most prominent mathematicians of her time.

To overcome the challenges, she faced as a female mathematician, Germain adopted the pseudonym Monsieur Le Blanc. By disguising her gender, she was able to correspond with other mathematicians and gain recognition for her work.

Sophie Germain

In honor of her contributions to number theory, the concept of a “Sophie Germain Prime” was named after her. A Sophie Germain Prime is a prime number that, when doubled and incremented by one, also yields a prime number. Although Germain did not have access to formal



education due to her gender, her groundbreaking research earned her recognition. In 1816, she became the first woman to win a prize from the Paris Academy of Sciences. Germain faced numerous obstacles throughout her career due to being a woman in a male-dominated field. Despite the prejudice and lack of opportunities, she persevered and left a lasting impact on the world of mathematics.

<https://facts.net/history/people/12-intriguing-facts-about-sophie-germain/>



is available on our Branch website.

What is it?

PayPal is a payment platform with a website and a phone app that enables payments between parties through online money transfers.

Why does the Fort Myers/ Lee County Branch, Inc. have an account?

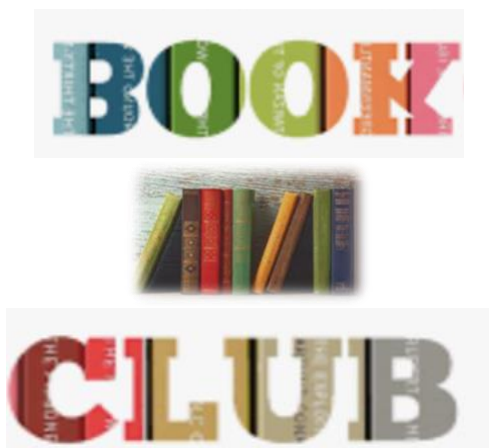
The Branch can manage payment for **Donations, Membership, Luncheon and Events.**

Will I have to set up a PayPal account?

No. You have options to pay by credit card, use your own PayPal account, or by check.

How will it work?

We have PayPal set up on our web page: <https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net>



We have two book clubs. Each welcomes new members.

Cover Girls' Book Club

Cover Girls is meeting in members' homes. Zoom will be available for those who are out of town or unable to otherwise attend. The meeting time is generally the second Wednesday of each month from 1 pm to 3 pm.

The selection for March 13th is *The Truth I Never Told You* by Kelly Rimmer. The meeting will be held at Judi Dixon's house. Contact Carol Fuechsel at cbfuechsel@gmail.com for more information.

Page Turners' Book Club

The Page Turners Book Club is now meeting every two months at Lake Parks Library from 1:30-3:30. The Page Turners Club is not meeting in February. We will resume meeting at Regional Lakes Library in March. We'll be discussing *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. We welcome new members !If you are interested in joining the club, please contact Lois Benedetto at: benedetl@georgetown.edu

WHY JOIN A BOOK CLUB?

Are you in a book club? Are you thinking of joining one or even starting one up? Well, here's some good news – book clubs are good for you and here's why:

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Book clubs offer an affordable way to connect with others. Socialization helps sharpen your memory and cognitive skills, which leads to an increase in your sense of happiness and well-being.

IT FORCES YOU TO READ

And I mean that in a good way. In today's busy world, it can be hard to find time for ourselves. Being in a book club forces you to put everything aside and just read and relax.

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

Book clubs read a wide variety of books so if you're stuck in a reading rut or don't know what to read next, look no further, a book club can open you up to a whole new world of books.

HEAR NEW PERSPECTIVES

You can enjoy healthy, respectful debates about a variety of issues in a book club. Hearing other readers' perspectives on social issues and everyday topics might change your own opinions - or theirs.

SHARE YOUR LOVE OF BOOKS

You get to talk about books! Whether you're gushing over a book or ranting about it, your fellow book clubbers will be all ears.

Guided Nature Adventures 2023-2024

Fall in love with Southwest Florida all over again! Explore the surrounding nature that your winter home has to offer. Join AAUW's Master Naturalist, Cathy Tucker, Nature Photographer, Jemetta Hunt, along with guest experts from Southwest Florida. On the fourth Wednesday of the month, be prepared to have an exclusive experience, that is Florida.

Please contact:

Cathy Tucker 239- 634-7414 or
Jemetta Hunt 239-249-6545

to reserve your spot or to answer any questions you may have. Below is a list of adventures we have planned for this year. Most are free, but some fees may be incurred. Lunch will be after each adventure at a unique location.

March 27, 2024

The Original Snowbirds- Location TBA

April 24, 2024

Ten Thousand Islands- Everglades National Park

May 22, 2024

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary or Guided Kayak Tour



"Manatee Park is a seasonal location for viewing non-captive Florida manatees in Lee County. Manatees visit the park in search of warm water during the cooler days in winter when the temperature in the Gulf of Mexico is below 68° F. The warm water in the Manatee Park canal comes from the Florida Power and Light power plant and is created as a byproduct of cooling off their equipment.

Mid-December – March: Manatees are more likely to be seen at Manatee Park when the temperature in the Gulf of Mexico drops below 68° F

April-November: Manatees are most likely to be seen in coastal habitats in the Gulf of Mexico."

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION!

Celebrating Our Scholars

Scholarship Co-Chairs: Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf

This month we want to introduce you to one of our STEM scholars. Julianna Bendeck was awarded our 2023 Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Emerging Research Scholar Award for her project: *The Importance of Altruism in Schools: Do Altruistic Student-Teacher Relationships Foster an Intrinsic "Willingness to Learn" Amongst Highschool Students?* She is currently a student at Bonita Springs High School and planning to continue her education at FGCU.



Julianna is third from the left.

Devera contacted Julianna and received the following note back. While this note is addressed to Devera, it is really aimed at all of you, because it is only through your generosity that we can

support the educational dreams of deserving young women like Julianna. As you will see below, Julianna is a wonderful example of why we do what we do. Excitingly, she has agreed to speak at our Scholarship Luncheon in April.

Dear Mrs. Graf,

Thank you for reaching out! Unfortunately, I won't be at the Science Fair this year. However, I'm still actively involved in psychology research and causes. I've started interning with Project DO Psych and am engaged with Active Minds, a leading mental health advocacy nonprofit. Also, I'm dual-enrolled at FGCU and working on my resume so I can be a part of social science research there. I am a staff writer for the Eagle News and several of my works have themes of mental health too!

I'm sincerely grateful for the recognition from AAUW last year as it opened up many opportunities for me! Since being recognized last year, I've honestly experienced significant amounts of personal growth. I can't thank your group enough for the kindness shown to me last year and hope another student will have a similar experience this year.

*Sincerely,
Julianna Bendeck*





AAUW Star Bright Scholarship

Established in 2005, by Book Club 3, to provide branch members with the opportunity to make donations honoring friends and commemorating special events awards two \$1,000 scholarships to female students attending their second semesters at Cape Coral Technical College and Fort Myers Technical College.

AAUW Lee County High School Scholarship

Established in 2011 in memory of Jane Wagner, a three-term branch president. It awards two \$1,500 scholarships per year to graduating female students with financial need chosen by the school counselor. The award is paid to the college of the recipient's choice.

AAUW STEM Awards Established in 2001 to encourage high school girls in STEM fields, it awards two entrants in the Thomas Alva Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science and Engineering Fair. Recipients must present a unique, quality topic, and conduct their own research. Judging is done by members of the Scholarship Committee. The first award, the *AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award*, provides a \$300 prize to a third or fourth place female entrant in the Thomas Alva Edison & Kiwanis Regional Science and Engineering Fair. The second award, the *AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Emerging Research Scholar Award*, provides a \$300 prize to a female entrant for a project that shows promise with the purpose of encouraging her participation in future years.

Marie Glasgow and AAUW STEM Award Fund

Established in 2019 in honor of Marie Glasgow, president of AAUW Fort Myers/Lee Co. Branch for two terms. It is awarded each year with the goal of improving educational opportunities by rewarding young Middle School girl(s) who are winners at the Junior Division of Edison-Kiwanis Science Fair or Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair. In even numbered years the award will go to a Lee County Middle School (grades 6-8) girl participating in the Junior Division of the Edison-Kiwanis Regional Science Fair. The winner should demonstrate

meritorious effort but is not a major winner (i.e., third or fourth place.) The project must

be STEM related and show proof of own research. In odd numbered years the award will go to a Lee County Middle School (grades 6-8) girl participating in the Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair. The winner should show meritorious effort but is not a major winner (i.e., third or fourth place.). The projects could benefit Mankind or the Environment. Judging for both awards is done by the Special Award Staff. The Award Judges may suggest different selection criteria but must seek approval of donor prior to award disbursement.

Girls in Engineering, Math and Science (GEMS)

This hands-on program is dedicated to science education for regional middle school girls by enthusiastic professionals and undergraduates, as facilitators and role models, in a girls-only environment.

AAUW FGCU Endowed Scholarship Established in 2000, it awards one (approximately) \$2,000 scholarship to a female student who resides in the five-county (Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, Hendry) area, with financial need, pursuing an undergraduate degree at FGCU. Priority is given to the current awardee.

AAUW Sue Gottcent Memorial Endowed Scholarship Established in 2006 with a bequest from the estate of member Sue Gottcent who was an avid supporter of AAUW's mission. It awards one \$2,000 scholarship to a Lee County female student aged 25 or older with demonstrated financial need who attends an institute of higher education that is part of the Florida State University system. Priority is given to the current awardee.

AAUW FSW State College Endowed Scholarship Established in 2000, it awards one (approximately) \$1,000 scholarship to a female Lee County student with financial need attending the Fort Myers Campus of FSW. Priority is given to the current awardee.



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Strategic Planning Committee was established by our branch in 2021 at the request from AAUW National. The goal is to devise a branch plan to achieve the AAUW mission of advancing gender equality for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. We are one of only three Florida branches to have a strategic plan. This plan is fluid and will continually be assessed and amended as needed.

Below is the 2024 revised strategic plan format (generated by co-chair Tamara Pigott) and the most recent committee minutes approved by the board at the February board meeting.

Your input is crucial in formulating our branch plan. Please complete the electronic survey emailed to you the week of February 12th, by March 10th. Simply click onto the link; complete the survey. The results will be in the April Torch.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact

Kathleen Haibach 585-233-7974. kathhaibach@gmail.com or

Tamara Pigott 239-744-9024. Tampigott@gmail.com by text or email.

AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County Branch Strategic Plan

	Goal	Responsible Committee or Person	Timeline
Education & Training	(1) Champion equal access in education, emphasizing STEM		
	(2) Ensure education at every level is free from sex discrimination		
	--- Support local students with scholarships	Scholarship	On-going
	--- Coordinate efforts with FGCU Whitaker Center GEMS program	Scholarship	On-going
Economic Security	--- Explore expanding STEM to STEAM	Scholarship	On-going
	(1) Shrink gender pay gaps		
	(2) Bolster inclusive career pathways for women in skills and training		
	--- Select women and girls with financial need for all AAUW scholarships	Scholarship	On-going
Leadership	--- Explore Pay Equity Training being offered by Naples Chapter	Cecile/Lisa	March 2024
	Expanding the number of women in leadership, particularly STEM		
	--- Host orientation session for new members	Membership	On-going
	--- Explore a mentorship program to scholarship recipients entering college	Programs	April 2024
Governance & Sustainability	--- Communicate and educate members on branch policies and by-law updates	Board	On-going
	--- Review legislation that supports AAUW mission	Public Policy	On-going
	--- Identify women leaders in our community as potential speakers	Board & Programs	On-going
	--- Collaborate with AAUW Florida branches	Board	On-going
	--- During Board planning meeting create an editorial calendar to coordinate member communications including programs, Torch & all member messaging	Board	April 2024
	--- Communicate with members via Torch/emails regarding Board meetings; President's message to encourage participation in board meetings	President & Communications	On-going
	--- Utilize member leadership development tools and workshops from National/State	Board	On-going
	(1) Implement continuous improvement and best practices in governance, inclusion and organizational function		
	(2) Enhance financial sustainability by increasing and diversifying revenue		
	--- Collaborate with other Florida branches	Board	On-going
	--- Review job descriptions with new Board and Committee members	Board	On-going
	--- Review and update AAUW Succession Plan	Board	Annually
	--- Mentor new members to increase retention and branch participation	Membership	On-going
	--- Obtain and maintain annual reports of Endowed Funds and Marie Glasgow and Friends Fund	Scholarship	On-going
	--- Fundraising to support an increase in the award amount of scholarships	Ways & Means	On-going
	--- Explore sponsorships to increase funds for scholarships	Ways & Means	On-going
	--- Encourage legacy gifts to AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County Branch	Board	On-going
	--- Establish member and volunteer recruitment plans	Membership	On-going
	--- Develop an annual survey tool for members to provide feedback to Board	Board	April 2024

Board Approved: 2/17/24

2023-2024 MEETING DATES and TORCH PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

SEND ARTICLES TO peggycihi@comcast.net

Meeting Date	Deadline for Articles	Mail Torch Date
September 16, 2023	August 24, 2023	September 6, 2023
October 21, 2023	September 27, 2023	October 11, 2022
November 18, 2023	October 24, 2023	November 8, 2023
*Bingo Dinner		
Thursday, Dec. 14	November 14, 2023	November 23, 2023
*January 13, 2024	December 18, 2023	January 6, 2024
February 17, 2024	January 24, 2024	February 7, 2024
March 16, 2024	February 20, 2024	March 6, 2024
April 20, 2024	March 27, 2024	April 10, 2024
May 18, 2024	April 24, 2024	May 8, 2024

**unusual date*



AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County

<https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net>

Our local e-mail address:

aauwleecounty@gmail.com

Our National Organization

<https://www.aauw.org>

Facebook, linked from the website and the direct link:

<https://www.facebook.com/AAUW-Fort-Myers-Lee-County-Branch-107794550957375>



The next Great Decisions discussion will be held Friday, April 5 at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom. Cheryl Tromley will lead our discussion on *Risky Science Across Borders*. Here is a summary from the Foreign Policy Association website:

Scientific advances benefit from collaboration between researchers, but what happens when material, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) is controversial and important to a nation's national security? Is there a middle ground between sharing information and denying access? How can we regulate cooperation?

Great Decisions meets virtually the first Friday of every month (with a couple alterations due to holidays) from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. There are eight topics each year. Our branch meets February through June and September through November. Participants purchase a booklet published by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) to prepare for the discussions and watch a "Master Class" video on the topic. FPA suggests additional readings for each topic, but that reading is at the discretion of the individual participant. Group members take turns facilitating the discussions.

Great Decisions is America's largest discussion program on world affairs. Our branch is still welcoming discussion participants for 2024. If you are interested in more information, contact Suzan Harden, Great Decisions coordinator.

skh062653@gmail.com

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW FORT MYERS/LEE COUNTY

Submitted by Suzan Harden

skh062653@gmail.com

The 2024 session of Florida's General Assembly began January 9 and runs for 60 days. During that time hundreds of bills will be debated, with some of them becoming Florida law. Advocacy is a major part of AAUW's mission. The AAUW FL Public Policy Committee and board members review the bills that have been proposed and identifies those closely related to the AAUW mission. The following chart summarizes bills AAUW FL has identified for action during this session. Both the House and the Senate must file a version of each bill for discussion to take place. Most bills now are just in the committee phase of the process. This may or may not be a complete list. The AAUW FL PPC and board members will continue to monitor bills throughout the session.

(Continued on the next page.)

PUBLIC POLICY

To see complete information about any bill, go to www.myfloridahouse.gov or www.flsenate.gov. You do not have to create an account to see this information for reference. You do need to create an account to set up tracking for any bill for which you would like action alerts. AAUW FL members have created position papers for these bills. You can go to the Advocacy section of the AAUW FL website or contact Suzan Harden, Public Policy Chair, for more information.

Bills AAUW Florida Supports			
Bill Numbers/Topics	Sponsors	Summary	Current Activity
SCR 142/HCR 647 Equal Rights for Men and Women	Sen. Lori Berman (D); Rep. Dotie Joseph (D), with co-sponsors Joe Casello (D), Anna Eskamani (D), Rita Harris (D)	Ratifies proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution relating to equal rights for men and women.	Senate referred to: Judiciary Ethics and Elections Rules House referred to: Civil Justice Subcommittee Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee Judiciary Committee 1 st Reading in both chambers on 1/9.
SB 1414/HB 1355 Freedom to Learn Act	Sen. Tracie Davis (D) w/ Sen. Shevrin Jones (D) co-sponsoring Rep. Michele Rayner (D)	Would repeal or amend many provisions of recently enacted bills affecting the instruction and management of education (both K-12 and higher ed), primarily regarding DEI initiatives and the removal of curriculum and books.	Senate referred to: Education Pre-K – 12 Judiciary Rules House referred to: Education Quality Subcommittee Appropriations Subcommittee Education & Employment Committee 1 st Reading in both chambers 1/9 and 1/10.

PUBLIC POLICY

Bills AAUW Florida Supports Continued			
<p>SB 100/HB 237</p> <p>Pregnant Women in Custody</p>	<p>Sen. Shevrin Jones (D)</p> <p>Rep. Dianne Hart (D)</p>	<p>If a woman in custody and not released within 72 hrs. requests a pregnancy test that yields a positive result, she would be allowed to request a postponement, though not a reprieve, of incarceration to allow for a safe, healthy pregnancy and delivery.</p>	<p>Senate referred to: Criminal Justice Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil Justice Fiscal Policy House referred to: Criminal Justice Subcommittee Justice Appropriations Subcommittee Judiciary Committee</p> <p>1st Reading in both chambers 1/9.</p>
<p>SB 128 /HB 127</p> <p>Paid Parental Leave for State Career Service Employees</p>	<p>Sen. Ashley Gantt (D)</p> <p>Rep. Lori Berman (D)</p>	<p>Changes unpaid leave to paid leave for over 80,000 employees of the State of Florida (avg. pay, \$56,500/yr)</p>	<p>Senate referred to: Governmental Oversight & Accountability Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government Appropriations House referred to: Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee Appropriations Committee State Affairs Committee</p> <p>1st Reading in both chambers on 1/9.</p>
<p>SB256/HB 343</p> <p>Pregnancy Support and Wellness Services</p>	<p>Sen. Lauren Book (D)</p> <p>Rep. Kelly Skidmore (D)</p>	<p>Would improve the integrity of the state-supported, childbirth-only Pregnancy Support Centers by requiring that information presented by medically correct and requiring Dep't. of Health inspections and annual audit reports.</p>	<p>Senate referred to: Health Policy Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services Fiscal Policy House referred to: Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee Health & Human Services Committee</p> <p>1st Reading in both chambers on 1/9.</p>

PUBLIC POLICY

Bills AAUW FL Opposes			
SB 1596 Employment of Minors HB 49 Employment and Curfew of Minors	Sen. Danny Burgess (R) Rep. Linda Chaney (R)	Reverses nearly a century of labor protections for 16- and 17-year-old FL students (although restrictions for hazardous work would still be in place); allows students to make employment decisions as adults w/o parent permission; would encourage students to prioritize low-wage work over their education.	House referred to: Regulatory Reform & Economic Development Subcommittee (Favorable w/Committee Substitute) Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts Subcommittee (Favorable w/Committee Substitute) Commerce Committee (Favorable) Senate referred to: Commerce and Tourism Regulated Industries Rules 1 st Reading in both Chambers 1/9 and 1/10 2 nd Reading in House 1/24

The deadline to request Mail-In Ballots for the Florida Presidential Preference Primary is Thursday, March 7, at 5 p.m. The Florida Presidential Preference Primary is Tuesday, March 19.

Make your request for Mail-In Ballots at. <https://www.lee.vote>

The new requests will expire at the end of 2024.



INTEREST GROUPS/COORDINATORS

BOOK GROUPS

Carol Fuechsel, Coordinator

cbfuechsel@gmail.com

Book Club **Meets**
Cover Girls **2nd Wednesday, 1 PM**
Page Turners **4th Thursday, 12:45 PM**
(The book clubs accept new members.
If interested, please contact Carol Fuechsel.)

BRIDGE

Patricia Crowe, Coordinator

pwc@world.std.com

HAND & FOOT

Carolyn Nance, Coordinator

Meets –1st Monday each month

cnance5240@gmail.com

MAHJONGG

Carolyn Nance, Coordinator

Meets –3rd Thursday each month

cnance5240@gmail.com

GREAT DECISIONS

Suzan Harden, Coordinator

Meets 1st Friday each month.

skh062653@gmail.com

GUIDED NATURE EXCURSIONS

Jemetta Hunt, Coordinator

jemetta@aol.com

Cathy Tucker, Master Naturalist

cptucker@embarqmail.com

TOOLS FOR ADVOCACY

Suzan Harden Coordinator

Skh062653@gmail.com

New Interest Groups Are Welcome

Contact: Jemetta Hunt

jemetta@aol.com

AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County Branch, Inc. 2023-2024 Officers

Elected – Executive Board

President – Cecile Brennan

*Past Presidents – Bonnie Ryan
and Janet George*

President Elect –

Nancy Schoenstein

Vice President of Programs –

Jill Jennings

Vice President of Membership –

Jemetta Hunt, Kathleen Haibach

Secretary –Patricia Crowe

Treasurer – Mary Kellner

Appointed Officers – Board Members

Public Policy – Suzan Harden

Co-Chairs of Scholarship –

Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf

Communications (Torch/Website/Facebook)

Peggy Drennan Cihl, Astoria Aviles and

Perry Doubt

Ways and Means –Peggy Drennan-Cihl

Standing Committees

Records Retention – Executive Board

Science Fair - Cathy Tucker

Diversity Officer - Lisa Crotty

Strategic Planning—

Kathleen Haibach and Tamara Pigott

Ancillary Positions

Reservations – Carolyn Nance assisted by

Lynn Felice

Sunshine – Mary Jane McDowell

Greeters – Board Members

Torch Proofreaders: Jill Jennings

and Carolyn Nance

Torch Circulation –

Jemetta Hunt (US Mail)

Kathy Jones (E-mail)



American Association of University Women

Fort Myers / Lee County (FL) Branch Inc.

PO Box 2115
Fort Myers, FL 33902-2115

Donate Today to help the Fort Myers Branch Advance Equity for Women

Use my Gift for: ____ Operating Expenses ____ Unrestricted ____ Scholarships* ____

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Is the gift in honor or memory of someone? If so please complete the following:

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Contact information for person honored or family of person remembered:

Name: _____

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City, State & Zip: _____

Note: Should you want to specify a specific Branch scholarship or award please name below: (See list under: <https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net> under tab Philanthropy; Scholarships, Awards

Scholarship/ Award: _____

**Please make checks payable to AAUW Fort Myers / Lee County, Inc. and mail to:
AAUW – ATTN: Treasurer, PO Box 2115, Fort Myers, FL 33902**

AAUW Fort Myers/Lee Co FL is a 501 (c) 3 not for profit organization and gifts may be tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

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