

The American Association of University Women

The **TORCH**

November, 2024

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AAUW. Vol. 63, No. 3

Peggy Drennan Cihl, Editor.

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGES FOR NOVEMBER

Welcome back!

I hope everyone weathered Milton without too many issues. Unfortunately, because the storm delayed many of our members from returning, we had to cancel our October meeting. Our November meeting will be our first opportunity to be together, and we look forward to seeing you.

Note that our November meeting will be held at **Lakes Regional Library** on Bass Road and *not* at the Landings. This is a one-time change. Our speaker will be our own Tam Pigott from the Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau. Tam also serves on our Strategic Planning Committee, and we are looking forward to hearing her speak on her work to promote Lee County as a destination.

Since we are not having lunch, this meeting is free and a great opportunity to bring a friend to introduce them to AAUW.

Our new membership directories are printed and ready for you. We will be distributing them at the November meeting. Extra copies are available for \$5.

We will also have a practice round of bingo (and prizes!) in preparation for our fundraiser and gala on December 10. Tickets for the gala (\$75 each) will be available for purchase at the November meeting. If you would like to sponsor a table, tables of 8 or 10 are available. Get a group together and support our scholarships!

November is also when we create our nominating committee for our elections next year. We also have several positions currently vacant. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Jemetta Hunt or me to learn more. It's a great way to support the branch.

As always, reach out with questions or suggestions.

Thanks,
Lisa

Lisa Crotty
Branch President

AAUW

BINGO FUNDRAISER

Supporting Scholarships for Women

Tuesday, December 10th

Doors Open at 4:30 PM

Reserve your table today!

aauwleecounty@gmail.com





Our club's mission is to
**PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO DESERVING
WOMEN**
so they can further their education. We have
three major methods of funding our
scholarships.

1. Contribute to a particular scholarship
2. Sponsor a scholarship
3. Support our Bingo Gala fundraiser in December. Ways you can do this are described on the following pages.

Our AAUW Board approved an exciting new opportunity for our members to support our scholarships. Beginning in our 2024/2025 fiscal year, anyone is now able to sponsor and name a scholarship ***“in honor of”*** someone.

For example, Cheryl Tromley is funding the Fort Myers Technical College Star Bright Scholarship and is naming it “ The Violet Roberts FMTC Star Bright Scholarship” in honor of her grandmother. You can do this as an individual or partner with others.

This offer applies to the following scholarships:

- AAUW Star Bright Scholarship (Cape Coral Technical College): \$1,000 per year.
- AAUW Lee County High School Scholarships: 2 @ \$1,500 per year.
- AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award: \$300 per year.
- AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Emerging Research Scholar Award: \$500 per year.

This opportunity does not change any of our normal donation processes. All opportunities for donating will remain the same, and this is just an ***additional way*** to contribute to our scholarships and an ***additional way*** to honor someone. The normal channels will still be available.

In addition, if anyone wants to donate ***“in honor of...”*** but does not want to commit to a sponsorship, as has always been the case, they may elect to target that donation to a specific scholarship or the scholarship fund. If the latter, the Scholarship Committee and/or Chairs will allocate it where the need is greatest.

If anyone is interested in exploring this opportunity, please contact Cheryl Tromley, Scholarship Committee Co-Chair at 203-530-9147 or email cltromley@gmail.com.

SUPPORTING OUR



Scholarship Co-Chairs: Cheryl Tromley and Devera Graf

We want to **THANK YOU** for your incredible generosity. Because of that generosity, we can increase our support for several of our established scholarships and fund some exciting additions to our STEM awards.

AAUW FGCU and FSW Endowed Scholarships: These scholarships were established in 2000. They award scholarships to female students who reside in the five-county (Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, Hendry) area, with financial need, pursuing undergraduate degrees at FGCU and FSW respectively. The amount awarded is a percentage of the endowments and is approximately \$2,000.

AAUW Star Bright Scholarships: Originally established in 2005, by Book Club 3, to provide branch members with the opportunity to make donations honoring friends and commemorating special events. There are now *two* Star Bright Scholarships, and they are a budgeted item that awards scholarships to female students attending the second semester at Cape Coral Technical College and Fort Myers Technical College.

We were able to increase the funding of these life-changing scholarships to \$2,000 each.

AAUW Lee County High School Scholarships: Established in 2011 in memory of Jane Wagner, a three-term branch president.

Two scholarships are awarded to graduating female students (from two different schools) with financial need. The scholars are chosen by the schools' counselors and the scholarships are paid to the colleges of the recipients' choice. We were able to raise these awards to \$2,000 each.

AAUW STEM Awards (High-School): Established in 2001 to encourage high school girls in STEM fields, it awards two entrants in the Thomas Alva Edison & 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 *AAUW Thomas Edison and Kiwanis Regional Science & Engineering Fair Award* and *Emerging Research Scholar Award* will now each provide a \$500 prize.

AAUW STEM Awards (Middle-School): Many of you know that girls often lose interest in STEM in middle-school, so this is an important time to support that interest. As you know we contribute annually to *Girls in Engineering, Math, and Science (GEMS)* program. Past *Torch* articles have highlighted this hands-on program dedicated to science education for regional middle-school students. The day-long programs, in a girls-only environment, are presented by enthusiastic professionals with undergraduates participating as facilitators and role models. This year we can increase the amount of our contribution to \$1,500. In addition, for this year, we are going to be able to support young women's interest in STEM by providing awards to middle-school girls participating in the *Junior Division of Thomas Edison Festival of Light Regional Inventors Fair*. There will be three *Regional Inventors Fairs*. There will be three \$200 awards—one each in grades six, seven and eight.

We appreciate your support and donations!



Save the date and reserve your table now! Our annual Bingo Fundraiser will be on Tuesday, December 10 at the Landings. All are invited!

The evening will celebrate women throughout history, and include bingo, a silent auction, raffle, and live auction. Each table will celebrate a woman in history - reserve your table to choose a woman to honor! The full list of historic women is available on our website.

Tickets are \$75 per person and includes a buffet dinner and 5 rounds of bingo! You can reserve your table (8 seats or 10 seats) today.

To reserve your table, or purchase your tickets, send your information to: aauwleecounty@gmail.com

See you there!

AAUW goes to the



Join us for
Our Program
at the

Lakes Reginal Library
15290 Bass Rd, Fort Myers, FL
33919
(239) 533-4000

OUR MEETING DATE:
Saturday, November 16, 2024
Gathering 12:00 Noon
PROGRAM BEGINS AT 12:30 PM

Our speaker will be our own
TAM PIGOTT from the Lee County
Visitors and Convention Bureau

RESERVATIONS

There is **NO CHARGE** for this program.
Every reservation **MUST** be made by email
at

aauwleecounty@gmail.com

Cancellations should be made no later
than *Tuesday, November 14* through our
email:

aauwleecounty@gmail.com

Brunch or Lunch is on your own.
Check with other members to get a
group together.



**Suggestions for nearby Brunch/Lunch
locations:**

CRaVE Restaurant

Saturday 8 M-3 PM
(239) 466-4663
12901 McGregor Blvd, Fort Myers

Eggcetera Breakfast & Lunches

Saturday 7 A M-3 PM
(239) 791-8227
16230 Summerlin Rd #205, Fort Myers

Sweet Bean Café

Saturday 7 A M-3 PM
(239) 834-9541
13251 McGregor Blvd. Ste 110 , Fort
Myers

(Peggy's favorite!)



Our Speaker is our AAUW member Tam Pigott,



[Home](#) » [Visitor & Convention Bureau Home](#)

Visitor & Convention Bureau

Tamara Pigott, Director

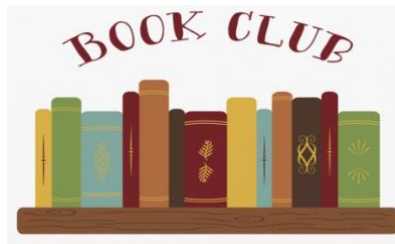


“I am chief cook and bottle washer! Seriously, I am responsible for leading a team that promotes and attracts visitors to Fort Myers—Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods in Florida. Our role is crucial in enhancing the economic impact of tourism in our community by effectively marketing and positioning it as a desirable place to visit, work, and live.”

Goal of the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

“To be the best Destination Marketing Organization in the United States.” To achieve this goal, the Visitor & Convention Bureau staff focuses on programs that are results-oriented, creative, reflective of superior customer service, and built on partnerships. The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) is devoted to maintaining and building year-round tourism in Lee County. To achieve this goal, the VCB works closely with the local industry to increase visitation through programs targeting key markets. Local tourism businesses are encouraged to actively participate in all the programs and grass roots outreach. By identifying and showcasing what makes the area special and different from all other sun and sand destinations, VCB Sales, Marketing, Media Relations & Visitor Services work together to deliver distinct and meaningful messaging to the traveling public.

AAUW



*We have two book clubs.
Each welcomes new members*

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 November is *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Michele. The meeting will be held at Carolyn Nance's home on November 13. New members are welcome.

For more information contact Carol Fuechsel at cbfuechsel@gmail.com

Page Turners' Book Club

We welcome new members. We haven't met since July and don't anticipate a meeting till December or so.

If interested, contact Lois Benedetto, benedetl@georgetown.edu



AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County

P.O. Box 2115

Fort Myers, FL 33902-2115

<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>

WOMAN OF INTEREST

Lilly Ledbetter



Lilly Lynn McDaniel Ledbetter (April 14, 1938 – October 12, 2024) was an American activist who was the plaintiff in the United States Supreme Court case *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.* regarding employment discrimination. Two years after the Supreme Court decided that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not allow employers to be sued for pay discrimination more than 180 days after an employee's first paycheck, the United States Congress passed a fair pay act *in her name* to remedy this issue, **the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009**. Subsequently, she became a women's equality activist, public speaker, and author. In 2011, Ledbetter was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilly_Ledbetter

2024-2025 MEETING DATES and TORCH PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

SEND ARTICLES TO peggycihi@comcast.net

Meeting Date	Deadline for Articles	Mail Torch Date
September 21, 2024	August 21, 2024	September 9, 2024
October 19, 2024	September 25, 2024	October 9, 2024
November 16, 2024	October 21, 2024	November 3, 2024
*Bingo Dinner December 10	November 18, 2024	November 26, 2024
January 18, 2025	December 13, 2024	January 8, 2025
February 15, 2025	January 22, 2025	February 5, 2025
March 15, 2025	February 19, 2025	March 5, 2025
*April 12, 2025	March 19, 2025	April 2, 2025
May 17, 2025	April 23, 2025	May 7, 2025

**Unusual Date*

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW Florida's Public Policy Education Forums were such a success last year, another year of discussions has been developed for 24/25. Here is the list of discussions:

Date	Topic	Presenter
Thurs., Jan. 9	Black Girls in Florida Schools	Bayliss Fiddiman National Women's Law Center
Thurs., Feb. 13	Florida Legislative Preview	Dr. Pat DeWitt, AAUW FL Co-Public Policy Director
Thurs., Mar. 6	Pay Gap, Caregiving, and Economic Security	Dr. Mary Gatta, AAUW FL Co-Public Policy Director Director, Research and Public Policy, National Association of Colleges and Employers
Thurs., Apr. 3	Gender and Race Equity in STEM	Amanda Koontz, Professor University of Central Florida

All sessions meet at 6 p.m. via Zoom. There is no cost. For more information about each topic, go to <https://aauw-fl.aauw.net/public-policy-issue-forums/>. You will see there is a reservation link for each topic, and you will need to make a reservation for each topic. Then you will receive a Zoom link for the session.

If you have any questions about these sessions, contact Suzan Harden. skh062653@gmail.com

Tools for Advocacy

As you complete your membership form for the 24-25 program year, you will see Tools for Advocacy listed as an interest group. The purpose of this group is to help interested members develop techniques for advocating with legislators. Contact Suzan Harden if you would like more information. Everyone is welcome!

skh062653@gmail.com

PUBLIC POLICY

PUBLIC POLICY **Submitted by Suzan Harden**

Summary of AAUW FL September Public Policy Forum

The first Public Policy Forum of the new program year was held Thursday, September 5. The topics were Amendment 1 and a brief summary of 2024 FL legislation regarding education. AAUW FL's Public Policy Co-Director Mary Gatta and LWVFL's Rosemary Nilles and Nancy Chism were the presenters.

Amendment 1 – Partisan vs Nonpartisan School Board Elections

Florida's school board elections have been nonpartisan since 1998. If approved by at least 60 percent of voters, school board elections would become part of Florida's closed primary system as of the November 2026 General Election. Primaries leading to this election may be partisan.

In the current system, school board candidates do not declare a party. Candidates are arranged on the ballot by district, alphabetically. Lee County has seven districts: 5 districts are area-specific; 2 districts are county-wide or open seats. All registered voters can vote for school board seats. The winning candidate must receive 50 percent of the vote plus one. If no candidate wins 50 percent, the top two candidates appear in a run-off.

How would this amendment change school board elections?

1. In a closed primary, only voters registered to a particular party can vote for that party's candidates.
2. Approximately 30 percent of Florida voters are registered as No Party Affiliates (NPAs), roughly 4 million voters. NPAs cannot vote in a closed primary; therefore, all those voters would now be excluded from voting in school board primaries. In Lee County, 128,848 voters, or 26.8 percent, are registered as NPAs and would be excluded in future primaries.
3. If only one party has candidates, the primary is open to all voters. Such a primary is called a Universal Primary Contest (UPC).
4. But Florida has a write-in loophole to close a UPC. The write-in candidate runs only in the general election and does not specify a party affiliation. Often, the candidate does not even campaign. However, the write-in candidate closes the primary. As a result of this loophole, over 8 million Florida voters were excluded from voting in Florida primaries from 1998-2022.

Reasons to Vote No on Amendment 1

All registered voters will participate in primary elections
Nonpartisan boards may have more incentive for collaboration and compromise
Nonpartisan elections maintain local control
Nonpartisanship promotes a school community with diverse perspectives and experiences

Reasons to Vote Yes on Amendment 1

Partisan school boards may contribute to transparency
Partisan school boards are a logical outgrowth of the politicization of education
Partisan school boards will align with other partisan races such as commissioners and sheriffs.

(Continued on the next page.)

(Continued)

AAUW FL encourages us to vote No on Amendment 1.

The League of Women Voters created a tri-fold providing more details on this amendment. Use this link to download the tri-fold: [Amendment-1-Trifold-2024.pdf \(lwvfl.org\)](https://www.lwvfl.org/Amendment-1-Trifold-2024.pdf)

Did you know? A new law passed in 2023 permits candidates from outside our county to run for our local school board. Only after being elected would they have to move to our county.

Brief Summary of Education Bills Passed During 2024 Legislative Session

Governor DeSantis signed into law 28 bills passed in the 2024 Legislative Session dealing with Education. Some had many topics. These are just highlights.

CS/HB 1317 – Patriotic Organizations. Allows Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America; Boy Scouts of America; Boys & Girls Clubs of America; Civil Air Patrol; Future Farmers of America; Girl Scouts of the United States of America; Naval Sea Cadets; Little League Incorporated; and Marine League Corp to speak with and distribute informational materials in classes to encourage participation and inform students of benefits to the student and the community. May have tables and recruit in schools.

CS/HB 1291 – Teacher preparation programs. Program may not distort significant historical events, teach identify politics, violate Florida law regarding discrimination, or base coursework or instruction on specified theories regarding social, political, and economic inequities. Covers incentives and easing of standards to encourage entry.

CS/CS/HB 1285 – Classical school teacher certification. The State Board of Ed can set standards. General, content or professional knowledge not required. Good only at a classical school. A classical school implements a classical education school model that emphasizes the development of students in the principles of moral character and civic virtue through a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and sciences that is based on the classical trivium states of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Florida has 18 classical charter schools across 9 school districts. For more about classical school curriculum, go to <https://www.the-classical-academy.com/classical-education-101-what-exactly-is-it/>

CS/CS/HB 49 – Employment of Minors. You heard a lot about this bill last spring because AAUW FL opposed its passage. This bill 1) permits minors 16 and 17 years old to work for more than 8 hours in any one day when school is not scheduled the following day and the day of work is a holiday or a Sunday; 2) waives the cap of 30 hours per week when school is in session for minors 16 and 17 years old if approved by minor's parent or custodian or by the school superintendent or designee; 3) allows minors 16 and 17 years old to work more than 6 consecutive days in any one week.

CS/CS/HB 1285 – Limit on book challenges. A resident in the county who is not the parent or guardian of a student with access to school district materials may object to no more than one material per month.

HB 931 – School Chaplains. Allows school districts and charter school governing boards to authorize volunteer school chaplains to provide supports, services, and programs, (i.e., mental health services) to children. Volunteer chaplains must meet background screening requirements just as any other school district employee or contractual entity must do. Districts must post on the school district website the names of the approved chaplains and their religious affiliations, identify the services the chaplains will be able to provide, and parents must give written permission for their children to receive services. Most school districts in the state, including Lee, have not embraced this policy.

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

Lois McDougall, Coordinator
lois.mcdougall@yahoo.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. 2024-2025 Officers

Elected – Executive Board

President – Lisa Crotty
Past President – Bonnie Ryan
President Elect –
Open

Vice President of Programs –
Jill Jennings

Vice President of Membership –
Jemetta Hunt, Kathleen Haibach
Secretary –Patricia Crowe
Treasurer – Mary Kellner and
Nancy Schoenstein

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
Ways and Means –Open

Standing Committees

Records Retention – Executive Board
Science Fair - Cathy Tucker
Diversity Officer - Lisa Crotty
Strategic Planning—
Kathleen Haibach and Tamara Pigott

Ancillary Positions

Reservations – Janet George and
Bonnie Ryan
Sunshine – Margot Flinn
Greeters – Board Members
Torch Proofreaders: Jill Jennings,
Lisa Crotty and Carolyn Nance
Torch Circulation –
Jemetta Hunt (US Mail)
Lisa Crotty (E-mail)



AAUW 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*** ___

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State & Zip _____

Phone: (Mobile) _____ (Home) _____

Email: _____

Donation Amount ___ **\$25** ___ **\$50** ___ **\$100** or **Other Amount \$** _____

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: _____

Street Address: _____

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 33901- 2115**

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.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE OR www.800helpfla.com. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.” CH39730



**Membership and Interest Form
AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County
Branch, Inc.
July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025**

Last Name: _____ **First Name:** _____

Florida Address (Is this a new or edited prior address in Florida? Circle: Y or N)

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Dates usually in Lee County: Full Time or Seasonal, from: _____ to: _____

Out of Season Address (Is this a new or edited out of season address? Circle: Y or N)

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Contact Information--Will be included in the directory and used to send branch communications such as the Torch.

Email: _____

Phone-Home: _____ Phone-Cell: _____

Birthdate: Month/Day: _____/_____

Education—As you would prefer to be included in the directory. Education: Degree(s)/Year/College/University(s):

Degree _____ Year _____ Colege/University _____

Degree _____ Year _____ College/University _____

Level of Membership

- \$63.00 New Member (Reduced cost for first year membership! Welcome!)
- \$99.00 Renewing Branch Member
- \$27.00 Dual Member—Primary membership with another branch Primary branch: _____
- \$27.00 Paid Life Member
- \$0.00 Honorary Life Member

Payment: Mail the Membership Form with your check, payable to **AAUW Fort Myers/Lee County Branch Inc.**

AAUW Fort Myers/Lee Co Branch, Inc.

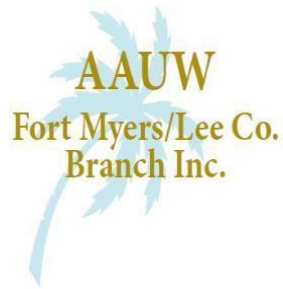
P.O. Box 2115

Fort Myers, FL 33902-2115

All questions regarding membership may be sent by email to Jemetta Hunt, Membership VP, jemetta@aol.com

My interests would be in the following Committees and Interest Groups

Check	Committees	Check	Interest Groups
	Membership/Directory		Book Group
	Public Policy		Bridge
	Scholarships		Hand and Foot
	Communications		Mahjonn
	Ways and Means/Fundraising		Nature Walks
	Torch Newsletter Production Editing		Tools for Advocacy
	Strategic Planning		Great Decisions
			Field Trips
			Other:



AAUW FORT MYERS/LEE CO. BRANCH
Jemetta Hunt, Torch Distributor
7361 Twin Eagle Lane
Fort Myers, FL 33902
AAUW Website: <https://fmlc-fl.aauw.net/>



AAUW Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100070887894617>

