



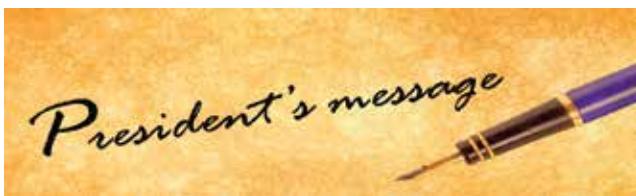
THE SAGE HEN

A Quarterly Publication of the AAUW Nevada State Council

2026 - 1st Quarter



Mission Statement: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.



Mark your calendars for the AAUW Nevada State Convention, **Saturday, April 25, 10:00 am** via Zoom. ***The New Face of Rosie the Riveter*** will focus on women's careers in the future and how to get there! We will have an outstanding panel of women who will talk about how traditional careers are changing, as well as new career opportunities for women. This will be followed by a keynote speaker who will highlight pathways to the new career opportunities.

There is often a debate within AAUW about university education vs. career and technical education (CTE) vs. certification vs. the military (the list could continue, but I'll stop here). Although there are criteria to join AAUW, the research is clear: SOME type of postsecondary education is required for jobs and careers that can maintain a suitable lifestyle. This is primarily because most jobs that pay a livable wage in the United States have become much more technical than in the past and a high school education simply does not prepare students for these more skilled positions. At one point it was possible to learn a trade on the job; now advanced computers and other forms of technology are ubiquitous. Currently there is a debate about how artificial intelligence (AI) will affect the job market. If it is anything like past innovations, there will be both benefits and risks that must be taken into account.

For about 20 years, I was involved in the area of college and career readiness, particularly for first generation college-going students, so I have thought about this topic a great deal. I did a longitudinal research study that followed 60 students from middle school through high school to explore how they were developing their career aspirations and the role education played in that process. I have drawn several basic conclusions from the literature as well as interviewing students twice a year for six years, but will highlight two.

1. An orientation toward the future is the first step. This applies to people of all ages. Are you looking forward into the future or backward into the past? Many people want to escape from where they have been: poverty, violence, abuse, a horrible job, etc. That is logical, but does not set the person up for possibilities – other than escaping what they had. The more important question is how and where do I want to be in the future?

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2. The debate about the educational route to the future is misplaced. What is more important is to have the mindset of lifelong learning, both formal and informal. Careers change and people change careers. Recognizing that learning does not stop with a specific certification or degree allows people to see new possibilities and navigate educational processes to achieve aspirations as they change and grow over time. Just think of your own life. How many different “careers” have you had? Even working for the same institution, I had three major and several minor career changes. They all required additional education, sometimes training, sometimes formal coursework, and even earning a doctoral degree.

Join us in April to hear our presenters discuss the 21st century face of our World War II friend, Rosie the Riveter. The convention will also include an election for AAUW State Council members.

Janet Usinger, President
AAUW Nevada



PUBLIC POLICY

New Momentum: Public Policy Begins With Us

Happy New Year! As we begin 2026, I want to thank AAUW members across Nevada for your continued leadership and commitment to advancing equity for women and girls. A new year brings renewed energy—and at this moment, real urgency. Decisions made at the state and local levels will shape our schools, courts, and communities for years to come.

While **American Association of University Women** continues important advocacy at the federal level, the heart of our impact happens here in Nevada. This is where policies are implemented, elections are decided, and community voices make a difference.

Nevada Leadership, Guided by National Priorities

AAUW Nevada is intentionally collaborating with **trusted state and local partners**, including the **Nevada Women's Lobby**, the **League of Women Voters**, and other aligned organizations committed to equity, education, and civic participation. These partnerships strengthen advocacy, align efforts, and expand opportunities for meaningful engagement.

AAUW's **national policy priorities** provide a clear framework for this work. In Nevada, those priorities are advanced through local action and member leadership:

AAUW National Priorities—Advanced in Nevada

- **Education & Higher Education:** Inclusive curricula, strong Title IX enforcement, expanded STEM opportunities, and accessible, affordable higher education free from political or ideological interference
- **Economic Security:** Pay equity, caregiving supports, retirement security, and protection of reproductive freedom
- **Social Justice & Democracy:** Voting rights, freedom from harassment and violence, and informed participation in **judicial elections**, which shape decisions on civil rights, education, and workplace equity for generations

Judges are policymakers in practice. Educating voters about judicial races is one of the most impactful—and often overlooked—ways to protect equity and justice in our state.



Candidate Forums: The Work Begins Now

With **primary and general elections taking place in June**, preparation for candidate forums must begin **now**. AAUW Nevada—working with state and local partners—is encouraging branches and members to begin planning immediately for nonpartisan candidate forums and voter education efforts.

Many longtime AAUW members bring **deep experience hosting candidate forums**. That knowledge is one of our strongest resources. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we will lean into the wisdom already within our membership. AAUW Nevada anticipates convening a **virtual meeting in the near term** to connect experienced members with those interested in organizing this year, creating space to share practical guidance and lessons learned.

Moving Forward—Together

Public policy may feel complex, but it begins with people who care enough to engage. Candidate forums are powerful ways to learn where candidates stand on issues that matter most to women, families, and communities—but they are not the only way to participate.

AAUW members also have access to **ready-to-use advocacy tools on aauw.org**, including policy briefs, sample letters, issue backgrounders, and the **Two-Minute Activist**, which makes it easy to take timely action in just a few clicks. These resources allow members to engage in ways that fit their time, interests, and capacity.

As we move into 2026, I invite you to see yourself as an essential part of AAUW’s public policy work in Nevada—whether by helping organize a forum, sharing your experience, responding to an action alert, or supporting others who are stepping forward. Together—grounded in national priorities and activated through local action—we can help shape policies, courts, and communities that reflect equity, dignity, and opportunity for all.

Let this be a year where we show, clearly and collectively, that **public policy begins with us**.



AAUW Nevada State Convention
Saturday, April 25th @ 10:00 a.m.
via ZOOM

**The New Face of Rosie the Riveter:
Women's Future Careers and How to Get There**



AAUW of NEVADA
2026 State Leadership Council Members and Branch Presidents

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From the Boulder City Branch:

We met our end-of-year mission to support women in education and awarded 8 college scholarships, totaling \$6,500. These students are tops in their academic work and have ambitious life goals. The branch activities for 2025 concluded with a December Holiday Luncheon at Fox Smokehouse BBQ in Boulder City. They served 25 of us! We filled one entire side of the restaurant.

On January 14, 2026, the first meeting of the year included guest speaker Ade VandenBurg who spoke about the reality of aging in America, the role of home care, strategies for aging in place, and how families can access the care and support they need. Ade is currently a PhD student in the Healthcare Administration and Pharmacy program at Nevada State University in conjunction with Roseman University School of Pharmacy, and owner of Prime at Home Care, a company focused on providing compassionate care for older adults in the comfort of their homes. She's another go-getter to watch!

Our upcoming February 11th meeting at 6:00 pm will be hosted by Lend-a-Hand (location: 801 Adams Blvd, Cottage 3, Boulder City) (<https://lendahandbc.org/>). Our presenter will be Kim Garrison Means. She will speak about Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) National Monument. She tells us this is "an important Native American cultural area and ecological treasure just south of Boulder City, and discuss the creative journey local advocates took through the designation process, and the community we have been cultivating around the monument since its designation to ensure its continued protection." We hope this will interest some of our Las Vegas Branch members to attend!

Holiday Luncheon:



Back Row from Left: Pam Noonan, Anne Slavicek, Janelle Sorenson, Ann Dreschler, Anje Azizsoltani, Sylvia Hawkins (behind her Dawn Green), Susan Nechai (behind her Alex Grafton), Aea Maab, Diane Barry, Kathi Dew, Angel Ball, (note one unnamed member is hiding!)
Front Row from Left: Patricia Dell'aira, LueAnn Amburn, Cindi Swanson, Jennifer Sheldahl, Judy Hoskins, Janet Bremer, Linda Gardner



Speaker Ade VandenBurg at January 14th
Boulder City Branch Meeting



From the Capital Branch:

Capital Branch has been busy with their signature Pecan Fundraiser, interest group activities, and program meetings. We were proud to make a \$2,000 donation to the Northern Nevada International Center in December to support the educational goals of refugee youth. And we were delighted to host former KTNV Meteorologist and UNR Adjunct Faculty, Mike Alger, at our January program meeting, to hear his perspective on climate change.



From Left: Betts Markle, Capital Branch VP Programs, Mike Alger, KTNV Meteorologist and UNR Adjunct Faculty, and Barbara Kuehner, Capital Branch VP Membership

From the Fallon Branch:

In September, we had our membership drive featuring a taco bar with libations. Yes, we had a great time and we learned about healing alternatives using sound.

Our Fall fundraiser was a smashing success! We literally went nuts! We sold organic walnuts from the Stockton area and raffled fabulous handmade quilts.

December featured an incredible experience with a “sound bath” and meditation. We brought yoga mats and wore comfortable clothing. Of course, our excellent cooks provided snacks.

January was our White Elephant sale and we feasted on soups, salads, homemade rolls, and delicious desserts. We also made a pretty penny on our selection of White Elephants. One woman’s trash is another woman’s treasure. Our scholarship fund is growing.

February will find us sharing a Multicultural Day. Our group explores the many different backgrounds we share through pictures, songs, dances, and food.

March is our annual Film Festival and Hors d’oeuvre Extravaganza. This is our main scholarship fundraiser. We will work diligently to assure that it will be a great success.

In April, we will honor our scholarship winners, Community Woman of the Year, Branch Woman of the Year, and special recognition recipients. Latin Farms is a delightful place in the country that will be the site of our luncheon.



From the Las Vegas Branch:

Happy new year to all from the Las Vegas AAUW Branch! As we step into the new year 2026, we are grateful for the past year and all our achievements, big or small.

In 2025, we began prioritizing collaborations with sister branches, hoping we would continue to strengthen these partnerships, to learn from each other and grow the membership in our respective branches this year. A key focus for us is also to grow our branch committees, getting to know each member in our Branch better and all the wisdom they bring, their rich backgrounds etc.

We will also focus on collaborating with like-minded community groups and allies who all share in our mission at AAUW.

We had a successful scholarship fundraiser in November, 2025. Thanks to our amazing fundraising committee and the support of our branch members, we raised enough for at least 4 scholarships this year. We will continue to explore more opportunities for fundraising to enable us to give more scholarships this year and in the future.

Activities apart from our fundraiser was our Christmas party in December in the beautiful home of Shirley Hills. Due to the holidays, we did not take part in any other community activities this quarter. We are however very proud of our VP of membership, Claudia Merrill, the founder and CEO of Grace City Opera Theatre. She and her opera group performed at the Smith Center on December 23rd, a very memorable night.

We hope, with the arrival of warmer weather, we can mobilize and participate in more community activities to enrich and grow our branch.

Wishing all a great and successful year 2026!!



From Left: Kevin Rubenstein, Lori Rubenstein, Anne Green, and Sondra Cosgrove



From Left: Janise, Margoth Tello, Shirley Hills and Marian Stanton



From the Las Vegas Branch (continued):



From Left: Jessica Parker, Janise, Barbara Wells, Afi Bruce, and Margoth Tello



From Left: Marian Stanton and Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert



Far Right: Claudia Merrill, CEO
and Founder of Grace City Opera Theatre



From the Reno Branch:

A very happy, gentle, and prosperous 2026 to you all. In Northern Nevada we were treated to a snowy Christmas Eve, but nothing again until 12 days later when we woke up to another sparkling blanket of white.

The Reno Branch missed holding their Christmas party when the President (yours truly) forgot to schedule the venue and woke up one Sunday morning to realize that the party should have been the day before. The branch hasn't fired me yet, and we have many in-person meetings and speakers to look forward to in the coming months. We hold our lunch meetings at the local Famous Dave's BBQ where we have a standing reservation for their private room.

February 28th will bring Senator Angela (Angie) Taylor to us. She will speak about the steps necessary for bringing our bill on candidate transparency forward in the next legislative session. We've also asked her to include any comments she would like to cover on Black History Month. Note: We've informed her that we are a non-partisan organization; while we are very concerned about issues, we examine them in a non-partisan way. She's cool with that.

March 14th brings us Deborah Cylke, a former middle school principal and high school vice-principal in the Washoe County School District. She will share her research on "The Unintended Consequences of Women's Upward Mobility" for Women's History Month.

April 11th is our annual business and election meeting. Our speaker is Dr. Courtenay Burns, a past-president of the branch and Director of Nevada Girls' State, who will share the present status of Girls' State, an organization our branch has financially supported for many years.

We end our season with a June picnic, hearing from one of our scholarship recipients, Kylie Baer, who will talk about her PhD work at UNR and her future plans.





From the Tahoe-Nevada Branch:

We hope the new year is off to a good start for all of you. Tahoe Nevada Branch is enjoying winter. Our interest groups are out snowshoeing, XC skiing, reading, cooking, planning travel excursions...

In December, we thoroughly enjoyed decorating tree ornaments with children at the community Giving Tree event. Our holiday dinner was fun and festive. We enjoyed mingling with fellow members and their spouses/partners. Our programs started the year with an informative presentation from Tahoe Family Solutions' Executive Director, Jody Wright. Our Matching Grant fundraiser was a huge success – surpassing all expectations. These donations will be used to support our scholarships and community education grants.

One of these grants is supporting educational hikes around the Tahoe Basin led by naturalists from Tahoe Institute of Natural Sciences (TINS). Please join us on March 4th, 10am-1pm for one of these hikes. A TINS naturalist will be leading a women's only snowshoe hike to Chickadee Ridge, starting from Tahoe Meadows. If you're interested in attending this FREE event, register by going to www.tinsweb.org. Click on "Upcoming Events" and scroll down to this event to complete the registration information.

Many of our committees are kicking into full gear for 2026. Nominating Committee will be looking for volunteers to fill Board vacancies, Scholarship/STEM/Career Technical Education committees will be preparing for scholarship interviews, and the Fundraising Committee will be busy planning our Art & Garden Party fundraiser event to be held on August 30th. We're also looking forward to participating in various community events in the upcoming months – the Science Fair at Incline Elementary School and Winterfest (part of Snowfest) at UNR's Lake Tahoe Campus. In a nutshell, we're happily busy!



January Program Dinner Meeting
Jody Wright, Executive Director
of Tahoe Family Solutions

