

News from the Northwest

April, 2021



Newsletter of the Northwest Suburban Branch

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

Our Vision: Equity for all.

We Meet on April 22nd – We're Still Zooming!

The last week of April will be very busy! We begin on Thursday, April 22nd with our branch meeting when we will discuss a remarkable woman – Elizabeth Smith Friedman. We've heard a lot about codebreakers and their contributions during World War II, but Elizabeth Friedman is probably not one of those we recognize, although she is known as the founder of modern cryptography. In January, PBS aired **The Codebreaker**, as part of its *American Experience* series; this program was based on the book, *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies* by Jason Fagone. We will be discussing both the video program, which is available via Passport or Amazon Prime, and the book.

Elizabeth Friedman was the codebreaker who spanned two World Wars and took down the rum-running Mafia during Prohibition, including Capone's brother; single-handedly neutered the German U Boats' wolf pack; and took down Nazi threats in South America that could have become a southern front against the US. In World War I she cracked the Germans' codes, AND she did it with paper and pencil! She started this on the estate of billionaire George Fabyan in suburban Geneva. He had recruited her in the Newberry Library in Chicago. She learned her craft by trial and error. She often fought bias against women and was paid less, but because she was so talented, she was the one who was always called upon, and she often did her work in the shadows, rarely getting the recognition she deserved.

How does Elizabeth Friedman inspire you or young girls who might enjoy coding? We'll discuss this and other questions about this fascinating book that begins at the Newberry Library in Chicago. To join us for a lively discussion, register in advance for this meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7ZAKdO6v1rjsrG9RJNnYoYvCyFAxni...> More details are on our website: <https://nwsuburban-il.aauw.net/>

Then, the very next two days, Friday evening and Saturday, you will have the opportunity to attend the AAUW-IL state convention, again via Zoom. There are wonderful speakers, including Michelle Duster, the great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, whom we have heard at the Des Plaines Library, who will be speaking about diversity; Gloria Blackwell of the AAUW staff; and other women who have been trailblazers in their fields. The annual business meeting will be held on Saturday, when awards will be given and new state officers will be installed. All of this will be available to us at no cost and without the need to travel to the meeting site and, perhaps, stay overnight; this, of course, because it will be held via Zoom! Information on registration and the link for the Zoom meetings will be included in a special state newsletter that will come to AAUW members. Even if you cannot "attend" the entire convention, plan to hear the speakers and, if possible, be a part of the state meeting.

There's a lot going on in AAUW!

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

Spring has finally arrived with signs of new growth and spring flowers all around! Perhaps you are inspired to make plans for a new project as Covid restrictions begin to relax, and we get vaccinated. With the sunny days, we might look on the bright side and think of possibly getting together in person this summer (maybe?).

Wendi is expanding her artist portfolio and will be participating in two juried shows this spring, and has become the chairperson of her church Missions committee. Due to new directions, I'm sad to say she has stepped down as branch co-president. We thank her for her three years of service on the board and maintaining the web site.

I hope you were able to attend one of the interesting March programs featuring Trailblazing Women of Park Ridge and the Suffragists - celebrated with cabaret songs. Looking forward, on April 22 we focus on a trailblazing codebreaker, Elizabeth Smith Friedman. Using Zoom, we will discuss the book, *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies* by Jason Fagone. Hopefully, you can get a copy of the book at the library and watch the PBS American Experience: **The Codebreaker** before we meet.

Our AAUW IL state convention will be the weekend of April 23-24, and it will be virtual and free this year! Exciting convention speakers are: Michelle Duster speaking about diversity, Gloria Blackwell (AAUW national staff), Kimberly Stratton (engineer), and Dr. Gretchen Goldman (scientist and mom). The annual business meeting will include awards and installation of officers. After the speaker on Friday evening, we will experience a Hospitality Social using Zoom groups so we can meet each other. (*However, you do have to provide your own beverage and snacks!*) I hope you can attend since it will be easier than when we have driven to the meeting location and back. A special IL state newsletter will have all the details about how to register (via Zoom of course.)

In May, we will have our branch annual meeting to elect branch officers. We are seeking members to serve as Program Vice President and Treasurer. Please let me know if you would like to serve as a branch officer.

Cheers, it's spring at last!

Elaine

AAUW PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

As a part of AAUW's National Election starting April 7, the organization will update its biennial public policy priorities. These priorities guide our advocacy work nationally and locally.

The commenting period for changes has ended and the full text we will be voting on can be found [here](#). Changes are in blue and green.

Additions are mostly focused on economic security for women through paid family, medical, and sick leave, and strengthening programs such as Medicare, Medicaid. Also added is language for strengthening access to health care services and access to quality paying jobs.

Under the category of public education there is new priority to support practices to halt the flow of students from schools to prison including disciplinary practices that disproportionately punish girls and students of color.

I hope you get a chance to look at the document and make sure that you vote! If you have any questions, contact me.

Cindy Grau
Public Policy Chair
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AAUW MEMBERSHIP AMENDMENT NEWS

The AAUW national board has proposed and supports a membership bylaws amendment that drops the degree requirement for membership.

“The AAUW National Board of Directors strongly supports elimination of the degree requirement for membership and will put the requirement up for a membership vote this spring. This important change is a critical step in bringing AAUW’s bylaws and membership requirement in line with our mission of advancing equity for women and girls. While AAUW is fiercely committed to the educational attainment of all women, given our commitment to inclusion, this is simply the right thing to do.”

In February, the AAUW-IL board unanimously endorsed approving the membership amendment and a webinar, Open Membership Town Hall, was presented to AAUW members in Illinois and other states. Here are some of the comments from the webinar discussion:

- In 1881, the beginning of AAUW, women were denied access to higher education and college graduates were needed to assist other women to enter college and achieve a degree. Today, that is no longer needed to be able to attend college. Also, many well-paying careers are available through trade schools or apprentice programs. The current burden of huge student debt prevents some women and men from choosing to attend college.
- How can we mentor non-degree women if they are not part of our branch and our activities?
- This amendment is a strategic decision to modernize our organization, to look to the future and welcome as members anyone who supports our mission of equity.
- Younger women are not motivated to belong to an organization; they want to join a movement. They also expect organizations to be inclusive.
- We have a welcoming membership diversity statement and a mission of advocating equity for **all** women and girls. To be consistent or authentic, we need to remove the barrier of requiring a degree which makes us appear elitist.
- Being inclusive leads to new opportunities for community collaboration and influence, as well as new potential funding support for AAUW.
- Our impressive history of promoting education will continue through our funded scholarships, fellowships, research and community grants in addition to local branch programs.
- As you see identified in our Public Policy priorities, AAUW has become a multi-focused women’s rights organization; from pay equity and Title IX to freedom from violence of bullying or sexual harassment.

At our March AAUW NW Suburban board meeting, the board approved supporting the Bylaws amendment to open our membership to anyone who supports our mission of equity for women and girls. We ask you to consider doing the same and cast your vote to approve the Bylaws amendment in April. To listen to the Open Membership Town Hall webinar, click on this link: <https://janeaddams-il.aauw.net/> Voting can be done online, and will be held April 7 through May 17. Each member will receive a specialized email with the instructions on how to vote online and how to request a paper ballot (if desired).

ERA ADVOCATES FOCUS ON SENATE AND FIRST 100 DAYS

By AJ Conroy, ERA Illinois

At the start of 2020, Virginia became the final state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. The resolution went to the National Archivist for certification. This ministerial task is proscribed by federal statute and this process was followed by Nevada, Illinois, the archivist, and every state that ratified the “Madison Amendment” in the 90s. This time, a lawsuit prevented that from happening.

Although the original lawsuit, brought by Alabama, South Dakota, and Louisiana, was voluntarily dismissed in March, legal wrangling continues with two parallel lawsuits against the Archivist—one brought by private parties and the other between states. Meanwhile, The US House of Representatives voted to remove the time limit for ratifying the amendment.

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At this point, there are three possible outcomes:

- Congress votes to remove the time limit, and the Supreme Court defers to Congress using the political question doctrine. (Ed. Note: The timeline was removed on March 17.)
- The Supreme Court acknowledges the 28th Amendment as proper through Article V.
- The Supreme Court decision dismisses the case, and advocates must restart the ratification process.

What can advocates do now? Email your senators about the resolution to remove the deadline. SJRes1 is co-sponsored by Senators Lisa Murkowski and Ben Cardin.

Stay up-to-date by following Facebook pages for ERA Coalition, VoteEqualityUS and ERA Illinois (@ERAillinois).

(If you are interested in reading more about this, follow the link below:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-congress-women-idUSKBN2B92QG>)

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Tuesday, April 13 AAUW Naperville: Rovers, Oscilloscopes, and Automation: Women Engineering the World

STEM degrees are lauded as a path to success especially for women. But what can one do with that degree? Learn about the innovative, creative, and technical achievements of our panel of 3 local women engineers working on the Lunar Rover Perseverance, Electronic Measuring Instruments, Automated Cars and Robotic Birds. Discover how to support women and girls interested in STEM, the challenges they may face, and advice on how to guide them as they make college and career choices.

This program is presented by the AAUW Naperville Area Branch. This program is open to the public, but you must [register](#) to receive a link to the Zoom program. All Northwest Suburban members received an email from our president, Elaine Fisher, with the full program for the webinar and the link for registration; it was sent to you on March 30.

Thursday, April 22, 7:00 pm: Elizabeth Smith Friedman

We will meet via Zoom for a discussion of the life of a truly amazing woman, Elizabeth Smith Friedman, the founder of modern cryptography. On Jan. 11 PBS AMERICAN EXPERIENCE aired **The Codebreaker** program about Elizabeth Friedman. It's available online now via Passport or Amazon Prime. This video program is based on the book, *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies* by Jason Fagone. We will discuss the video program and the book.

The codebreaker who spanned two World Wars and took down the rum-running Mafia during Prohibition, including Capone's brother, single-handedly neutered the German U Boats' wolf pack, and took down Nazi threats in South America that could have become a southern front against the US. In World War I she cracked the German's codes. AND she did it with paper and pencil. She started this on the estate of billionaire George Fabyan in suburban Geneva. He had recruited her in the Newberry Library in Chicago. She learned her craft by trial and error. She often fought bias against women and was paid less. But because she was so talented, she was the one who was always called upon, and she often did her work in the shadows, rarely getting the recognition she deserved.

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April 23-24, Friday - Saturday: AAUW IL Convention

Full information on convention and convention activities will be found in the AAUW-IL *Link*, which all AAUW members should have received. The keynote speaker on Friday, April 23 will be Michelle Duster, great granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, and her presentation will be followed by a virtual social mixer (provide your own goodies). Saturday's keynote address will be given by Gloria Blackwell, Executive Vice President and Chief Program Officer of AAUW. Saturday will also feature two other speakers and the annual business meeting. The link for convention registration will be sent to you early in April; watch your email for communications from AAUW-IL.