

Feb. 2016

AAUW of Idaho Briefs

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by your state board and membership.*

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To AAUW of Idaho members:

The AAUW of Idaho winter board meeting was held Feb. 13 – 14, 2016 at the Idaho Education Association building in Boise, followed by Lobby Day on Feb. 15 at the Idaho State Capitol. The meeting was both preceded and followed by events built around the visit of special guest Lisa Maatz, AAUW Vice President of Government Relations. Lisa made presentations and attended branch meetings in the state from Feb. 11 – 17. Here's an overview of the events and board business.

1. Lisa Maatz, AAUW Vice President of Government Relations, had a very successful visit. It included well attended public presentations on advocacy for changing public policy, including addresses to political science classes and a lunch presentation at the Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University. Lisa also attended branch meetings in McCall (Long Valley branch), Coeur d'Alene, and a combined meeting of Orofino and Moscow. Congratulations to Kathy Scott, Julie Custer, and branch presidents and members throughout the state for organizing such a productive visit.
2. Lauren Necochea, Project Director for the Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy and Director of Idaho Voices for Children, spoke to the board about Idaho's tax structure and the Healthy Idaho Plan. She said Close the Gap Idaho is the umbrella group of organizations working to close the health insurance funding gap by supporting the Healthy Idaho Plan. That plan is a hybrid approach to Medicaid expansion; it would serve the 78,000 Idahoans who do not have access to health care currently. Lauren reported that more than 20% of the uninsured are mentally ill and there are 10,000 Idaho veterans who are uninsured. AAUW lobby corps members are working diligently to support Close the Gap. Members outside of Boise are urged to respond to the correspondence from Kathy Scott, AAUW of Idaho president, when emails or phone calls to our legislators are needed.
3. Melissa Wintrow, state representative from District 19 in Boise, spoke to the board about civility in government. She conveyed her own personal struggles in building necessary relationships with legislators whose views are opposite her own. She communicates closely with the AAUW lobby corps and asked for the group's support on two of her current projects: a bill to give terminal patients the right to use investigational drugs, and a rape kit processing bill to codify the process used by the state crime lab for rape kit analysis. No law currently exists on the timetable or process for the handling of rape kits. Sue Chew, state representative from District 17 in Boise, stopped in briefly during Melissa's presentation. She reported that efforts to legislate public funding, via vouchers, for private schools are at a standstill, good news for AAUW. Such a move would require amending the state constitution and, for now, that is not likely to be pursued. Board members pointed out that public funding for private education is also against the US Constitution. Amending Idaho's constitution would set the state up for another costly court battle.

4. Lisa Maatz addressed the board on strategic ways to communicate with legislators and policy makers. She urged all members to subscribe to the AAUW Action Network to receive email notifications about national legislation affecting AAUW priorities. You can sign up at www.aauw.org/actionnetwork. Lisa suggested branches have an Action Network sign-up sheet at every meeting. For building relationships with legislators, she suggested everything from sending a birthday or other occasion cards to using food gifts that tie in with our priorities, such as sending a Pay Day candy bar to legislators on Equal Pay Day, April 12 this year. She reminded members to use the letters to the editor column to thank legislators who vote our way. Lisa said snail mail to legislators must now be radiated before delivery, delaying it by six weeks, so electronic communication is now being weighed as seriously as snail mail used to be weighed.
5. Board reports included:
 - Carol Stirling, AAUW of Idaho VP for membership, reported the state now has 259 paid members. She said two branches have grown in membership while four have declined.
 - Pat Alpine, AAUW of Idaho treasurer, distributed a written report showing the organization is in good condition financially, with expenses to date under budget while revenue exceeds budget, primarily due to the overall growth in membership.
 - Gayle Wilde, AAUW of Idaho VP for public policy, reported the lobby corps has been very busy working on AAUW priorities including Add the Words, early childhood education, STEM, Close the Gap, Planned Parenthood, science education rules, school vouchers, and the ERA. Sylvia Chariton, president-elect for the Boise branch, has testified at several legislative hearings as have other lobby corps members.
 - Kathy Haley, AAUW of Idaho and Boise branch webmaster, announced that AAUW site resources has a new employee, Sabita Kodka, to help branch webmasters with their sites.
 - Bonnie Pfaff, AAUW of Idaho nominating committee chair reported nominees for state offices for the coming year, starting July 1, include Kathy Scott and Julie Custer, co-presidents; Gayle Wilde, VP for public policy; Kay Reed, treasurer; and Kitty Geidl, secretary. The committee is still seeking a VP for membership as well as candidates for the non-elected board positions of webmaster and Gem State Bulletin editor.
 - Julie Custer, Boise branch president and AAUW of Idaho co-president-elect, received the traveling Keep the Ball Rolling award for a long list of contributions at both the branch and state levels of AAUW.
6. On Monday, Feb. 15, AAUW members participated in Lobby Day at the State Capitol to meet with their state legislators to discuss AAUW priority issues, including education and Close the Gap legislation entitled Healthy Idaho.

SAVE THE DATE!

The board confirmed the next state convention will be held August 12 – 14, 2016 in Coeur d'Alene. The AAUW visiting director will be Ellie Hill, who is also a Montana state representative. She will speak on AAUW priorities. In addition, a 90-minute workshop on Telling Your AAUW Story will be presented by Erica Stout from the national office. The Coeur d'Alene branch is planning fun activities in addition to the business sessions and workshops, so members are urged to save the dates and plan to attend the convention.