

President's Message

The Association Convention was exhausting and exciting, as usual. We heard from Jehan Sadat on her efforts toward peace and social justice for women. In receiving the Legal Advocacy Fund "Speaking out for Justice" award, Eleanor Holmes Norton spoke of working with AAUW on issues vital to the nation. She credited AAUW with having saved Title IX.

We had a chance to hear from our new Executive Director, Kathy Frost, who will assume that office August 1. And the highest ranking woman in the history of the US Congress, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, stopped by the lobbying briefing to get us ready to go to the Hill to present the AAUW view on privatizing social security and modernizing the Higher Education Act, to our Senators and Representatives. Lisa Maatz, Director of Public Policy and Government Relations, described us as the Great Teal Machine as we went to the Hill on Monday afternoon to present our views.

Madelyn Albright received the AAUW Achievement Award, the Educational Foundation's highest honor. She was the first woman to hold the position of Secretary of State, the highest-ranking woman in the US government.

Florida received a Platinum Award in the 21st Century Recognition Program. Florida was third in total contributions to the Educational Foundation and Tampa and Niceville/Valparaiso were among the top ten branches in per capita contributions to EF.

Ruth Sweetser was elected Association President and, without opposition, Barbara O'Connor was elected Educational Foundation President and Leslie Henderson was elected Regional Director. Ann Terry, South Atlantic Region's outgoing Regional Director was elected Association Executive Vice President/Secretary.

A number of bylaws changes were discussed and voted on. While a proposed change to open AAUW membership to anyone who supports our mission failed, the delegates voted to open AAUW membership to those who hold an associate or equivalent degree. The delegates also voted to establish a process by which state presidents in a region would fill a vacancy for the position of Regional Director and removed references to the Legal Advocacy Fund president and board, now that LAF has merged with the Educational Foundation. It was also voted that a disbanding branch must transfer its assets to an AAUW entity. This was suggested in Model branch bylaws, but this vote formalizes the requirement.

State and branch bylaws need to reflect the changes made at the Association convention and we will be working toward that end.

The boards of the Association and Educational Foundation voted to approve a new programmatic theme for AAUW: Education as the Gateway to Women's Economic Security. This theme will serve as a guide for new AAUW programs, developed at the national level and refined and implemented by states, branches and other institutional and

community partners. The theme will be used to build a national platform of programs and initiatives related to access to high-quality education and professional training and development for women; opportunities to study and advance professionally in high-skill and high-wage fields; greater value for women-dominated fields; fair wages, family-friendly benefits and nondiscriminatory workplaces for all women; and the status and progress of women and girls internationally on the previous issues. We will be hearing more on this theme as it is further developed.

As we start another AAUW fiscal year, I look forward to working with all the branches in Florida as we further the work of our organization to promote equity for all women and girls, lifelong education and positive societal change. Because equity is still an issue.