

Bulletin

Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

www.aauwfortwayne.org www.indstate.edu/aauw-in www.aauw.org

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Thoughts from the President:

By Dr. Bobbie Weikle

Many thanks to those of you who sent your lovely holiday greetings and wonderful thoughts. It is times like these when AAUW sisters need to communicate with each other and give positive encouragement to people around us whenever possible.

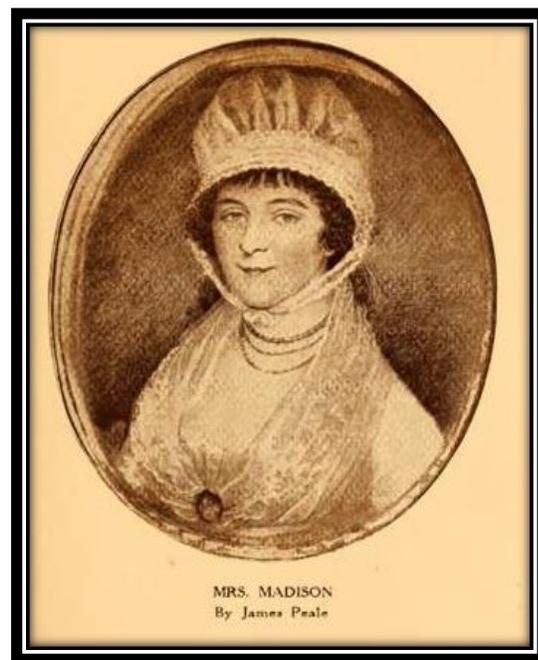
What Will Our Legacy Be???

After watching in horror, the events a few weeks ago, the desecration of our nation's Capital Building and the insurrection against our democracy, I was reminded of other events witnessed such as the murder of JFK and Jack Ruby being gunned down on national TV. After watching President Nixon's impeachment trial, I never imagined being a witness to three more impeachment trials in my lifetime. Like many of you, I have been wrestling with the burning question – "What will our legacy be to future generations?"

A More Perfect Union!!!

In listening to an audio production of the historical book, *A Perfect Union: Dolly Madison and the Creation of the American Nation*, I was struck by similarities that divided the nation at that time and the divisions recently seen among our citizens. Although the word 'bipartisanship' had not been invented at that time, Dorothea "Dolly" Paine Todd Madison had a keen sense about the need for 'unity' within our nation if the fledgling young country was to survive and be a democracy that represents ALL people. By promoting "amicable socialization" through her social gatherings and events, she instituted many of the traditions that continue today in the role of First Lady. Sensing the racial tensions and divisiveness between the political parties of the time, the First Lady utilized her position and the White House as a way of bringing opposite opinions together. Since women were not allowed to vote or take a governmental role, she found other ways to work toward the common good of everyone.

However, Mrs. Madison's tenacity and courage were tested many times during her role as First Lady. Dolly's strength as one of our 'Foremothers' was tested on August 24, 1814, when thousands of Washingtonians fled the city as word spread that British troops were going to invade and take over the city.



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Even though chaos was at her door, Dolly continued overseeing preparations for the dinner party she had originally planned. In a letter she simultaneously wrote to her sister, she described that fateful day and her husband's warning to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. As black hands of enslaved people worked to loosen the screws from the large portrait of George Washington, Dolly sensed the urgency and ordered the frame broken to save the President's portrait. By her heroic act, she kept the portrait from becoming part of the British 'spoils' of the 1812 war and being paraded through the streets of London. In comparing the past few weeks, I will never forget the mob of protesters at the Capitol Building, the scenes of Speaker Pelosi's office being ransacked as rioters waved her desk and the Confederate flags as their 'spoils' of the event. The threats to officials' lives and the protester's feet propped on the desk of the President of the Senate are indelibly seared in my brain.

Fortunately, Mrs. Madison narrowly escaped with her life and she not only saved the President's portrait but many other historical documents that would have burned along with the White House on that day. When Dolly later learned that the British invaders had sat at her dining table and feasted on her food before setting fire to burn the White House, she realized the significant risks that were taken in saving precious historical items while getting to safety. On that fateful day, Mrs. Madison became a heroine in our history for the remainder of her life. She received honors and is treasured for her ability to bring people with diverse opinions together and for her work to further a democratic nation.

What will AAUW's Legacy Be???

After watching our new President give his inaugural address, his message of unity and working together as a nation resonated the historical message learned from Mrs. Madison's risking her life to protect important pieces of our shared democracy. When lives are being threatened by the pandemic and more recently threatened by violent protesters, please ask yourselves this question: "What do you want our legacy to be?" Please take time to write to your elected government officials and express your concerns about protecting our democracy. Let them know your views about funding for public education and creating more fairly drawn areas within Indiana's voting districts. Indiana legislators need to hear your position on **House Bill 1396** which is one of four so-called "constitutional carry" bills **currently proposed**. At this time, Indiana does not require a permit to purchase a gun but requires a permit to carry guns openly or to carry a concealed weapon. HB 1396 introduced by Ben Smaltz of Auburn and Matt Lehman of Berne **would eliminate handgun licensing**. Show your support for a more bi-partisan government to promote a more unified nation and equity for ALL people.

In addition, please ask yourself another question that pertains specifically to our organization. What do you want our AAUW legacy to be? Our national AAUW recently sent an email asking for comments about the future of our organization. Our Indiana State AAUW President recently announced some new on-line events that will be held. Please share your ideas and let us know what directions you want our organization to take into the future. _____

Reference: Allgor, Catherine. (2006). *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation*. BBC Audiobooks America, 42 Whitecap Dr., North Kingstown, RI 02852-7445. ISBN: 0-7927-4021-1.

Photograph of Dolley Madison appears on Wikipedia's website.

AAUW Fort Wayne Branch Salutes Two of Our Members

We proudly share the accomplishments of two of our newer members.

Dr. Laura McDermott will become the Superintendent of the Whitley County Consolidated Schools in February of 2021. Laura has been the Assistant Superintendent of the school district for several years prior to her new position. AAUW strongly supports women in leadership roles and we applaud Dr. McDermott's leadership in her newest educational position. Laura related that the district has designed plans A-E and F to help them be administratively prepared for continuing to educate students throughout this pandemic.

Dr. Terri Swim, also an accomplished educator, has researched the area of infant mortality and recently submitted the article that follows for our newsletter to help AAUW members better understand the gravity of this issue and the tremendous need to work on solutions within our society.

Our thanks to both Laura and Terri for their continued efforts to ensure that our children and young adults receive an education – even in the midst of a pandemic.



Infant Mortality: Reshaping Future Generations

By Terri Jo Swim, Ph.D.

Nothing could be more devastating to a family than the death of an infant. Unfortunately, far too many families in Indiana and Allen County have experienced the death of a child under the age of 1. In fact, Indiana ranked 11th highest in the nation for infant mortality rates in 2018 (Mississippi was highest at 8.3 and New Hampshire was lowest at 3.6; *Infant Mortality Rates by State, 2020*). Much effort was invested statewide to reduce this loss of life and it paid off. Preliminary data for 2019 indicated that the infant mortality rate was reduced from 6.8 to 6.5, with a concurrent reduction from 13.0 to 11.0 for Black infants.

However, much work remains to meet the Healthy People 2030 Goal of reducing infant mortality to 5.0 infant deaths per 1,000 births (*Infant Mortality, n.d.*). As with any complicated issue, it is often difficult to determine where to start to solve the problem. As a state, we initially focused on increasing access to prenatal care, reducing smoking and improving sleep practices. These efforts, for example, resulted in smoking decreasing 15% in the past four years from 25.7% to 2.18% for women of childbearing ages (18-44; *Infant Mortality, n.d.*, see Indiana Summary 2020 tab) which may have contributed to the decrease in infant mortality. However, we should follow the results of a study conducted in Florida which found that public health activities specifically related to infant health (i.e., not total public health spending) significantly reduced infant mortality rates (Bernet, Gumusa, & Vishwasraoc, 2018). Thus, we need to be more specific in selecting public health activities to reduce infant mortality.

At the same time, we know that other issues such as gender equity and pay play a large role in a child and family's outcomes. Homan (2017) investigated how the gender balance of state legislatures was associated with state infant mortality in the United States. She found a strong negative relationship between political representation of women in state governments and infant mortality rates. In other words, states with fewer women representatives had higher rates of infant mortality

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Infant Mortality: Reshaping Future Generations

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According to the Indiana House of Representative website, we have 13 (18%) female representatives out of 71. Thus, it is possible that electing additional women to represent the citizens of the state may result in a different allocation of resources that could benefit infants and families.

Additionally, raising the minimum wage and working toward greater gender equity in pay could result in additional reduction to infant mortality rates as these both are significantly related to economic stability. The AAUW website ranks Indiana 44th in the nation because the pay gap in Indiana is 76%. Thus, women (and their infants) would benefit greatly from a higher income that results in reducing stress from food and/or housing insecurities.

Although we have recently completed the election cycle, we should continue advocating with our state legislature regarding the need to address the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. We can consider both direct public health activities as well as steps to increase families' economic security as avenues for decreasing infant mortality.

References

Bernet, P. M., Gumusa, G., and Vishwasraoc, S. (2018). Effectiveness of public health spending on infant mortality in Florida, 2001–2014. *Social Science and Medicine*, 211, 31-38.

Homan, P. (2017). Political gender inequality and infant mortality in the United States, 1990-2012. *Social Science and Medicine*, 182, 127-135.

Infant Mortality Rates by State (2020, April 24) Center for Disease Control: National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved December 13, 2020 from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant_mortality_rates/infant_mortality.htm.

Infant Mortality (n.d.). United Health Foundation. Retrieved December 13, 2020 from https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/IMR_MCH/state/IN.

About the Author:

Dr. Terri Swim has taught in higher education for nearly 20 years. Along with her classroom teaching provided to college students, Dr. Swim also serves as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs at Purdue University Fort Wayne. Regionally, she was instrumental in starting the Bachelors of Science in Early Childhood Education Program at the University. In addition, along with being the author of many articles about early childhood, she has co-authored or co-edited several books. Her most prominent work has been the 9th edition of her book, **Infant and Toddlers: Caregiving and Responsive Curriculum Development**; the 10th edition is currently being written.

Are You Interested?

Redistricting: Creating a Better Balance of Voters in Indiana

The AAUW Fort Wayne Branch has been asked to collaborate with the Fort Wayne Area League of Women Voters to bring awareness about their efforts to improve our voting rights. The League is working with others at the state level to send messages to state senators and representatives on our commitment to protecting voting rights and expanding voter access. If you are interested in these topics, please send an email and include your name and address for further information to Nancy McCammon-Hansen at nmccammonhansen@gmail.com.

In addition, the League has also announced a new Film Series about ***Voter Suppression***, ***Gerrymandering***, and the need for ***Redistricting Reform***. The films will be shown on Thursdays – January 28, February 4, and February 11. The films will be shown on each date from 7:30-9:00 pm, EST. Panelists and Q & A will also be held following the viewing of the films. Viewing the films is free and each may be accessed via your computer. Please check the League's web site and Facebook page for **registration and more details**. Website www.lwvfw.org.

Letter from National AAUW

By Kim Church, Executive Director, AAUW

January 10, 2021

On Wednesday, January 6, 2021, we watched as the President of the United States incited a mob to march on the Capitol to attempt to overturn the results of [the] election he lost eight weeks ago. We watched in horror as that mob of white nationalists stormed the U.S. Capitol building. And we watched as they tried, and failed, to subvert our democracy, leaving a trail of wreckage and terror in their wake.

This was not the beginning. This was an inflection point in years of hate and division incited by a President who does not care about our country or its people, but only about himself. He has stoked racism, sexism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, ableism, xenophobia, toxic masculinity, and more — allowing those who share his beliefs to come out in the open and act without fear of repercussions and wreak havoc on the seat of democracy. The failed insurrection at the Capitol this week was shocking, but not without warning.

We come together today as a community of multi-racial, multi-generational, differently-classed gender justice leaders, who represent women, girls and gender nonconforming people from every corner of this nation, united in condemnation of these unconscionable actions. Together, we demand that our country's leaders uphold their Constitutional responsibilities and remove President Trump from office immediately. He must be held accountable. He has shown that he is an imminent threat to all of our communities, our nation and our very democracy. We cannot risk one more day under this President.

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Letter from National AAUW

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Now is the time for our leaders to do what is right and fulfill your obligation to the American people who elected you. The House of Representatives has committed to beginning impeachment proceedings, and the Senate must show up with a unified voice to swiftly do the same. If you fail to condemn white nationalists' violent extremism and hold the President accountable for his actions, you are neglecting your basic responsibility to serve the American people. Vice President Pence, members of the Cabinet, and Members of Congress, you each swore to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States." This is the moment for which that oath was written. And if you fail to protect this country, women and girls across this country will not forget.

American Association of University Women (AAUW), Feminist Majority, In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda, Institute for Women's Policy and Research, Jewish Women International (JWI), MomsRising, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Council of Jewish Women, National Crittenton, National Domestic Workers Alliance, National Partnership for Women & Families, National Women's Law Center, Paid Leave for All, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, SEIU, She the People, Supermajority, TIME'S UP Now, United State of Women, Women's March, and YWCA USA.

Signed by: Ai-jen Poo (National Domestic Workers Alliance), Aimee Allison (She the People), Alejandra Castillo (YWCA USA), Alexis McGill Johnson (Planned Parenthood Federation of America), Amanda Brown Lierman (Supermajority), Anna Chu (National Women's Law Center) Anne-Marie Slaughter, C. Nicole Mason (Institute for Women's Policy and Research), Dawn Huckelbridge (Paid Leave For All), Debra Ness (National Partnership for Women & Families), Fatima Goss Graves (National Women's Law Center), Ilyse Hogue (NARAL Pro-Choice America), Jeannette Pai-Espinosa (National Crittenton), Jennifer Klein (TIME'S UP Now), Joanne N. Smith (Girls for Gender Equity), Jordan Brooks (United State of Women), Katherine Spillar (Feminist Majority), Kim Churches (American Association of University Women), Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner (MomsRising), Marcela Howell (In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda), Meredith Jacobs (Jewish Women International), Monique W. Morris, Ed.D, Rachel O'Leary Carmona (Women's March), Sheila Katz (National Council of Jewish Women), Tina Tchen (TIME'S UP Now), and Vicki Shabo.

Interest Groups

Regular group meetings may not be held due to Coronavirus health precautions. Please check with your group leader to learn if events will be held.

Current Literature I – Usually meets the first Tuesday of the month.

No meeting in February or March 2021.

April 6 - no thumbnails; book discussion "Becoming" by Michelle Obama.

Location to be announced.

Membership Matters

The AAUW National Board of Directors voted at the meeting held on October 16, 2020 to **increase National Individual Member dues** which will occur over the span of the next three years. *State and Local Dues will not increase.*

Fiscal Year 2022: National Dues \$62 + State Dues \$7+ Branch Dues \$18 = \$87

Fiscal Year 2023: National Dues \$67 + State Dues \$7+ Branch Dues \$18 = \$92

Fiscal Year 2024: National Dues \$72 + State Dues \$7+ Branch Dues \$18 = \$97

Please remember that all but \$3 of your annual national dues remains tax deductible.

AAUW Trust

By Barb Kanning, AAUW Trust Chair

barbkanning@gmail.com or (260) 432-5228

Please note that we are NOW in the annual two-month period for applying for grants from the Trust. The grant period will END February 28, 2021. The Board of Trustees will meet on March 5, 2021 to decide who will receive Trust dollars in April.

If you know a nonprofit that might have a project that is appropriate for our mission, get them to apply ASAP! Go to our local website: aauwfortwayne.org and click on the Trust tab at the top and read the qualifications. The application must be done online and completed by the deadline.

Also, we are always accepting donations to "build" our capital account of any amount that you might have available.

Thanks for your dedication to AAUW.

Please Take Note!!! Updated Information **for Annual AAUW Meeting and Recognition Event**

It was previously announced in the *Yearbook/Directory* that our **Annual Meeting of the AAUW Fort Wayne Branch & Recognition Event** was to be held on March 6, 2021. Due to the pandemic, plans are still not finalized for the event to be held. **When plans are finalized for the event, you will receive an email with the details and the registration for the event.**

NOW

*is the best time to Recruit
New AAUW Members!*

*Every AAUW member is a
part of the membership
team. Experience tells us
that new members who
are **recruited by our own**
Branch members become
active and **stay** in AAUW.*

Grant Applications

accepted

January 1 through February 28.

*The Grant Application Form and
instructions for applying may be
found on the web site at:*

<http://aauwfortwayne.org>

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