



# AAUW-NM ... Roadrunner ...

## Fall 2024

*Please Note Los Alamos Report Now Included in this Issue*

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



**Helena Whyte, Co-President**



**Anne Chase, Co-President**

### From our Presidents

**Greetings to all our New Mexico Branches and Members.**

**We are beginning a new 2024-2025 year with an experienced Co-President – Helena Whyte and a new one – Anne Chase, who have been attending monthly AAUW Governance Committee Zoom meetings.**

As you plan your new branch year, evaluate what your branch has outgrown and may need to update/replace. Is there something that could be changed or added to your branch? Does your Branch web page need updating? Do you have a recent posting on your Branch facebook page?

This is our first year under our new By-laws (smaller leadership team), which means that we will have 3 LTM meetings this year - one of which will be via Zoom Nov 2, an in-person meeting in Santa Fe during the 60 day legislature session, and an in person state convention in April or May. Since the program chair is now a one-year appointed position, we are looking for a volunteer or committee to plan the state convention. Let Helena or Anne know if you would like to find the state convention location. Kathy Davis, Cheri Burch and Sylvia Fink planned the

2024 convention in Alamogordo even though we did not have a branch there (we may have a new branch forming there).

As everyone is well aware, this November is a big election and one of our priorities is to get out the vote. Because New Mexico has early voting, we need to start now to encourage all our members to exercise their right to vote – both up and down the ballot.

**Check Out / Share AAUW's Voter Issue Guide (also translated in Spanish):**  
**[AAUW Voter Issue Guide](#)**

[We encourage you to think critically about your civic responsibility and to examine the issues before casting your vote. AAUW is a nonpartisan organization which means you cannot use AAUW affiliation if you are working for a specific candidate. You can speak out about the issues, but you cannot use AAUW name to support a political party.](#)

[The UN is calling 2024 a “Super Year” because internationally 3.7 billion voters will be going to the polls in 72 countries, making this the largest election year in history!](#)

**We also want to congratulate the Carlsbad Branch on signing up 25 new members at their Champagne en Blanc event! VERY impressive!**

## Public Policy Report

**Meredith Machen, Public Policy Chair**

### It's My Vote- AAUW's 2024 Election Guidelines



AAUW's State Public Policy Chairs have been asked by national to make sure that members are clear about our nonpartisan policies, which are stricter than some other nonprofit organizations. In broad strokes, AAUW never expressly advocates for the election or defeat of any clearly identified partisan candidate or political party and never prepares for or coordinates election-related activities with any candidate or political party. It's a bit more complex than that. There are certain AAUW policies prohibiting 501(c)(3) organizations from undertaking activities that are legally permissible for 501(c)(4) organizations. We summarize the difference by saying that 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are able to accept tax-deductible donations and are primarily educational entities whose advocacy activities are limited, but when it comes to elections, the distinctions in status matter.

AAUW's Action Fund (501(c)(4)) has a 2024 Voter Guide template useful for us when determining where candidates stand on our priority issues. See <https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/voter-guides/>.

Several of our national Public Policy meetings and special election trainings have focused on subtleties that I will summarize here. Comments and queries from my counterparts in other states make me appreciate once again how enlightened New Mexico's laws and policies are in terms of human rights, education, social services, health care (including reproductive rights, gender equity, and other areas). We are making progress as a state, though we lack sufficient funding and infrastructure to address our most intractable problems.

As is clear in AAUW-NM's newly revised bylaws, our state organization is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. AAUW-NM's Advocacy Team, which operates under 501(c)(4) rules, conducts activities to promote policies, programs, and funding at the legislature and other state and local governments, including school boards. While a couple of our branches are separately incorporated as 501(c)(3) organizations, most branches have 501(c)(4) status. AAUW is adamant that whether organized under 501(c)(3) or (c)(4) we are never allowed to support



candidates or parties. In this election cycle, we are seeing other nonprofits organized under 501(c)(4) rules using their action funds to support and/or oppose specific candidates. The stakes are very high this election and speaking out on issues of importance is our right as Americans; however, we must do so carefully. I believe that some of our usual allied organizations, respected nonprofits, which share our priorities, could be on very thin legal ice that could jeopardize their status with the IRS. We will abide by longstanding AAUW policies and procedures. We can compare candidates' positions, statements, records on voting on or promoting legislation, as long as we do our analyses fairly and equally, side by side.

**Individual AAUW members** may endorse candidates for partisan elective office, contribute money or anything of value to such candidate(s), and organize for supporting such candidate(s) as long as there is no mention of AAUW. "Any AAUW member who is actively involved in a candidate's campaign should avoid participating in activities that may give the appearance of AAUW's endorsement of the candidate."\*

**"Election activities carried out in AAUW's name must be conducted within the guidelines set out in AAUW policies. Activities must also be allowable under regulations established by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Election Commission. There are certain AAUW policies prohibiting 501(c)(3) organizations from undertaking some activities that are legally permissible for 501(c)(4) organizations.**

\*\*

#### **WHAT AAUW ORGANIZATIONS MAY and MAY NOT DO**

Focus issue education messages and get-out-the-vote activities on the impact that the election results will have on AAUW priority issues.

Those messages or activities **must not** expressly advocate the election or defeat of any candidate or party. Encourage voters to support unspecified candidates who agree with AAUW's position on specific issues. For example, a branch or state can publish a "vote pro-choice" message. The message cannot appear, however, in a publication that gives candidates' views on reproductive rights. Identify particular groups in the community (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities) to be part of coalition efforts or to receive election materials. Decisions about which groups to work with should be based on factors such as the desire to build a broad-based coalition, not on whether an anticipated coalition member can affect the outcome of an election. Any political action committee or organization that has endorsed a candidate cannot be asked to be a coalition member in an AAUW voter education or voter turnout campaign.

#### **VOTER EDUCATION**

**"Any publication or oral statement of the candidates' responses to questions asked on a questionnaire or at a forum may include a statement of AAUW's position on the issues covered, as long as there is no call to remember AAUW's position when voting."**

In addition to voting records, the following may be used to gather and publicize information about the candidates' positions on issues: position papers issued by candidates, public statements made by candidates, candidate questionnaires, and candidate forums. Different guidelines apply to each activity.

All candidates running for the offices to be covered in the questionnaire must have the opportunity to participate. Language must not favor or disfavor a particular candidate, and all responses received must be printed in their entirety in any publication of questionnaire responses. The publication of responses should include the names of all candidates to whom the questionnaire was sent, but publication may proceed even if all candidates do not respond.

#### **FORUMS**

All major party candidates for the office must be invited, and an effort must be made to ensure their participation. **If only one candidate can attend and the other candidates do not send**

representatives, AAUW branches with 501(c)(3) status may not proceed with a forum. AAUW branches with 501(c)(4) status may proceed in organizing regardless of how many candidates attend."

*\*Quotations are excerpts from **AAUW Board of Directors Policy Book, May 2024**, which is available online. Segments have been re-arranged for clarity. Policy 301 in the Policy Book has the full set of rules for AAUW's 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations for our state entity. Any entity that has not filed to be separately incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization falls under AAUW's 501(c)(4) status.*

For more information, contact Meredith Machen, AAUW-NM Public Policy Chair, [meredith.machen@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.machen@gmail.com), 505 577-6337.

### SAVE the DATES!

**AAUW-NM Winter Meeting - Sunday February 9 - Santa Fe**

**Legislative Advocacy Day - Monday February 10 - Santa Fe**

#### **Healthy Aging and Economic Security** **How Is NM Preparing to Address Our Challenging Demographics?**

By 2030, New Mexico will have the fourth largest number of residents over 65, and many have disabilities and need special support services. Our school-aged and working population has markedly declined according to the Census and is projected to decline further. What programs, policies, and plans are in the works to meet the gaps and needs? Stay tuned. Information about our speakers and meeting logistics will be in the Winter Roadrunner and sent out to all AAUW NM members.

If you have speakers to recommend for these meetings, please contact Meredith Machen, State Public Policy Chair, [meredith.machen@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.machen@gmail.com), 505 577-6337.

### AAUW-NM Elections and Legislative Calendar

#### 2024

Late September- Check [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) for the League of Women Voters nonpartisan voter guide to see your customized ballot, candidate responses to questions, and ballot questions.

October 8 – Early begins. Check [nmvote.org](http://nmvote.org) for absentee ballot/vote-by-mail application and general information. Link to your county clerk for specific early voting locations and schedules.

October 22-Last day to request absentee ballot/vote-by-mail application

November 5 – Election Day. Mail-in ballots must be received by your county clerk by 7pm Close to deadline? Deliver to your county clerk or use drop-boxes. Expect mail delivery to be very slow.

November 6 – Go to [nmvote.org](http://nmvote.org)/ "Voting and Elections" to see unofficial voting results by office and district.\*

#### 2025

**Legislature- [nmlegis.gov](http://nmlegis.gov)**

January 2 January 17 Legislation may be pre-filed

January 4 LWVNM Advocacy Training Workshop, 10am to noon by ZOOM

January 21 Opening day. Governor speaks around noon.



**February 9 AAUW NM Winter Meeting, Hotel Santa Fe (Details to be confirmed)**

**February 10 AAUW NM Advocacy Day presentations (Details to be confirmed)**

February 20 Deadline for introduction of new legislation (midpoint)

March 22 Session ends (noon)

**Election questions or concerns: call 505-827-3600 or email**

[Elections@sos.nm.gov](mailto:Elections@sos.nm.gov) . NM's elections are ranked first in the nation for accuracy, accessibility, and efficient administration.

*Branch Leaders and Public Policy Chairs: Please reach out to your new and returning local legislators to introduce yourself and share our Public Policy Priorities for 2025. Please help arrange a legislative preview in your area before the session begins and send your local delegation invitations. Town halls held in early January with other non-partisan organizations are very helpful in building member engagement, new membership, and partnerships.*



Thank you all for my Legacy of Leadership Award. My AAUW-NM membership has given me a community of friends and “partners-in-crime” for a variety of activities over the last 19 years. Though my husband and I will be moving to Highlands Ranch, Colorado at the end of July, I plan to join the Online Branch and continue my participation in AAUW New Mexico. Thank you, again. I will miss so many of you.

Sylvia Fink



### Special Report from former AAUW NM President Lynn Heffron

I am happy to share that I have joined the Santa Fe School Board effective August 29, 2024 to replace a member who left mid-term. I will serve until December 2025. My represented district includes 7 schools: 4 elementary, the Nye Early Childhood Center serving 3 and 4 year olds with special needs, one middle and one high school. These last 2 weeks I have walked through all the schools accompanied by principals and staff. I have also joined the SF School Board Audit Committee. My board membership prohibits tutoring at the SF public schools, but I continue to tutor at the Institute of American Indian Art. Please know the academic, mental, and social well being of our students together with understanding their family relationships represent key areas of my studies and pursuits of bettering their achievements and holistic wellness.



## Branch News

Please Note the Los Alamos Report has now been added to the Roadrunner.

### **Judy Prono, Facilitator AAUW-Los Alamos Report**

We are looking forward to our Fall Lunch on Sept. 28, which will kick off our 2024/25 activities. Held at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church and catered by Ruby K's, a local restaurant, it will feature two speakers this year. Bailey Garcia, a Tech Trek camper from Los Alamos Middle School, will share her impressions and takeaways from this year's camp. We always enjoy seeing Tech Trek through campers' eyes and hearing what they found most rewarding. After Garcia's talk, Helena Whyte will show short videos from this year's camp and one that focuses on the camp's impact on three young women who attended Tech Trek several years ago.

Our second speaker will be Kristen Henderson of N3B (Newport News Nuclear BWXT Los Alamos), who will discuss work under way to clean up legacy radiological and hazardous waste around Los Alamos National Laboratory. She will also discuss N3B's community outreach work that supports nonprofits in northern New Mexico.

As part of our business meeting, we'll have a DEI presentation and discuss plans for our branch interest groups: fiction and nonfiction book groups, Great Decisions (a foreign policy study group), and Out 'n About. We will also recognize two new Honorary Life Members of our branch, Judy Crocker and Mona Wecksung. We now have 8 Honorary Life Members, which underscores the AAUW mission-commitment of our members.

As part of our October activities, we will encourage members to attend the local candidate forums for county and state candidates, sponsored by the League of Women Voters. We will also again support the League's Voter Guide work. And on election day, we will offer rides to the polling sites for any members who would appreciate that assistance.

### **AAUW Carlsbad Roadrunner Report Submitted by: Cassie Marrs AAUW Carlsbad President**

AAUW Carlsbad met in July to plan our events for the year. We had a good turnout at the meeting and set some exciting events.

We already had a successful start by bringing back the Champagne Brunch en Blanc. We held this event back in 2018 and 2019. This year we were fortunate to have it again. It was held on Sunday, August 25 at The Valley Venue. The Valley Venue is a new wedding venue owned by



our Program Chair and she very generously let us have the event there.

We asked for nominations for our AAUW Carlsbad Empowerment Award, given to a woman who has done work to empower women in the community. We received 8 nominations and the award went to Zelma Lopez, the Executive Director of Affirming Heart Victim Services. She founded what began as the Cavern City Child Advocacy Center, with a mission of providing Forensic Interviewing to the child of Eddy County. This has now grown into the leading victim service agency in southeastern New Mexico, spanning two counties. Her efforts have created a lifeline for women in Eddy County ensuring they have access to the resources they need. Her vision and dedication have not only transformed AHVS but have also uplifted the community, creating a safer and more supportive environment for women. Zelma was awarded a beautiful, engraved vase filled with white flowers donated by Angee's Flowers.

We had ~90 people attend the event. Which was a huge turnout for our first year back. We asked those attending to wear white to the event to honor the suffragists who fought for our right to vote. Our guest speaker was City Councilwoman Karla Niemeier who discussed the struggles she overcame in life as a woman to get where she is today. Her speech was very inspirational and many women who attended discussed how they related to what she talked about. Our brunch was catered by the Carlsbad High School Culinary group and we served champagne.

The highlight of the event was gaining 25 new members! Our leadership is just so delighted with the interest we had at the event. We hope to retain these new members for years to come. Since we gained so many new members, we had a New Member Orientation. This was held at The Other Side at Milton's Brewing to introduce members to our organization. We explained what our plans were for the year and how they could get involved. We also discussed what things are happening at the state and national level. We had a great turnout and they stayed for our monthly meeting which happened right after.

We continue to have our monthly meetings, monthly book group and monthly lunch bunch. If you haven't already, be sure to check out our Facebook page, AAUW Carlsbad. We have been working to post more often.

### **Report from the Santa Fe Branch of AAUW By Co-President Jeanne Patrick**

The Santa Fe Branch was scheduled to have its annual Ice Cream Social September 14 2024. However, the main water pipe to the meeting room broke. The meeting has been rescheduled to September 21.

The Branch has been busy scheduling programs for the future. November 6 a discussion of The Women a book by Kristin Hannah will be held . Several of the members of the Santa Fe Branch were actually in the military in DaNang Vietnam during the time period referenced in the book. Members of the Branch are looking forward to lively discussion. Friends and family members have been invited to this group.

In December our Branch will attend the annual Christmas concert at the Lensic Theatre. This has become a tradition for the Branch.

In February, Anne Hillerman will be discussing her books with our branch. Ms. Hillerman has been a frequent guest of our Branch for 16 years. She originally discussed her book of restaurant reviews and then children's books. Her late husband Don Strel discussed his pictorial book of places in New Mexico that were featured in Tony Hillerman's books.

The Santa Fe Branch will be hosting our UNM Endowment scholarship winner in the Spring. As always, Santa Fe looks forward to ideas to recruit new members.

## **Fall Roadrunner Report from Las Cruces Branch** **Submitted by Co-Presidents Donna Yargosz & Lynette Schurdevin**

Although it is only the beginning of a new fiscal year for us, various members were busy over the summer rewriting and preparing printed material to hand out to prospective members and/or students interested in our scholarships and awards. We have a one page (one side) paper called "AAUW in a Nutshell" which outlines what we do and how we do it. We hope it will be an all-purpose handout for a variety of events, both public and inside the branch.

We will kick off fundraising for our Big Three causes: the Scholarship Fund and NCCWSL, Girls Can! (career exploration for 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls), and Tech Trek. The donation jar at each general meeting usually nets us quite an amount from our generous members. We will also participate in our usual Lynchcreek Farm's live wreath and centerpiece fundraiser. And we will try out selling beaded items (like the name tag lanyards many of you saw at Alamogordo) and other things at a local holiday bazaar.

We will encourage voting during this election year by partnering with the League of Women Voters and by using free voting materials from National.

Our interest groups are going strong (book clubs, bridge, mah jong), and we will add back in Going Places, which offers day trips to interesting local places plus lunch out together.

In December we will have our holiday luncheon and silent auction. We are an active branch; this year is shaping up to be no different.

## **Albuquerque Branch Report** **Submitted by Louise Gerstle**

The Albuquerque Branch of AAUW continues to be very active. In 2023, branch member Danielle Martin gave a presentation about the history of artificial intelligence (AI) and its applications. At our April meeting this year we welcomed Jennifer Quay Minnich, a computer scientist who specializes in artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML). Her talk was "Current Uses and Impact of Artificial Intelligence."

Spring found the STEM Taskforce busy as usual. In April, members of the Taskforce judged projects for the 2024 Central New Mexico Science and Engineering Research Challenge and awarded Young Scientist Awards to girls competing in different categories from 6th to 12th grade. In May, cards of congratulations were sent to 60 alumnae of Tech Trek 2019 who were graduating from high school.

The last general meeting of the year in May was a garden luncheon at the home of Janet Matwiyoff, where members socialized and welcomed new members and visitors.

The first meeting of the 2024-25 year in September featured a jigsaw puzzle competition, which even drew the attention of some residents of the retirement community where meetings are held. STEM chair Cheri Burch gave a short presentation about the history of jigsaw puzzles, as well as the benefits to doing puzzles. Attendees were split into teams of four, each with the same (science themed!) puzzle to do within 45 minutes, and only allowed to see the image at the beginning of the time. The winning team, completing the puzzle in just under 28 minutes, included branch members Mary Moskal, Kim Scheerer, Sue Phelps, and guest Trish Merewether.





 **AAUW TECH TREK  
NEW MEXICO**

**Your donations to support our AAUW NM summer STEM camp for upcoming 8th grade NM girls is always needed and appreciated.**

**Contact Cheri Burch for more information.**

**[ctburch@aol.com](mailto:ctburch@aol.com)**

## Strengthening Education at All Levels

1. Ensuring quality programs through funding, professional training, and student support.
2. Promoting access to both academic programs and personal development.
3. Enhancing career opportunities through training, scholarships, and fellowships.

## Improving Economic Security and Healthy Lifestyles

1. Supporting funding for affordable housing, social services, quality childcare, and food.
2. Advocating for affordable, accessible healthcare, reproductive rights, and behavioral health.
3. Promoting fair economic policies, including student loan debt relief, tax credits, and pay equity.
4. Addressing income stress and retirement security.

## Fostering Quality Work Experiences

1. Promoting improved compensation and professional advancement opportunities.
2. Advocating for Paid Family and Medical Leave and flexible, family-friendly work conditions.

## Promoting Safe, Just, Sustainable Communities

1. Advancing gender equity and sexism; addressing gun violence; reducing trauma and domestic abuse; treating alcohol and substance abuse.
2. Advocating for social justice and civil rights.
3. Protecting our environment and natural resources.

## Improving Government Accountability and Access

1. Modernizing legislative practices; advocating for compensation to ensure diverse representation.
2. Promoting collaborative problem-solving and reducing partisanship.
3. Fostering respectful dialogue about critical issues.
4. Protecting voting rights and fair elections.
5. Embracing inclusive practices and policies.

For further information, visit [AAUW-New Mexico](#). Meredith Machen, AAUW-NM Public Policy Chair, [meredith.machen@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.machen@gmail.com), 505 577-6337

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### **AAUW**

Founded in 1923

### **Mission:**

To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy

### **AAUW-NM Focus:**

"Empowering Women to change their lives"



**AAUW NM**

**AAUW**

The *Roadrunner* is a quarterly publication of AAUW NM  
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