

Presidential Postings



Fall is truly in the air! And the holiday season is upon us. I hope you can spend time with family and friends in the next few weeks.

The November 8th meeting with Kirstin Connelly, our County Registrar, was quite wonderful. She spoke about voter outreach and the mapping prejudice project, as well as the November election. The First Congregational Church of Martinez provided a nice place for the meeting. Thanks to Carlyn Obringer for arranging for our speaker and to Nancy Hobert for coordinating with her church as our meeting location.



The Holiday Party Extravaganza is coming on Saturday, December 13th, at noon, at the Brookview Clubhouse. Sharon Wilson and her committee have put together a lovely menu and some fun activities for the gathering. Reservations go to Diane Peterson with a November 29th deadline. Check out the flyer that was emailed with this newsletter!



Janice Walker is hosting the Annual Layette Shower at 10 A.M. on January 26, 2026. See Janice's article about the items that are needed for Hillcrest Church's Layette Program. Articles created by hand or purchased that can be used by children from 3 to 12 months old are this year's request.

Happy Holidays!

~ SarahJoy, Sherrie, and Reba

[SAM Program](#)



[International Soup Supper](#)



[Public Policy](#)



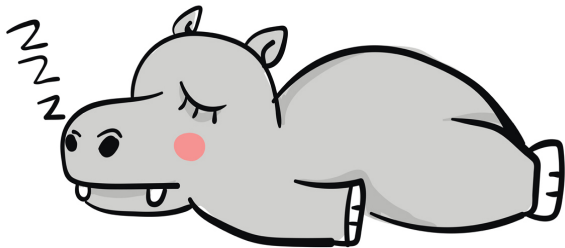


Wine Appreciation Group

The Wine Appreciation Group met on November 21st and learned a little about Pinot Grigio and Pinot Gris and tasted them. Thanks to Karen, Sandy, and Gayle for providing the wine. We had a lively discussion and voted on our favorite.

There will not be a meeting in December. The next Wine Appreciation meeting will be on January 16, 2026, at 4 P.M., at Diane Peterson's house. We will learn about and taste Sangiovese, a red wine. If you want to attend, please let Diane know. Space is limited and sadly we have had to say "sorry" to a few.

~ Diane Peterson



Annual Layette Shower Wednesday, January 21, 10 A.M.

Here we are again at that time of year when thoughts turn to giving to others. The tradition of our Branch, started many years ago by member Jean Hamilton still goes on. That tradition is to donate items for needy mothers to the Hillcrest Church's Layette Program. This year's Layette Shower will be on Wednesday, January 21, at 10:00 A.M., at Janice Walker's, 524 Monti Circle, Pleasant Hill. The Layette Program this year requests anything a little one can use from sizes 3 months to 12 months. Please email me, sandjwalk@comcast.net, or call 925-827-3374, if you plan to attend the shower. If you're unable to attend but would like to make a donation, please drop off your item before the shower, or contact me and we can make arrangements for a pickup. Do plan to participate in January. The people of Hillcrest have always been so appreciative of our donations and those who have received them have had great needs.

~ Janice Walker



SAM at Fair Oaks in February/March

Would you like to be a SAM volunteer?

We are creating a curriculum for our SAM (Study Art and Music) Program for Fair Oaks Elementary School for February/March 2026. Our lesson plan always includes an artist and a composer. This year we will be studying the artist **Piet Mondrian**, and **George Gershwin** will be our composer. The music we will be studying is **Rhapsody in Blue**.

Your duties will be pretty simple — help us set up and clean up and then admire the work of the students. We will teach K thru 5th grade, and 3 Special Ed classes (SDC).

We are planning a workday in February, where we will prepare the materials for the students and get familiar with the PowerPoint.

Please let us know if you would like to volunteer. So far, we have 17 volunteers on our list. It's lots of fun and rewarding.

~ Sherrie Moore, Barbara Minneman, and Helen Pereira



Note from our Treasurer

During this day and age there are multiple scams out there. As careful as you are, there are occasions when your bank account is compromised and it is necessary to close the account. If you have written a check using the compromised account to AAUW Pleasant Hill- Martinez Branch, please let me know. I can either shred that check or return it to you. You can then write a replacement check using your new account. The bank charges us a \$16 service fee for returned checks. Thanks.

~ Claudia Bass, Treasurer





Morning Books

Morning Books will meet on Wednesday, December 3rd, 10 A.M., at Sandra Wolfe's home. We will be discussing *Crow Talk* by Eileen Garvin. Set in the Pacific Northwest, this book offers a touching tale of nature and love. (This author also wrote *The Music of Bees*.) Join us for a lively discussion of this book.

Next month, on January 7th, 10 A.M., we're discussing *James* by Percival Everett. Carolyn Barclay will be our hostess. This book is "A brilliant, action-packed reimagining of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* told from the enslaved Jim's point of view." I'm looking forward to reading it, and I hope you are too!



Lunchin' Ladies

Lunchin' Ladies will meet on Monday, December 15th at 12:00 noon at The Cheesecake Factory, 1181 Locust Street, Walnut

Creek. Reservations must be in to Gayle Miner by Monday, December 8th.

Gayle Miner, 925-788-3272 or gayle.miner@yahoo.com

NO EXCEPTIONS PLEASE.



Nimble Fingers

Nimble Fingers will not be meeting in December. Look for the next meeting information

in the January 2026 newsletter!

Janet: 925-387-8039

janetsullivan218@aol.com

Karen: 925-408-5721

karen.winters@sbcglobal.net



Mah Jongg

Mah Jongg will meet on Friday, December 19, at 12:30 P.M. at

Brookview Clubhouse. Newbies are welcome too!

Be sure to let Suzanne Salter

(seabear92020@outlook.com or 925-988-0322)

know if you are coming.



Grand Slammers

Bridge Club — for information, contact Marlene De Laurenti:

mdl@astound.net or 925-934-4171

SUNSHINE

If you know of any member who needs a bit of sunshine, please let me know!

Marti Martin

richmar1016@sbcglobal.net or

925-229-3574

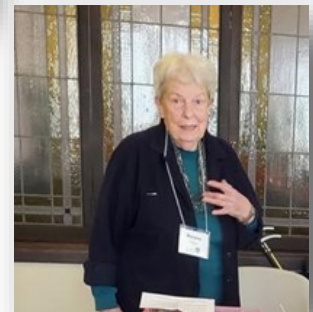
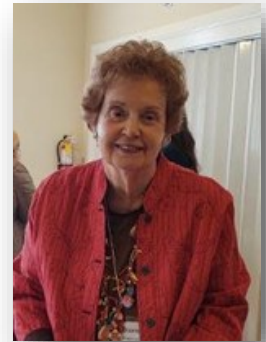


AAUW Pleasant Hill— Martinez Branch Website

Our website will show you everything you need to know about our Pleasant Hill — Martinez branch. Read about our November Program on the Photos Page. Check out our Programs and Events on the **Program Page**. As always, read the latest newsletter on the **Newsletter Page**.

Just go to <http://www.aauw-pleasanthill-martinez.org>. Remember to press **F5** to get the most current version of each page. Forward any questions or comments that you may have to the webmaster on the **About Us Page**.

~ Sherrie Moore, Webmaster



PHM AAUW NEWS is sponsored by Montecito Animal Clinic

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Public Policy

2025 Legislative Session Ends with Some Big Wins and Tough Losses for AAUW California

The 2025 legislative session has closed in California.

Kathy Van Osten, AAUW California's Legislative Advocate, summarized the session this way: "In 2025, 917 bills were sent to the Governor, of which he signed 794 bills and vetoed 123 bills. The 2025 Legislative Session was tumultuous as policymakers worked to address the impacts of ravaging urban wildfires in Los Angeles, to pass a State Budget that closed a \$12 billion deficit, and to address a multitude of impacts created by the violent upheaval of federal funding and policies that have or will decimate services for Californians, that threaten existing or future projects in the State, and that threaten our educational institutions."

With these issues in mind, AAUW California put together our 2025 Legislative Agenda, taking a support position on 26 bills, and for the first time in our recent history, taking an opposition position on 7 bills. With the blessing of the Public Policy Committee and the AAUW California Board, we were proud to advance this agenda, which confronted some of the most pressing issues that we face as a state, and a nation, around gender equity and social justice. We were also proud to take strong opposition positions this year, given the large number of bills introduced at the start of the session that were antithetical to AAUW California's values and Public Policy Priorities.

While our A-priority support bills did not fare well this session, we are happy to report that we had a great deal of success with the rest of our support bills as well as with stopping the opposition bills from advancing.

First the bad news: Our A-priority support bills were vetoed or gutted.

- **SB 771 was vetoed.** This A-priority bill, authored by Senator Henry Stern and sponsored by AAUW California, would have held social media companies liable if their algorithms aid or abet individual users who are breaking the law and intimidating or threatening others in online spaces. The Governor vetoed the bill, indicating that current civil rights laws have not been tested in the courts with respect to algorithms' complicity in hate crimes, and that until existing law is deemed insufficient by the courts, SB 771 is premature.
- **SB 418 was vetoed.** This A-priority bill, authored by Senator Caroline Menjivar, would have prohibited a health service provider from denying coverage for services based upon race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, including sexual preference or gender identity, intersex traits, and pregnancy. The Governor vetoed the bill, citing a concern that the bill's requirement to cover prescribed hormone therapy without utilization management (UM) is likely to drive up the cost of health care.
- **AB 1098 was gutted and amended.** This A-priority bill, authored by Assemblymember Mike Fong, would have prohibited a postsecondary educational institution from discriminating against a student based on their current, potential, or past pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions. According to the author's office, the bill had run into significant opposition from the public universities, and they chose not to continue to move the bill this year. Instead, the bill language was gutted and replaced with language that establishes the Office of the Interagency Council on Education within the Governor's Operations Agency. The amended bill was signed into law.

Now, the good news: Of our fourteen support bills that made it to the Governor's desk, eleven were signed into law. Below are some important wins:

Public Policy (cont'd)

- **AB 621 - signed into law!** This B-priority bill, authored by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, heightens penalties for companies whose platforms distribute deepfake pornography.
- **SB 669 - signed into law!** This B-priority bill, authored by Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire, authorizes up to five rural hospitals throughout the state to partner with licensed birth centers to provide perinatal services in rural communities.
- **AB 260 - signed into law!** Authored by Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, this bill protects access to medication abortion.
- **SB 627- signed into law!** Authored by Senator Scott Wiener, this bill bans law enforcement officers from wearing facial coverings during their duties.
This is the first such law enacted in the nation!

And of the seven bills that AAUW California opposed, four have become 2-year bills and three have died:

- **AB 579 is dead!** This A-priority bill, authored by Assemblymember Leticia Castillo, would have stated categorically that parents' refusal to acknowledge a child's gender identity can never be considered a form of abuse or neglect, and therefore cannot be considered in a custody dispute.
- **AB 25 is dead!** Authored by Assemblymember Carl DeMaio, this bill would have required an elections official to verify the citizenship of voters and authorized the official to require a person to provide documentation of citizenship for that purpose.
- **AB 1012 is dead!** Authored by Assemblymember Bill Essayli, this bill would have prohibited the pro-

vision of Medi-Cal to people without legal immigration status.

To see the full results of the 2025 Legislative Agenda, please go to the [Bill Tracking Report](#). The November issue of [Public Policy News](#) includes a Legislative Agenda Scorecard.

~ Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko, Co-chairs AAUW California Public Policy

Supporting Public Education: Community-based Coalitions

It began with one quietly determined advocate on a mission. Laurinda Ochoa, a Danville-based grandmother and retired attorney, was alarmed by the 2021 launch of Moms for Liberty chapters across California. In 2022 she began monitoring San Ramon Valley Unified School District (SRVUSD) board meetings, where she observed a swelling stream of demands from Moms for Liberty and their allies favoring restrictive and/or anti-LGBTQ+ curricula. Laurinda's desire to organize with like-minded local public education champions led her to join the Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek (DAW) branch, where in 2023 she secured a strong commitment for branch representation at monthly meetings of the SRVUSD Board. Laurinda noted the organizations represented by other community attendees at the school board meetings. She nurtured relationships between our DAW branch and other groups who share AAUW's dedication to outstanding public education.

And she pressed on. Hearing DAW members' concerns about the challenges confronting school boards throughout the area, recognizing the synergistic political impact of multiple organizations speaking with a unified voice, and the potential for grassroots public education advocates across school districts to learn from one another through shared successes and challenges, Laurinda scaled up. She contacted the leaders of local pro-public

Public Policy (cont'd)

education organizations to solicit their interest in forming a grassroots coalition that would serve as an additional source of support for public education across Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. The response was widespread enthusiasm. After several leadership planning meetings, the Lift Up Public Schools coalition launched formally in April, 2024.

Lift Up Public Schools (LUPS) is an all-volunteer coalition of grassroots groups from Contra Costa and Alameda Counties advocating for excellent public education delivered in settings that are safe and welcoming to all. LUPS has about 250 members including leaders from AAUW branches; PTA; Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG); the League of Women Voters; teachers unions; county and local partisan organizations; and current and former school district faculty and staff. The coalition is not funded by any political organization or entity. LUPS does not raise funds or make donations. The coalition's mission is to advocate for high-quality public education that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Its vision is a vibrant, democratic society of compassionate, well-informed, engaged community members.

LUPS initially focused on helping recruit, vet, and drive turnout to elect 2024 pro-public education school board candidates. The coalition supported 10 candidates running for seats in 8 Alameda County districts, 6 of whom won, and 6 candidates running for seats in 4 Contra Costa County districts, 4 of whom won. The coalition's support included social media promotion, assistance with the planning and conduct of candidate forums, and volunteering for candidate campaigns. In addition to electoral work, LUPS conducted community outreach to cultivate awareness, understanding, and action regarding the challenges facing public education; submitted public comments supporting diverse and inclusive ethnic studies curriculum; and endorsed a district parcel tax campaign. In the wake of the 2024 elections, the coalition has worked on capacity-building – evolving its organizational

structure to stimulate the growth of LUPS local hubs in nearby school districts, expanding community outreach and education about the work of school boards, and developing as a trusted source of insight on the local impact of key public education-related issues at all levels of government.

As a LUPS organizer, I can attest to the value of our nascent coalition. We are growing compassionate grassroots power – holding a summit where presenters and the public exchange national, regional, and local perspectives on how best to respond to crucial challenges confronting public education; promoting outstanding school board candidates; publicizing local pro-public education initiatives; encouraging the development of local advocacy hubs; and leveraging the thousands of person-years of LUPS members' collective experience to help communities fulfill our highest aspirations for public education.

It can start with a single advocate – might be you!

This article is the third installment in a series focused on the AAUW California School Board Project. If you missed them, check out “Understand the Urgency of Branch Participation in the School Board Project” and “School Boards - The Overlooked Frontline of Democracy” in the September and October issues of [Public Policy News](#).

~ Ogie Strogatz, Member, AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project

Writing a check for donation or event?

**Please make it payable to
AAUW Pleasant Hill—Martinez Branch.**



International Soup Supper

Wednesday, February 18th, 2026, 6 P.M.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
1601 Mary Drive, Pleasant Hill

**Please join us for hearty, homemade soups, breads, and desserts at our
Pleasant Hill-Martinez Branch Annual International Soup Supper**

Coffee, water, and tea will be provided. Be sure to bring your own soup bowl and spoon.

Dinner starts promptly at 6 P.M., and remember that spouses, partners, and friends are most welcome.

**Let us know if you would like to bring a pot of soup serving 10-12 people
or bread or dessert OR pay \$15. All guests pay \$15.**

Contact Suzanne Salter 925 988-0322 or seabear92020@outlook.com

Reservation deadline and payment by February 15th

Please indicate number of guests. You must pay in advance!

Make checks payable to **AAUW Pleasant Hill-Martinez Branch**

Mail to: 275 Appalachian Drive, Pleasant Hill 94523

Our speaker for the evening is Cherise Khaund

She will talk about her experiences growing up in Saudia Arabia and Venezuela

We are having a raffle to support Tech Trek

Raffle - 1 ticket for \$3, 2 for \$5, 5 for \$10, 12 for \$20

So bring some cash and have some fun!

**Let Diane Coventry know by February 12th if you would like to donate
any raffle items. Indicate estimated value of items.**

Hope to see you there!

PHM AAUW Calendar

Dec 3 Morning Books, 10 A.M., Sandy Wolfe's

NO DECEMBER BOARD MEETING

Dec 13 Holiday Party Extravaganza, 12 noon,
Brookview Clubhouse

Dec 15 Lunchin' Ladies, 12:00 noon, The
Cheesecake Factory, 1181 Locust Street,
Walnut Creek

Dec 19 Mah Jongg, 12:30 P.M.,
Brookview Clubhouse

Dec 24 January NEWS deadline - slightly EARLY!

Jan 14 January Board Meeting, 7 pm, TBA



2025–26 Leadership Team

President 1 (Board Meeting Chair):

SaraJoy Haynes

President 2 (General Meeting Chair):

Sherrie Moore

President 3 (National & Newsletter):

Reba Siero

Vice President—Program:

Carlyn Obringer

Vice Presidents—Membership:

Nancy Hobert & Diane Peterson

Vice Presidents—AAUW Fund:

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