

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I was very proud to lead the Florida delegation to the Association Convention in June in Washington, D. C. It was an exciting convention and everyone came away with renewed enthusiasm for AAUW and our mission.

For the past year, AAUW has been experiencing many challenges and changes, one of which was the merger of the Legal Advocacy Fund with the Educational Foundation. I want to make clear, that the Legal Advocacy Fund still exists and will continue to support continuing and new cases of discrimination in the academic world. Florida AAUW continues to urge branches to support the Legal Advocacy Fund as well as the Educational Foundation. Contributions made directly to LAF continue to be tax deductible, as do contributions to the Educational Foundation.

Another of the changes in AAUW, is the decision by vote of the delegates to the Association Convention to open membership in AAUW to those with an associate degree or the equivalent. It is important to recognize that this is a change to the Association bylaws, which take precedence over state and branch bylaws. Those with an associate degree are now entitled to full membership in AAUW.

The associate degree is defined as an academic degree conferred by a two-year college after the prescribed course of study has been successfully completed. It also includes degrees awarded by community colleges, junior colleges and bachelor's degree-granting colleges and universities upon completion of a course of study equivalent to the first two years in a four-year college or university. The equivalent of an associate degree is an academic degree or diploma awarded by a qualified institution such as a business college or a hospital, which may not be called "associate degree" but has the same academic requirements or greater. An example is the 2 or 3 year RN diploma.

Many are asking if someone who has completed two or more years of college but has not received a degree or diploma would be eligible for membership in AAUW. Thus far, it has been ruled that they would not be eligible. (But, if the individual is pursuing a degree, they would be eligible for a student affiliate membership.) AAUW remains an organization whose members have completed academic work and have been awarded a degree or diploma from a qualified educational institution.

I hope that all members of Florida AAUW will embrace this change to our membership requirements and look on it as an opportunity to reinvigorate our branches. And remember, members with an associate's degree, will be full members, equal in every way to those with a four year degree. They can vote, they can hold office, and they are entitled to membership. Welcome this change.

You probably recall that for the past year I have adopted a kind of mantra, "**We will keep showing up.**" I think we have to continue to show up to further the mission of AAUW, to promote equity for all women and girls, lifelong education and positive societal change. With that in mind, I'd like to remind you that Lobby Days with the Florida

Women's Consortium will take place March 27/28, 2006, in Tallahassee. Our State Convention will be held at the Hyatt Hotel in Sarasota on April 21/23, 2006. Put these dates on your calendar and plan to participate. Because equity is still an issue.

L. Carol Newnam
President