

## Suggested Newsletter Content

### AAUW Open Membership Vote

AAUW's annual election will start on April 7. Included in the vote is a proposal to open membership, which requires a change to AAUW's national bylaws through member vote. A description of the proposed bylaws changes can be found [here](#).

#### HOW MIGHT THIS BYLAW CHANGE AFFECT MY BRANCH?

It will help protect the future of AAUW by opening up opportunities for funding. Because our current educational degree requirement can be deemed discriminatory and not in keeping with our mission, some foundations and corporations will not donate to our organization since it is counter to their criteria of equity. This disadvantage, along with the now 400-plus organizations competing with AAUW on women's equity issues for funding, greatly affects National's ability to get much needed funding. Declining membership, now at 50,000, only provides 15-20% of the annual budget. This is not enough to support branch and member services.

It will make it easier for your branch to recruit a more diverse membership, including those who did not have the opportunity to attend college 30, 40 or 50 years ago. In addition to possibly increasing membership, these new members may bring new energy and viewpoints critical to your branch's ability to meet the needs of your community through our mission. It will also remove the embarrassing situations when you must tell someone they do not qualify, such as a government official, a non-profit leader or even a Tech Trek parent. Remember, Eleanor Roosevelt and Lily Ledbetter would not qualify for AAUW membership with our current educational requirement.

It will update the relevance and image of your branch as the world reckons with inequality and systemic racism, much of which disproportionately affects women. It might open up more opportunities for collaboration. Having a limiting membership requirement can be considered discriminatory and off putting to other local like-minded groups. When speaking at community functions, it demeans the branch to say that not everyone can be a member.

It will no longer limit your membership by penalizing women who cannot attain a degree due to today's skyrocketing educational costs, childcare, elder care, transportation, working multiple jobs and language barriers. Today, there are more alternatives to college degrees which have burdened women with two-thirds of the national college debt. With more careers open to women, i.e., firefighters, pilots, entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, manufacturers, retail managers, and more, your branch may have the potential for a variety of new members.

#### WHAT WON'T CHANGE IF THIS PASSES?

It will not affect AAUW's status as one of the leaders in graduate grants and fellowships. Due to the generosity of our members our fellowships and grants are fully endowed and will continue in perpetuity.

It will not affect the name – AAUW. Like the YWCA and NAACP, much of the original meanings are no longer accurate. For example, we are international, not just American. We have been open to individuals with associate degrees, not just degrees from universities, since 2005 and open to men since 1987.

**It will not affect the honor of having earned a degree in times when so few women attained this achievement. Today, with women outpacing men in earning all degrees for decades, we can proud that we were instrumental in breaking down the barriers for women who followed us.**

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It will not affect the uniqueness of AAUW. Its uniqueness is its breadth of programming, research, policy, advocacy, fellowships and grants, and grassroots membership.

It will not change your branch's involvement in local scholarships or interest groups.

It will not change the mission of the branch. Mission is not determined by a degree, but in belief in and dedication to equality for women.

It will not attract a large number of younger members which numerous national studies show Millennial and Generation Z women and men prefer projects and not membership programs.