



West Harris County Branch

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

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May 2025 Newsletter

Issue 9

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June 2025 deadline:

May 15, 2025

AAUW WEST HARRIS COUNTY BRANCH presents an evening of Fun and Fashion on **Sunday, May 4th** at its annual Spring Style Show at Chico's at 12850 Memorial Drive in Town and Country, starting at **6 p.m.** Check with Helen Santire for tickets. No tickets will be available at the door. Proceeds benefit the AAUW Funds National – Greatest Needs.



Plan ahead to attend the **Saturday, June 14th** **SPRING RECOGNITION LUNCHEON**, starting at **2 p.m.** at Fratelli's Ristorante on Wirt & Westview, for the Installation of the 2025/26 Officers and the honoring of the Tomsen Baker Telfer Scholarship Recipients.



West Harris County
Empowering Women in Houston
since 1976



President's Message



As Spring arrives, we have some wonderful activities planned for our branch. We have cultural events, outdoor activities, game days, book club meetings, and many other interest groups that meet for information and fellowship. I urge all to try to get out and participate with your fellow branch members. Remember, on May 4th we will have our annual style show, and, in June, at our end of the year luncheon at Fratelli's, we will be installing our incoming officers and awarding three scholarships to deserving high school senior girls. Stay active ladies!

Jo Glidewell, President

AAUW National Election 2025

Voting by electronic ballot is now open until May 13th. You are asked to vote for Board of Directors, Bylaw changes, and Public Policy Priorities.



Please visit <https://act.aauw.org/MemberVote2025> for more information on the candidates and ballot initiatives. Simply Voting Inc. has been hired as the independent third-party election provider. Each member should receive individual directions by email or regular mail from National with their Elector ID and Password. If you have any questions or updates regarding your membership or changes to your address or email, please contact Connect@aauw.org.

MEMBERSHIP

It's that time of year! As continuing members of AAUW, you will be getting emails from National and our own branch about renewing your membership. Feel free to renew at any time before your anniversary date as your fees will be accepted and your anniversary date will not change. For example: I just renewed, and my membership does not expire until June 2026. Go to AAUW.org, and log into your account. Scroll down on your Personal Snapshot page and look for the RENEW button. If you have any trouble, there is a link to a tutorial video in the "My Memberships" in the Personal Snapshot column on the left. This will take you to "Community Hub: Tools & Resources". Scroll down to the video: "How to Self-Renew for Existing Members". This is a direct link to the YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vXUvq-1JY4> Please, contact me if you have any difficulties. We want you to retain your membership.

*Kris Bybee-Finley, Membership Vice President
304-610-8708*

PUBLIC POLICY



Suggestions for Advocacy Action on

AAUW Texas Priority Topics and Bills of the 89th Legislative Session:

Women's Healthcare

Life of the Mother Act, SB 31 by Sen. Hughes & HB 44 by Rep. Geren Support

*This bill would provide exceptions to otherwise prohibited abortions based on a physician's reasonable medical judgment. These bills would clarify when doctors are allowed to perform medically necessary abortions to save the life of the pregnant patient. These bills would revise the code to remove confusing language about medical emergencies that made doctors hesitant to provide lifesaving abortions. This carefully crafted legislation addresses one and only one issue—it would save women's lives and health, including future fertility, by clarifying that doctors and other health providers should practice evidence-based medicine, including terminating pregnancies that threaten the mother's life or health. **The bottom line is SB 31/HB 44 will save lives.** SB 31 was heard in Senate State Affairs on Thursday, March 27 and was left pending in committee. HB 44 had a hearing in House Public Health April 7 and left pending in committee. **Call the Chair and members of both committees and your representative to ask them to support these bills as they move forward.***

Minimum Standards of Care for Sexual Assault Survivors, HB 220 Rep. Ordaz & SB 1899 by Sen. Huffman Support

*These bills would establish minimum standards of care for sexual assault survivors that improve the quality of support and treatment received by these individuals. It would require them to receive access to private spaces for consultation with medical providers and advocates, showers after examination, medication for sexually transmitted infections, and emergency contraceptives. HB 220 was heard in House Public Health Committee March 31st with Committee report sent to Calendars for a vote. **Call the Chair and members of the committee as well as your representative to ask them to support the bill as it moves forward.** SB 1899 is referred to Senate State Affairs but is not yet scheduled for a hearing.*

Abortion Inducing Medications, Civil and Criminal Penalties for Facilitating, SB 2880 by Sen. Hughes and HB 5510 by Rep. Leach Oppose

*This bill would prohibit the manufacture, possession, distribution, transport, and delivery of abortion-inducing drugs. It would criminalize providing information on obtaining these drugs or creating online platforms facilitating access, including criminalizing platforms that enable funding or distribution of abortion-related services. Allows civil lawsuits against violators, including damages for wrongful death or personal injury resulting from these drugs. It would criminalize payment for abortion services, destruction of evidence related to abortion, and extend the statute of limitations for prosecuting abortion-related offenses. **Significantly, SB 2880 could inhibit health care for patients who aren't even pregnant, including men.** SB 2880 was heard in Senate State Affairs on Thursday, March 27th and left pending in committee. **HB 5510** has been referred to State Affairs Committee.*

Prohibiting Local Government Support of Abortion Assistance, SB 33 by Sen. Campbell Oppose

*This bill would prohibit local governments or other governmental entities from appropriating tax dollars to abortion assistance groups that indirectly support or facilitate out-of-state abortion services. It would expand the definition of "abortion assistance entities" to include any organization or individual that provides financial support, travel arrangements, childcare, or other logistical services that facilitate access to abortions. This would also empower the Office of the Attorney General, state residents, or individuals within a political subdivision to initiate legal action against any entity engaging in prohibited transactions, with provisions for recovering misused funds, court costs, and attorney's fees. **SB 33** was heard in Senate State Affairs April 7 with Committee report sent to Calendars for vote. **Call the Chair and members of the committee urge them to oppose SB 33.***

Public Education Related Issues

Vouchers/Education Savings Accounts, SB 2 by Sen. Creighton AAUW TX Opposed

The House passed SB 2 85 to 63 on April 16. SB 2 will likely go to conference committee as the version passed by the House is significantly different than the versions passed by the Senate.

Ten Commandments in the Classroom, SB 10 by Sen. King AAUW TX Opposes

*SB 10 would require public schools to hang the ten commandments in a "conspicuous place" in the classroom. Text and frame size requirements are detailed in the bill. Classrooms and schools would be required to accept any private donation of a framed copy of the ten commandments. **This bill passed in the Senate and was sent to the Public Education Committee.***

Period of Prayer in Schools, SB 11 by Sen. Middleton AAUW TX Opposes

*SB 11 would allow for a school board to elect to impose a period of prayer in public schools. A consent form would need to be signed and returned by each student. It is unclear where the prayer would take place, and who would administer it. The bill states that if every student consents to the period of prayer, that it will be allowed to occur over the loudspeaker of the public school. **This bill passed on the Senate floor last week and sent to the House. Call your representative and let them know you oppose SB 10 and SB 11.***

Public School Funding, HB 2 by Rep. Buckley AAUW TX Support

*HB 2 is bill for the substantial public education funding for the upcoming biennium. It also included a variety of provisions for increasing school funding. AAUW TX supports any increase of funding for public schools. **HB 2 passed in the house with a vote of 144 to 4 and will now go to the Senate for consideration. Call your Senator and let him/her know you want the Senate to pass the increased funding contained in HB 2.***

Gun Safety and Reducing Gun Violence

Deregulating Short-Barrel Rifles, SB 1596 by Sen. Hagenbuch Oppose

*SB 1596 would remove short-barrel rifles from a list of firearms that are prohibited from being purchased or possessed without being registered with the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record maintained by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Short-barrel rifles include but are not limited to sawed-off shotguns and other highly destructive firearms that have been used in several mass shooting events. Would legalize short-barrel firearms, a type of weapon regulated under federal law for its use in organized crime. This type of gun was used in the Santa Fe school shooting, which killed 10 and injured 13. These firearms are more easily concealable and maneuverable, enhancing their lethality. SB 1596 was passed by the Senate on April 14. **Call your Representative to oppose SB 1596.***

Relating to the age at which a person not otherwise prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a firearm may carry a handgun or is eligible for a license to carry a handgun. HB 2470 Would allow 18–20-year-olds to carry handguns, licensed or unlicensed, despite data showing this age group is at higher risk for gun homicide and suicide. Left pending in Homeland Security, Public Safety Committee. **OPPOSE**

Relating to the possession of a firearm by persons convicted of certain felony offenses. HB 2771 It would remove serious felonies like stalking, aggravated assault, and terroristic threats from the list of crimes that prohibit gun possession in Texas. April 7 heard by committee and left pending in Homeland Security, Public Safety committee. **OPPOSE**

Relating to the carrying of concealed handguns by handgun license holders on the premises of a polling place on the day of an election or while early voting is in progress. HB 1794 Would allow guns in polling places, potentially discouraging civic participation and putting voters and election workers at risk. On April 14 heard and left pending in Homeland Security, Public Safety committee. **OPPOSE**

Relating to the locations where a handgun license holder may carry a handgun. HB 4201 Would allow more guns in sensitive places like schools by expanding where LTC holders can carry — and could be especially dangerous if paired with bills lowering the carry age to 18. April 14 heard and pending in Homeland Security, Public Safety committee. **OPPOSE**

Voting Rights: Free and Fair Elections

Proof of Citizenship to Vote, SB 16 by Sen. Hughes, et al. Oppose

*This bill would require new registrants and existing registered voters who did not provide proof of citizenship when they registered to prove their citizenship before they could vote in state, local, and presidential elections (voting in any race other than those for U.S. Senate and House). Even if you are currently registered to vote, you would be required to show proof of citizenship documentation if you did not show it when you registered. Specifically, SB 16 would require individuals to provide documentary proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, passport, or naturalization papers, when registering to vote. This creates significant barriers, particularly for naturalized citizens, elderly voters, people with name changes and anyone who may not have immediate access to those documents. This bill mirrors the federal SAVE Act tightening voting laws. The burden is shifted to the voter to prove their eligibility, and it undermines the ability of VDVRs to register eligible citizens to vote. **SB 16 passed the Senate and been sent to the House. Call your representative to oppose.***

Ending Countywide Voting, SB 76 by Sen. Hall Oppose

SB 76 would eliminate the Countywide Polling Place Program in Texas.** Many of our communities use county-wide polling locations to make it easier for people to vote near their place of work or in a manner that is convenient for them. This bill was left pending in committee. **Call the State Affairs committee to OPPOSE

Prohibiting Rank Choice Voting, HB 817 by Rep. Cain & SB 310 by Sen. Hughes Oppose

*This bill would prohibit rank choice voting in Texas elections. Rank choice voting and instant runoffs are designed to ensure the winner of an election is the candidate with a majority of support. SB 310 passed in the Senate and referred to the House Elections Committee **Call your representative to oppose SB 310.** HB 817 was passed by the House and is on the House calendar for vote. Call your representative to oppose HB 817 and SB 310.*

Prohibits a public employee from distributing voter registration application forms, HB 1489 by Rep. Oliverson and SB 511 By Sen. Bettencourt Oppose

*This bill would prohibit any officer or any employee of the state of Texas (for example public school teachers) from distributing a voter registration form to a person who did not request it. HB 1489 was heard in the House Elections Committee last week and left pending. **Call the committee and ask them to oppose HB 1489. SB 511 to be voted on in the Senate.***

Withholding County Registrar Funds, HB 1478 by Rep. Cain **Oppose**

*This bill would permit the Texas Secretary of State to withhold funds from a county voter registrar who fails to perform voter registration duties, including those related to any challenges to voter registration. HB 1478 was voted favorably out of committee last week. **Call your representative to oppose HB 1478.***

Increasing Criminality for Election Offenses, HB 1661 by Rep. Vasut & SB 507 by Sen. Bettencourt

Oppose

*This bill would increase criminality for election offenses by increasing the punishment for multiple election offenses (elevating from a misdemeanor to a felony) and creating two new misdemeanor election offenses related to election supplies, e.g., failing to provide sufficient ballots to a precinct, and closing polling places. **SB 507 was voted favorably out of committee. Call your senator to oppose SB 507. HB 1661 was voted favorably out of committee. Call your representative to oppose HB 1661.***

Micromanagement of Ballot Language, HB 1783 by Rep. Paul & SB 506 by Sen. Hall

*This bill would make changes to ballot measure language provisions for home-rule cities and expand the state's authority over their wording, including requiring that the language not mislead voters. It also gives the Secretary of State authority to review municipal ballot measures and to write the measure if the municipality fails to meet the Secretary of State's assessment of clarity. **These bills have been heard and left pending in the Elections Committee/State Affairs committees to oppose.***

Expansion of Rights for Poll Watchers and Candidates, SB 2309 by Sen. Hughes & HB 4989 by Rep.

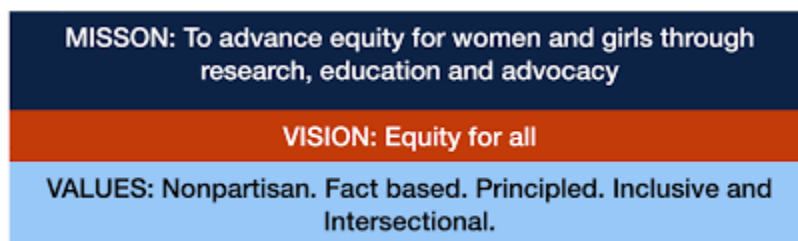
Dorazio **OPPOSE**

*This bill would expand poll watchers' rights to include observing the opening of polling locations, inspecting ballot boxes, and observing ballot box transfers to other locations. It also requires the currently required video surveillance system to expand to include hallways, doorways, and offices while also expanding the time frame of the video surveillance system to the entire election period. Further, it requires a "large analog clock" to be visible on the live stream. It allows candidates to be present for more post-election processes currently not open to candidates or parties. SB 2309 was heard and left pending in committee. HB 4989 has been referred to the Elections Committee/State Affairs committee but has not been heard. **Call committee members to oppose.***

Voter Deputy Registrar Appointment Renewal, HB 1297 by Rep. Vo **Support**

*This bill would require the registrar to provide notice of the expiration of a volunteer deputy voter registrar's (VDR) term, along with a renewal application and information about any relevant changes in law. VDRs who submit renewal applications will be immediately appointed to a new term with no gap in appointment. **It has been heard and left pending in committee.***

Georgia Kimmel, Public Policy Chair



MAY 2025 ACTIVITIES & INTEREST GROUP NEWS

Sharon Jorgeson, Activities Coordinator

Garden Divas



The Divas are 'traveling' in May! We will be visiting the **Wildseed Farms** and spending two nights in Fredericksburg. The farm has more than 1,000 cultivated acres in Texas and over 200 acres of wildflower fields at its Texas Hill Country headquarters outside of Fredericksburg. The fields surrounding the property are mostly in bloom March through October. The farm offers the highest quality non-GMO wildflower seeds, including hard-to-find native grasses. They are the world's largest producer of Texas Bluebonnets and carry a wide variety of fruit, vegetable, and culinary herb seeds perfect for large gardens or patios. The

Nursery at Wildseed Farms is one of the largest plant nurseries in Central Texas. They offer a large selection of in season plants and gardening products as well as garden décor, and pottery. The butterfly gardens are surrounded by a half mile of walking trails, nestled in their production crops. The walking trail allows you to stroll at your leisure and see some of our fields in different stages of growth. In addition to visiting the farm, we will have an option to visit an Outdoor Art Museum. The Coming King Foundation (TCKF) was formed on April 6, 2004 as an independent 501c3, non-profit organization. Free TCKF "Covenant Certified" art gardens are being established across the USA and world. Several renowned sculptors have already donated their monumental sculptures. There are fabulous opportunities for shopping and enjoying the beautiful 'hill country'. We will be staying Monday and Tuesday nights, (**May 5 & 6**) and will be visiting the **Wildseed Farms** on Tuesday. If you are interested in going on this trip, please arrange for your hotel room **ASAP**. We are staying at the Fairfield Inn and Suites in Fredericksburg. (1-830-955-8070). You can email me smboone@gmail.com for more information regarding the rooms and to let me know whether you plan on going on this trip.

Gourmet Groups – Classic and Nouveau Combined

Join the gourmet group for a Cinco de Mayo-themed dinner at the home of Hazel and Otto Kjos on **Saturday, May 3rd**. For further information please contact the co-chairs: Barb Cook 713-705-7832, or Kris Bybee-Finley 304-610-8708.



Hiking Honeys



On **Thursday, May 15th**, the Hiking Honeys will be heading to Mercer Botanical Garden and Arboretum at 22251 Aldine Westfield Road. Situated on the west side of Aldine Westfield Road, Mercer Botanical Gardens consists of well-marked walking paths that wind through a 1.5- mile loop. For those wanting to carpool from the Barryknoll parking lot opposite the Cinemark Theater in Memorial City Mall, plan to arrive by **9:15 a.m.** to depart for our hiking destination. For those of you meeting us at the Gardens, plan to arrive there at 10:00 a.m. Parking is located in front of the Visitor's Center where we will gain access to the Gardens. Our lunch destination will be at La Presa Mexican Restaurant, 23343 Aldine

Westfield Road in Spring. The restaurant is north of Mercer off Aldine Westfield, just minutes from our hiking destination. If you want to join us, please send an email to Mary Ann McMordie at mamcmordie@gmail.com and indicate whether you will carpool from Memorial City or meet us at Mercer Arboretum.

Great Decisions: Afternoon and Evening Groups

Inside the Loop Great Decisions will meet on **Tuesday, May 13th and 27th at 3:00 p.m.** via Zoom.

For more information, please call Pat Thomsen at 713-302-8899 or Linda Marlin at 713-302-7788.

The Great Decisions Wednesday Night Group meets at **7:00 p.m.** on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday from February through May on Zoom.

The upcoming topics are:

May 14th - AI and American National Security.

May 28th - American Policy in the Middle East.

All branch members and their spouses are invited to join the group for stimulating discussions of the United States' foreign policies and US relationships countries around the world. Contact coordinator Willette Norman to be put on the member list and receive Zoom contact information. willetten@gmail.com, or 281-450-8875.



Bridge Group

Fun and friendship await you in the active AAUW bridge group. If you are interested in getting on the sub list or would like more information, contact the coordinator. We meet on the **3rd Thursday (10:30 a.m.)** each month. Peg McNealy, 281.679.7299.



Culture Group

On **Thursday, May 29th**, the Cultural Interest Group will be visiting POST HOUSTON located downtown near Buffalo Bayou. It has a long and storied history. Established as a depot next to Houston's Grand Central Station in 1934, the present-day structure was designed by the same architectural firm that built the Astrodome. The new building became the Houston headquarters of the USPS in 1961. In 1984, the Post Office was named after Barbara Jordan, the first African American woman elected to the Texas Senate. The HUGE structure was redeveloped in 2015 as the POST, one of the jewels on the downtown scene, a hub for culture, food and recreation. Noteworthy is the rooftop Skylawn and garden, a state-of-the-art Music Hall and an International Food Hall with 25+ vendors. You will enjoy the food and the view! We will meet at our usual Memorial City Mall parking lot (12125 Barryknoll) at **10:00 a.m.** and carpool to the POST. **Our free guided tour will start at 11:00 a.m.** Early arrivers can wait inside at the Eden Plants and Coffee Shop on the first floor. The POST is located at 401 Franklin Street, 77201. Parking is free for the first 90 minutes and \$5.00 for each additional hour. Payment is by credit card only. We will eat lunch in the International Food Hall, also credit card only. Please RSVP to Debbie Rossi at drossi1584@gmail.com or text her at 713-248-7520. Let me know if you can drive or if you will be meeting us there.



Cultural Interest Group Launches Request for Destinations

The Culture Interest Group is nearing our final trips of the season, so it is time to celebrate and ponder what fascinating destinations we can explore next season. Please send your favorite locals for consideration to Jane.wood9@icloud.com. You are welcome to join in on our season wrap up and planning party on **Sunday, June 8th at 3 p.m.** at Jane Wood's condo.

Byway Birders

Byway Birders will meet **Sunday, May 18th** to plan for next year. More details will follow in an email to members on the contact list. For more information, please contact Pat Dach at patdach@gmail.com

Metropolitan OPERA Opportunities

What an outstanding opera season 2024-2025 was for all our AAUW-WHC opera enthusiasts! We saw five spectacular operas written by the best classical composers: Offenbach, Puccini, Verdi, Beethoven, and Mozart. Looking ahead, the Metropolitan has already announced the 2025-2026 season and our group will once again be mesmerized by the talents of the most outstanding internationally acclaimed opera singers and composers. There will be a total of eight OPERA Opportunities for us to attend. Please look for more information at the Prospective Members Coffee in August and the September newsletter. Looking forward to seeing you in the fall, Diana Guarniere and Rose Ennis!





Afternoon Contemporary Literature

We will meet on **Wednesday, May 7th at 1:00 p.m.** for lunch at Eagle's Trace, Austin Square/Waterloo Restaurant, 14703 Eagle Vista Drive. At 1:30 p.m., we will discuss Our Missing Hearts by Celeste Ng. Please contact Co-coordinator Linda Morgan at 281-989-6499, amorgan352@sbcglobal.net, or Co-Coordinator Cheryl Smith at 402-651-2445, ccherylesmile@gmail.com, for more information.

Contemporary Readers

On **Wednesday, May 7th at 1:00 p.m.**, we will discuss The Women by Kristen Hannah. Our group will meet at MDUMC West Campus, 13186 Memorial Drive, Room 462, in the TJ Maxx shopping center., For more information, contact Coordinator Sharon Pope, 713-376-0940, spope576@gmail.com or Co-Coordinator, Cathy Urquhart, 832-454-5017, curquhart80@gmail.com.

Enjoying History Book Club

We will meet on **Monday, May 12th at 1:30 p.m.** at the Tracy Gee Community Center Library Room. We will discuss Wild House Wild Child by Shelley Fraser Mickle. Nancy Guilloud will lead the discussion. Please contact Nancy Guilloud with any questions, nanguilloud@aol.com

Evening Contemporary Literature

Please join us on **Monday, April 28th at 5:00 p.m.** at Los Tios Restaurant on Kirkwood and Memorial. We will discuss Wildflower: An Extraordinary Life and Mysterious Death in Africa by Mark Seal. Maggie Chapman will lead the discussion. Please contact Coordinator Carole Ballew at caroleballew@yahoo.com or call 832-656-0775 for more information. Please note that this is a change of date. We had to move our May 5th date back to April 28th due to Cinco de Mayo.

Mystery Book Club

We will meet on **Tuesday, May 20th at 1:30 p.m.** at the Tracy Gee Library to discuss Dead of Winter by Steven Mack Jones. Please contact Pat Pease, 713-824-1681, popease@aol.com, or Kris Bybee-Finley, 304-610-8708, brazitku@gmail.com for more information.

Zoom Eclectic Book Group

ZOOM Eclectic Book Group will meet on **Thursday, May 15th at 2:30 p.m.** to discuss West with Giraffes: A Novel by Lynda Rutledge. Willette Norman will lead the discussion. All meetings occur on ZOOM. Members and guests are welcome to join us for one or all the books. Please contact Carolyn Morris carolynmorris16@gmail.com 713-560-1889 or Pat Thomsen, Co-coordinator, patthom2@sbcglobal.net, 713-302-8899.



May Birthdays

Sharon Jorgeson	May 12	Marilyn Watson	May 23
Marylois Miller	May 14	Cheryl Smith	May 25
Marilyn Arendt	May 16	Pamela Doan	May 26
Donna Harshman	May 16	Edith Dunlop	May 27
Mary Hilton	May 19	Susan Wilson	May 28
Brenda Van Derbur	May 19		
Shari Mauthner	May 22		