

Winter 2021

“Unless we start to fight and defeat the enemies in our own country — poverty and racism, and make our talk of equality and opportunity ring true, we are exposed in the eyes of the world as hypocrites when we talk about making people free.”

— *Shirley Chisholm*

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Many of us watched as Kamala Harris was sworn in as our nation's first female Vice President. In Vice President Harris we also witness the first Black American, Indian American, and South Asian American sworn in to serve the second highest elected office, pledging to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Her appointment is indicative of the work you have done on behalf of AAUW and the work of countless organizations. Her achievements are your achievements because you showed up at the polls. Through your tireless efforts, you continue to do your part in advancing opportunities for women and all who continue to be marginalized in our society. This historic win is the new dawn of hope



"Announcement of Senator Kamala Harris as Candidate for Vice President of the United States - Wilmington, DE - August 12, 2020" by Biden For President is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

and possibility. However, work remains. We have witnessed the fragility of our democracy and the importance of our civic engagement in ensuring recognition of and support for human rights and civil liberties. Take action by visiting [AAUW's Advocacy Toolkit](#) or become a [Two-Minute Activist](#) on issues impacting women and girls. It is not, now, the time to rest. Let's follow Vice President Harris in acknowledging that while she may be the first, she certainly will not be the last. The pinnacle of the mountain we are climbing is not yet in sight. Onward for gender equity!

Nana Amos,
AAUW/CT President

Branches Support Mature Women With Over \$20,000 in Scholarship Aid

by Judith Slisz, VP, AAUW-CT

For the past several years, four branches have helped a large number of mature women to advance their continuing education. Lower CT Valley has awarded 3 grants of \$2,000 each to women from their surrounding towns who are at least 20 years old and pursuing an associates or bachelors degree. The funds can be used for books, bills, childcare or whatever the needs are. Storrs/Willimantic awards \$2,000 to a rising junior at ECSU or UConn. Bridgeport awards five scholarships of \$1,000 each to women enrolled at U.B. or Housatonic CC (HCC). Greater Meriden, with support from the Cuno Foundation, has awarded as many as 5 scholarships at \$2,000 each to area women attending CCs, four-year college and universities or post-graduate programs. The women must be at least five years out of high school. In the past, these grants and scholarships have been funded by successful fundraisers and community support; in the absence of in-person fundraisers due to the pandemic, this current year could present some challenges, but most of the branches expect to continue their programs, even if temporarily scaled back.



Photo credit: Meriden/Wallingford Branch AAUW

At a recent virtual meeting, the Bridgeport branch invited Daniella Squizzato, Acting Director of Student Success at HCC and Alese Mulvihill, Dean of Students at GatewayCC to discuss the particular needs of the women students, exacerbated during the pandemic. Many women are moms, some working from home, trying to balance their professional work and their academic work with childcare and kids doing remote learning at home. Women deemed “essential workers” are out of the home but still challenged by childcare centers having to close and kids learning remotely at home, or trying to. Other challenges facing women students are housing and food insecurity, elder care, and economic hardship. At HCC, 65% of the students are women; 50% are from Bridgeport; 32% are African American; 67% are part-time students. At Gateway CC, 46% of the students are African-American; 46% are Hispanic; 55% are part-time students. Many of these students are returning to college to complete an associ-

ates or complete credits to be able to transfer to a four-year school. For new first-time, full-time students, tuition is free and based on the net cost after other awards are taken into consideration, but scholarships are limited for part-time students. Pell Grants do not cover undocumented students or students wishing to transfer to a four-year college.

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Photo credit: AAUW.org

Branches Support Mature Women With Over \$20,000 in Scholarship Aid

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Both Squizzato and Mulvihill described programs the colleges offer to support their students. There are college scholarships and book scholarships; food pantries; headsets for students needing quiet to study at home; coaching; family field trips to build community; camperships for their kids; and stipends for students from emergency funds that can be used for car expenses, food, and rent. Clearly, the colleges are doing the best they can but the needs are significant.

The presentation by the college representatives increased our understanding of the needs of women students at the CCs. The speakers offered to help us fill gaps in our list of College & University Partners by connecting us with Student Affairs administrators from the other CCs. We expect to continue to update this list and make it available to all the branches via Google docs so that those branches who wish to distribute their scholarship application more broadly can send it to the CCs in their area. The Bridge-

port branch has opened a dialogue with GatewayCC and HCC that will continue. Storrs/Willi has an ongoing dialogue with ECSC and UConn. Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin at CCSC has invited us to attend programs, including a recent program on Latinas, that help us understand the challenges of women students, particularly women of color. AAUW-National encourages us to support women of color in their educational advancement with a focus on STEM and development of leadership skills. (STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics—areas of good paying jobs where women and people of color have been underrepresented.) Having role models from underrepresented groups as teachers would help inspire students of color. We read of students who go through grades K-12 without having a single teacher that looks like them. However, when students of color encounter a Black or Brown teacher, such an experience can have a significant impact on their lives and interest in education.

Special consideration in our scholarship application process could be given to women of color pursuing a career in STEM or in teaching if branch membership supports that.

Harita Selvaraj

Harita Selvaraj is an international student at the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut with a major in English with a concentration in Creative Writing, and a minor in Mass Communications. Currently, she is interning as a writer for the American Association of University Women, CT. Harita has worked as a Customer Service Trainee at her University's Print and Mail Center for three years and has studied abroad in South Korea during Summer 2019. She has published poems in the University of Bridgeport's Literary Magazine, Groundswell. She also loves learning new languages in her free time and hopes to become fluent in at least eight of them.



Photo credit: Harita Selvaraj

Reflecting on the Biden Administration's All-Female Communications Team

By Alexa Moyer

When I was younger, I wasn't interested in politics because I thought that the only position that had a woman in it was First Lady and that seemed so boring. If a younger me had seen more women in different positions in government, not just being treated as a decoration or a secretary, I would have realized that politics and law was my passion much sooner. I wouldn't have shrunk away from men talking about politics because I believed that I didn't belong there. Seeing other women in the government would have made me realize that I have a stronger voice than I thought I did. It's important to have women in all departments of government, but especially in more visible positions. While the Biden Administration has nominated 12 women to high-level cabinet positions, an all-female communications team was the perfect place to begin. The communications team is one of the most visible positions in a Presidential administration, and giving those positions to women means that they will be more visible to the public than other positions in the administration. This increased visibility means that more young women and girls are able to see people who look like them on TV. Seeing other women in politics, not just being told that they are there, but actually seeing them, will inspire younger women to speak up and to be more active in order to get their voices heard. I hope that by having women in the most visible positions, more girls will find their voices and get involved. I hope that realizing they have a voice is the least that they do. I hope that they realize that they have a brain to come up with solutions, and they have hands to build something incredible. Most importantly, I hope that they realize that as young women, and women in general, they have the power to do great things and make great changes that improve society and the lives of others.



Alexa Moyer

Photo credit: Willow Springs Photography/Elizabeth Gorbey

“Most importantly, I hope young women, and women in general, realize that they have the power to do great things and make great changes that improve society and the lives of others”.

My name is Alexa Moyer and I am a sophomore at the University of New Haven. I am a Legal Studies major with a concentration in Dispute Resolution. I want to help make college and university campuses a better place for women by helping to give support to the women who are currently on those campuses. I also want to help empower women who have already graduated by spreading information that they can use to make themselves even more successful.

Fall 2020/Spring 2021 AAUW/CT Intern



Photo credit: Dana Jensen/The Day

Inspirational Woman: Gay Clarkson

By Cameron Phillips

Gay Clarkson stepped down as President of the New London branch of AAUW where she served most recently since 2018. We wanted to shed a spotlight on Gay not only so others might hear her story, but so that young women like myself might learn from her example and challenges along the way.

Gay was brought up in Memphis, Tennessee, but moved to New York City when she was in her 20s. She found work there as a legal secretary, and threw herself into her work although it was not her passion. She had to work even harder when her first husband passed away at a young age due to cancer, leaving her with two children, ages seven and eight, to raise and support on her own. Gay says that if given the opportunity to change one thing about her past, she would have sought out more opportunities to be the best possible mother to her children.

Growing up, Gay had been told by her own parents that she was not “college material”; however, when she was 50 she finally enrolled in Oklahoma State University and proved them wrong. She says that she found it gratifying when the younger students wanted to cheat off her and looked to her for all the answers. Gay earned her BA in Art History and MS in Art Education.

She went on to teach as a professor at Tulsa Community College. Her advice to young women is to stay in school because she says, “there is nothing more exciting than education.” Additionally, she advises young women to pursue their dream jobs and not feel like they have to rush into marriage and family right away.

“There is nothing more exciting than education.”

Gay has been doing volunteer work since she was eight years old when her step-mother encouraged her to volunteer at a veterans’ hospital. She discovered that she loves helping others and has been doing volunteer work ever since. She is president of the Friends of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, a board member of S.T.E.P.S, and the recording secretary of Expressiones. She was even elected Volunteer of the Year in 2018 by the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut.

Gay moved to Connecticut from Tulsa, Oklahoma 9 years ago for her husband’s work and joined AAUW-CT to help women like her who are returning to school. She has always wanted to be a leader and has worked hard to keep the New London branch together. Gay is proud of her efforts and is grateful for all of the friends she has made in AAUW-CT.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Women

By Aimee Ocegueda

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the livelihood of many families in the United States. Women's jobs and livelihoods are more vulnerable due to the pandemic's impact on the job market. As a result, women's employment rates are dropping faster than average (PCSW). According to McKinsey & Company, now 54 percent of overall job losses are borne by women. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women creates a risk and reverses progress made to women's economic security.

The pandemic has caused severe economic consequences all over the world, but specifically here in the United States. The economic fallout is having a regressive effect on gender equality. Due to huge gender disparities in the workforce, many women now experience disproportionate economic burdens because of low employment rates and high job losses. Compared to February 2020 numbers, women's employment has gone down 9%, while men's employment has gone down by 7.8% (Catalyst).

Jobs that are women dominant, that did not suffer much due to the pandemic were counted up to 250,000. These mainly consisted of women who were working in human re-



sources, social work, and healthcare. On the other hand, male-dominated jobs like real estate, business, and administrative work were not highly affected by the pandemic. Around 900,000 men were still employed during the

Aimee Ocegueda

Hello everyone! My name is Aimee Ocegueda. I am currently attending the University of Bridgeport. I am a senior majoring in English with a concentration of Literature. I am also minoring in psychology. An interesting fact about me is that I like to learn foreign languages. For example, I have taken a Mandarin class for 4 years now and I am currently taking Korean and French. I am very excited to be part of the AAUW Internship Program. I cannot wait to explore and learn more about gender equity, and most importantly, put my writing and researching skills into practice.

peak of the pandemic. By comparing the numbers, we can see that more men are employed than women. Also, because women make less money than men, they also have fewer savings (McKinsey). Women who lost their jobs who are the primary source of income for the household still need to manage to provide for their families during difficult times.

One community hit hardest by the pandemic, is the Latino community. There are over 6 million Latinos in the United States of America. Latinas are paid less than their white counterparts and are more likely to suffer hardship at times like these. According to AAUW, Latinas won't achieve equal pay until the year 2451 at the current rate of change. Not only do these women get paid less, but they are also most likely to lose their jobs during an economic downturn. The unemployment rate for Latinas went from 5.5 percent to 20.5 percent over the course of February to March of last year. About 21 percent of the Latina population in the United States lost a service occupation job from February to May in 2020 (AAUW). A service occupation job is a job where someone provides a service to others such as waitressing, housekeeping, childcare, etc., many of which were let go.

Sources:

- <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-united-states/>
- <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#>
- <https://www.pcswct.org/blog/pcsw-covid-initiative-launch>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADSLQetY_gU&feature=youtu.be



Cameron Phillips

Photo credit: Cameron Phillips

Cameron Phillips recently joined the AAUW-CT team as a marketing intern. She lives in Waterbury, CT with her family and her two cats. She is currently a senior at the University of New Haven where she is majoring in English with a concentration in writing and minoring in Spanish language and Latin American studies. In addition to her internship, she also works as a tutor at her school's Writing Center and as a secretary in her school's Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. She also serves as president of the Alpha Sigma Theta chapter of the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society, treasurer of Anime Club, and executive assistant of W.R.I.T.E. Club. As a woman currently enrolled in university, she looks forward to furthering the AAUW's mission and spreading the word through social media about the organization's work. She hopes to strengthen important skills (such as writing) needed in her field while also making a difference for women in Connecticut and helping AAUW-CT continue to grow.

Resources for Transgender Women and Their Allies

By Cameron Phillips

AAUW's mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls, and this includes transgender women and girls. Here is a list of some resources for transgender women and their allies in Connecticut.

For Trans Women:

Health:

Connecticut Members - [World Professional Association for Transgender Health](#)

The World Professional Association for Transgender health has a list of providers of transgender healthcare (both physical and mental) in Connecticut.

Legal:

ID Documents Center: Connecticut - National Center for Transgender Equality <https://transequality.org/documents/state/connecticut>

Here you can find information on how to legally change your name in Connecticut.

Transgender Law Center

<https://transgenderlawcenter.org/>

The Transgender Law Center is a trans-led national organization that advocates for trans and gender nonconforming people.

School:

"College Guide for Current and Prospective LGBT Students" - Accredited Online Colleges

<https://www.accreditedonlinecolleges.com/lgbt-college-guide/>

This explains what LGBT+ students should look into before applying to a university. It also contains a list of scholarship opportunities for LGBT+ college students.

Hotlines:

The Trevor Helpline

886-488-7386

This number is the Trevor Project's hotline for LGBT+ people under 25 who are thinking about suicide.

For Allies:

Understanding:

"A Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth" - [The Trevor Project](#)

This guide from The Trevor Project describes the basics of gender identity and expression and how to respect the identities of transgender and non-binary individuals.

For Everyone:

Education and Advocacy:

GLSEN Connecticut

<https://www.glsen.org/chapter/connecticut>

This is the website of the CT chapter of GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Center), the national organization that fights for LGBT+ students' right to education.

True Colors

<https://ourtruecolors.org/>

True Colors provides education and advocacy to LGBT+ youth and their families. Their website lists additional resources, information on the programs they offer, and ways to get involved.

This list is not exhaustive; we hope it serves as a starting point for those in need of support or looking to get involved as an ally.

Inspirational Woman: Mary Mazur

By Cameron Phillips

There are many women in AAUW with inspirational stories. One I would like to highlight is Mary Mazur. Approximately two years ago, Mary began her battle with cancer. She fought it once but then it returned several months ago. Mary stays strong by focusing on her goals and everything she still wants to do. Her mantra is *"I had cancer but the cancer didn't have me."*

Mary is an only child born in Lowell, Massachusetts. Throughout her life she went to all-girls schools for her education. When it was time for college, she attended Rivier University. Mary began her college career as an English major but eventually switched to a biology major with a chemistry minor because that was where her true passion was. She graduated in 1966 and went on to earn her M.T (ASCP) from the Carney Hospital School of Medical Technology. She worked at a VA hospital in Boston and then transferred to another VA hospital in California where she became the head of the chemistry department. However, in 1971 her father fell ill and she moved back to Massachusetts. She returned to the Boston VA hospital and became a research assistant to the head of the emergency department. Looking to return to school, Mary applied and was accepted into the graduate program in Anatomy and Physiology at Northeastern University. She then met her future husband and discontinued her pursuit of a Ph.D. in microbiology to relocate with her husband to Western Massachusetts where he was starting his internship in medicine.

After 22 years of marriage, Mary became a single mom to three daughters and one son. Her goal was to keep the family together, happy, healthy, and strong and to support them through their educational goals. All three girls completed their Masters with Honors. Her son is an electrical engineer/designer without ever attending college and holds multiple patents for his innovative designs. During this same time period, Mary became the head of the Medical Assistant program at Mildred Elly Business School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and held that position, until reuniting with her college sweetheart, and moving to Connecticut in 1998.

When asked what her proudest achievement is Mary replied, without a doubt, being a mother

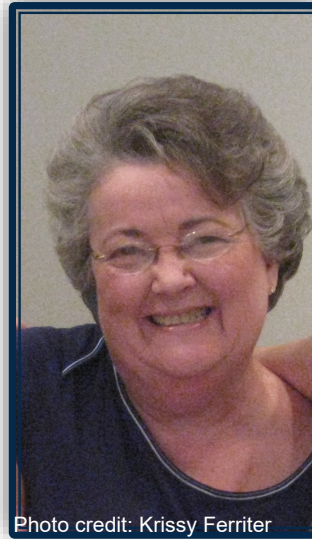


Photo credit: Krissy Ferriter

and raising her children to be happy, successful, grounded, accomplished adults and her five beautiful, vivacious grandchildren.

Mary joined Lower Connecticut Valley AAUW-CT with one of her friends in 2006 and has held several positions including co-treasurer, co-president, vice president, and president. She also served as the fundrais-

ing committee Chair as well as the program Chair. Mary stepped down from all of those roles, but is still a member and remains active on the scholarship committee. Mary helped re-establish the scholarship committee 11 years ago. Her goal was to offer assistance to women with less opportunities for scholarships who she believes will make a difference in the world if given a chance to advance their education. Over the years, Lower Connecticut Valley AAUW-CT has awarded approximately \$47,000 in grants to 28 women.

In addition to her work with AAUW, Mary is also the program chair at the Lyme Public Library. She is carrying on the legacy of an ancestor on her father's side who, centuries ago, established the oldest free library in England. She says that her goal is to learn one new thing a day and her work helps her achieve that. She enjoys volunteer work because she has a lot to give and do, and it helps both herself and others continue to learn and grow. Mary also says that volunteer work makes her feel truly alive. First and foremost, Mary wants all young girls to remember that men and women are created equal. She also says that, "nothing is impossible, and always give it your best. Always be the very best that you can." Additionally, she lives by Mahatma Gandhi's words, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." She wants young women to know that if they are unhappy with something, they have the power to change it.

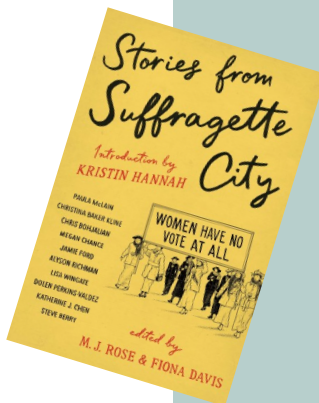
**"Nothing is impossible...
Be the change you wish
to see in the world"**



Photo credit: Sue Aberbach

Stories From Suffragette City Editors Attend LCV AAUW Book Discussion By Sue Aberbach

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the Lower Connecticut Valley chapter afternoon book discussion group welcomed M.J. Rose and Fiona Davis, the editors of *Stories From Suffragette City* on December 2nd. Their book features short stories by thirteen authors who have joined to write about a diverse range of characters that all take place on October 23, 1915—the day thousands of women marched up Fifth Avenue in New York demanding the right to vote—and their right to be heard. Fiona and M.J. discussed how they came up with the concept for the book and responded to the questions and comments of the book discussion group.



Both authors are known for their intricate plots, historical settings, and strong female characters. M.J. Rose is the author of more than 20 historical novels, including *Tiffany Blues* and *Cartier's Hope*, where the lead character, Vera, is ahead of the times in her efforts to obtain respect and equality for all women. In her latest novel, *The Lost Tiara*, a woman architect stumbles upon a family treasure that leads her to discovering her mother's life during the fall of the Romanovs.

Fiona Davis is known for her novels set in iconic New York City buildings that weave characters from different eras into their plots. Her latest book, *The Lions of Fifth Avenue*, features a character who joins a group that supports suffrage and women's rights. Her book, *The Chelsea Girls*, has just been released in paperback. We were happy that this virtual book discussion was attended by about 25 chapter members and CT-AAUW President Nana Amos.

Our Equity Wish List for the Biden-Harris Administration

AAUW.ORG

With the nation facing a persistent pandemic, volatile political unrest and a fractured, fragile economy, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris face an unprecedented array of challenges as they begin the work of their new administration.

Addressing racial justice, gender equity and education reform will be key to improving the economic security of women and their families and ultimately helping our nation recover from the current crises. On behalf of AAUW's 170,000 members and supporters, we hope that our new leaders will take swift and bold action to [implement these priorities](#) in the Administration's first 100 days and beyond.

COVID Relief

Women—especially women of color — account for most of the [essential workers during the pandemic](#), working on the front lines as health-care workers, childcare providers, pharmacy employees, grocery store clerks and more. Yet women are also disproportionately suffering from our nation's inadequate response to the COVID-19 crisis, losing more jobs and taking on family responsibility that forced many out of the labor force. So the needs of women and their families should be front and center in any future COVID response.

We applaud President Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion dollar rescue package which, among other things, would include more direct payments to individuals, increased unemployment benefits, a \$15 an hour [federal minimum wage](#), federally mandated paid time off for workers and large subsidies for child-care costs. Many of these policy changes would specifically help women of color, who must be at the center of our recovery efforts, both from the virus and the economic crisis it has caused.

Women's Economic Security

Job creation and economic opportunity are critical issues for women, many of whom continue to struggle with financial instability and wage discrimination. Women are [overrepresented in low-wage jobs](#) — nearly two-thirds of minimum wage workers in the United States are women and 24 percent of minimum wage workers are women of color. What's more, women face par-

ticular challenges in the workforce, including harassment, discrimination and occupational segregation. The gender pay gap also persists: On average, women working full time still make [82 cents on the dollar](#) as compared to men, and women of color experience even wider gaps.

Raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a critical first step, but the Administration must do more to close the gender wage gap. Among our recommendations: Require federal contractors to include salary ranges in job announcements and prohibit them from relying on job applicants' salary history to set wages; and require employers to collect and report compensation data by race, ethnicity and gender, then make that information readily available so it can be used to adjust salaries appropriately.

Additionally, the administration can take many steps to stop [workplace harassment](#) — implementing strong policies to help federal workers and setting a good example for cultural change throughout the country. These recommendations include, enacting anti-retaliation provisions, prohibiting non-disparagement and non-disclosure agreements unless requested by the employee, banning pre-dispute mandatory arbitration, instituting strong penalties, and eliminating caps on damages awarded to workers who have experienced discrimination. AAUW will also be working with Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, and we have confidence that President Biden will sign the bill as soon as it lands on his desk.

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Photo credit: AAUW.org



AAUW Mission:

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

AAUW Vision:

Equity for all.

AAUW Values:

Nonpartisan. Fact-based. Integrity. Inclusion and Intersectionality.

AAUW Diversity Statement:

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, and leadership team and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation on the basis of age, disability, gender, location, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

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<https://aauw-ct.aauw.net>

AAUW Equity Wish List for the Biden-Harris Administration

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Educational Equity

AAUW has a long history of breaking down gender barriers in education, and since our founding 140 years ago, women have made enormous progress. Yet obstacles still persist for women of color and those from low-income communities. In addition, the [gender divide in STEM](#) programs remains wide, with women still concentrated in areas of study that steer them into lower-wage jobs. What's more, women are especially burdened by the nation's student debt crisis: [They hold nearly two-thirds of all outstanding loans](#)—around \$929 billion—crippling their educational advancement and economic security. Finally, COVID-19 has further exacerbated educational inequities in our K-12 schools and institutions of higher education, demonstrating that we need to continue working to provide safer, more inclusive, and culturally responsive institutions.

The new administration can address educational issues by instituting federal loan forgiveness programs to alleviate the burden of student debt; increasing grants and scholarship programs to make education more accessible to low-income families; providing more support to minority-serving institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities; strengthening [Title IX protections](#) to ensure a safe and equitable environment for women in schools and on campuses; and funding research and championing programs that encourage women to pursue the STEM fields.

Calming the chaos that has characterized the past few years and working to move forward with an agenda that centers racial and gender equity will not be easy. But AAUW remains steadfast in its promise to use our voice and work on the local, state and federal levels to make sure that all women—especially those who have long been deprived—have the economic security they deserve.

According to AAUW
in 2021, Women
make up
30.8%
of those in state
legislature offices
nationwide

Source: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/our-equity-wish-list-for-the-new-administration/>