

2021 – 2023 AAUW Pennsylvania Officer Candidates

MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT: Randi Blauth, Easton Branch

Randi is currently the Membership VP for her branch, previously having served as Diversity and Inclusion officer for nine years, as president (2012-14), on the nominating committee and Facebook Communications. She co-founded the inter-branch study group Diversity: Deeds and Dialogue. In 2012, she was awarded the Teal Award and, in 2016, the Outstanding Woman Award, both from Bethlehem Branch, and the Member Making a Difference Award in 2020 from Easton Branch.

Randi is a frequent participant at state summer retreats and has attended four state conventions and three national conventions. She previously served on the state nominating committee and has presented on diversity and public policy issues at state conventions. From 2015-17, Randi served on the national Diversity and Inclusion task force.

Randi earned her B.S. Ed. in library science from Kutztown University and holds secondary education and English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching certificates. Although she is now retired, she taught ESL at Northampton Community College for 16 years. She serves on the Bethlehem Area Public Library Board of Trustees and volunteers as an elementary school mentor and in the Orton-Gillingham reading program. She also volunteered with the Institute of Jewish/Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College, doing workshops on Holocaust education for middle schoolers and high schoolers.

When asked what she sees as the primary focus of AAUW-PA and how she would work toward that goal if elected, Randi answered:

The primary function of AAUW PA is to bring women together who are united in purpose in advancing equity for all women and girls across the state. Women can look to AAUW PA as a source for information and support for those shared values and advocate across the state with help from the state board officers. We learn together in our local, district, and state meetings and share our information and values with women in Pennsylvania who aren't yet members.

I would have quarterly meetings with branch membership vice presidents to discuss how we can advance knowledge and share ideas locally of AAUW to attract new members. I think it's important to reach out to women whom we may think we have nothing in common, but need to realize that all women have common issues and I would encourage and help branches do so. AAUW provides many tools and ideas to use to attract new members and perhaps we can make our own. In addition, I would work with the state board to collaborate on new ideas for the advancement of membership and build on the structures put in place by our outgoing membership chair, Linda Tozier, who was a gem at her job.

SECRETARY: Ajla Laussegger, National and state member

Completing first term as AAUW Pennsylvania Secretary. Agreed to serve another term.

Ajla is currently serving as AAUW-PA board secretary after having been elected in April 2019. She holds a B.S. degree in Business Administration, Financial Analysis from the University at Buffalo and a J.D. degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Law. She now serves as Associate General Counsel at Quaker Houghton and previously worked as an associate at Jones, Gregg, Creehan & Gerace, LLP. Ajla joined AAUW in 2018.

When asked what she sees as the primary focus of AAUW-PA and how she would work toward that goal if elected, Ajla replied:

I think the primary focus is a split between financial equality for women, as well as racial justice and equality. We are moving into a new era, where discrimination of any kind is intolerable and only works to hurt those disadvantaged by it, and it is important we level the playing field for all.

I will support the initiatives of AAUW PA, fully participating to engage branches, as well as members, to ensure the goals and core values of the organization are met.

FINANCE OFFICER: Dr. Ann Echols, State College Branch, formerly of the Blacksburg, VA, Branch

Ann is currently serving her second term as finance officer for State College Branch, which she joined in 2018 after having been a member in the Blacksburg (VA) Branch (1993-98). She graduated with a B.B.A. degree in accounting from Texas A&M University, an M.B.A. in accounting and finance cognate from Florida Atlantic University, and an Ed.D. in vocational and technical education policy and Ph.D. in strategic management from Virginia Tech.

From 1994 until 2000, Ann taught and designed business courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. She has held teaching/research positions at Virginia Tech, Penn State's Smeal College of Business, The Freeman College of Management at Bucknell University, and Juniata College. She considers herself retired now, and she does volunteer service full-time.

When asked what she sees as the primary focus of AAUW-PA and how she would work toward that goal if elected, Ann replied:

AAUW-PA serves as a conduit between national and the State's branches, helping to ensure they are aligned and support the mission and values of the organization while meeting the needs of local communities.

As a unified organization, I would like to see AAUW reduce barriers to membership, streamline the ease of processing membership applications online which may include reducing the number of membership schemes, as well as increase the attention given to closing the pay gap and promoting equity.

I believe AAUW-PA could increase its effectiveness by developing a stronger online presence (<https://aauw-pa.aauw.net/>).

It is important to ensure that all Pennsylvania branches feel satisfied with the support they receive from both national and AAUW-PA, as well as have the resources needed to carry out the organization's agenda at the local level. Generating membership from Millennials/Gen Y, and also from Gen Z, who began coming of age in 2013, is critical to our sustainability. We need to increase our understanding of how to align our programming and other opportunities with their needs while continuing to hold AAUW's mission as our "north star."

If elected as AAUW-PA's finance officer, I will accurately account for our state finances and be transparent in doing so, while working to advocate for increased efficiencies as appropriate.