



OF MARYLAND

## Report on State Programs

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Our summer conference focused on “Diversity, Inclusion and Maryland’s Future,” was held on July 20 in Frederick. The Frederick branch did a wonderful job as our host and attendance was good despite the incredibly hot weather. We took time to look into AAUW Maryland’s future as we prepared for 2020,



the hundredth anniversary of women’s right to vote. The program was planned in partnership with Jacki Gray, Diversity Chair for AAUW Maryland. Our guest speaker, Dr. J. Bruce Stewart, a nationally recognized expert in diversity and inclusion, conducted a seminar exploring the value of diversity and inclusion in our society and in AAUW. Together we explored various dimensions of diversity and learned to better understand how to reach out to different audiences

and their different values and needs. In small group discussions we worked to clarify our values and set goals to increase our diversity and become a more inclusive organization at the branch and state level.

Our fall conference was held on October 26<sup>th</sup> in Baltimore. This conference focused on “The Urgency of Civility.” The Baltimore branch did a great job hosting this event. For thousands of years, people have struggled with staying respectful and courteous toward others. We are currently seeing a huge



resurgence of interest in civility. Triggers include road rage, the internet, Facebook, political polarization, texting and tweeting. And with more high-speed communication and mobile devices, it’s tempting to participate in conversations instantaneously, without always thinking how our comments might impact others. Our meeting focused on this important and, sadly, all-too-urgent topic. Daniel Buccino, Director, Johns Hopkins Civility Initiative, led us as he shared insights on civility—what this concept entails and how we might go about restoring and maintaining more civil discourse and behavior in a respectful, functioning society.

Small group interactions followed with enlightening conversations on the topic.

Sadly, our program year did not end as planned. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and our Governor’s stay at home orders, we had to postpone our annual spring convention not once, but twice. We hope to hold a conference at a later date to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women’s right to vote in the US and explore ways to encourage more women to use that vote. The seed for the first Woman's Rights Convention in the United States in Seneca Falls, New York was planted in 1840, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton met Lucretia Mott at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The conference refused to

seat Mott and other women delegates from the U.S. because of their sex. In 1851, Stanton met temperance worker Susan B. Anthony, and shortly the two would be joined in the long struggle to secure the vote for women in the U.S. Finally, on August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified. And on November 2 of that year, more than 8 million women across the United States voted in elections for the first time.

We will, eventually, celebrate this legacy and look at implications of votes for women and focus on how we can get more women to vote in elections at every level. In 2016, 63.3% of women voted. That's 73.7 million women. With a concerted effort, we can increase the percentage of women voters as they see how issues at every level affect them.

The next time you hear political pundits discussing "the women's vote," bear in mind they're referring to a powerful constituency that numbers in the millions. As more and more female candidates forge their way onto local and national platforms, women's voices and gender-inclusive agendas are increasingly coming to the fore. In the days ahead, it may well be the votes of women, individually and collectively, that make or break the outcomes of future elections. We can help make that happen!

I am extremely grateful to the Frederick and Baltimore branches for hosting the fall and winter meetings, and particularly grateful to the Anne Arundel branch for all of the organization and planning for the spring convention and summer meeting, both of which, as noted previously, were cancelled. A special Thank You to our state co-presidents, Kate Stevenson and Susan Wierman, for their guidance and support and to all the AAUW members who facilitated small group discussions at each meeting. These discussions have become an important way for us to make concrete plans on issues of concern to AAUW at the local, state and national levels.