

Hello November.

AAUW-Orange, Durham, Chatham Branch

From the President: Bea Keller

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Be sure to vote and encourage others to vote! Our members are typically voters, but are our friends, acquaintances and younger family members likely to vote? Currently, same day registration is permitted during early voting. I was heartened to see the number of people, including younger men and women, in line during early voting.

The United States has a poor voter turnout even for presidential elections. According to the University of California, Santa Barbara *American Presidency Project*, the highest percentage of the voting age population (all white men—the few freed black men faced hostility and violence at the polls, and Native Americans and other non-white people were not considered citizens) who voted was 81.8% in 1876. The winner of the popular vote, a Democrat (Tilden), lost to Rutherford B. Hayes in the Electoral College vote. 1840 (80.2%) and 1860 (81.2%) were also standout years. The per-

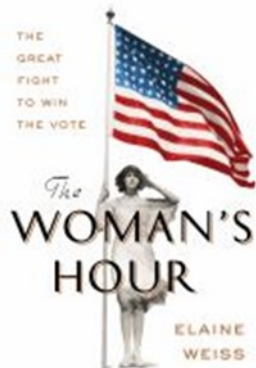
centage of eligible voters who did vote in the presidential elections from 1840 through 1900 ranged from 69.6 to 79.3 percent—most years were in the 70 percent range except for the 3 years in the 80's.

Starting in 1904, voter participation declined—even after 1920 with women gaining the right to vote. Of course, the voting age population (VAP) had increased after passage of the nineteenth amendment. In 2012, 54.9% of VAP voted, and in 2016, the current estimate is 55.5% of the voting age population cast their ballot. Prior to the establishment of poll taxes and literacy tests in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, African-American voters (all male) voted despite violent clashes at the polls. African-Americans ran for local and state offices, and some won their elections. But the advent of polling taxes and literacy tests put an end to black participation for almost seventy years in the south, and eventually disenfranchised poor whites as well. In Alabama, for example, J. Morgan Kousser, a historian,

wrote in *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South* that, "They disfranchised these whites as willingly as they deprived blacks of the vote. By 1941, more whites than blacks in total had been disenfranchised."

Nihil sub sole novem! There is nothing new under the sun! The same political attitudes with the aim to curb voter access are trying to prevail today. What can we do to improve voter participation? Australia defines voting as a civic duty and therefore compulsory; fines are levied against the non-voters. Four to five percent of eligible Australians don't vote. Short of punishing non-voters, what can we do to encourage voting?

1.) *Veterans Today* suggests that we will attract the young voters only if we meet them where they are. In 1998, Oregon transitioned to a vote-by-mail system—and the results are impressive. In the 2014 mid-term, more than



Save the Date!

Book Discussion
**The Woman's
 Hour** by Elaine Weiss
 on Wednesday,
 November, 14, from
 10:30 a.m. to 12:00
 p.m. in meeting room
 C at the Chapel Hill
 Public Library.

Poverty in NC: How the Working Poor Live

Saturday, November
 17, 10:30 a.m.
 Haven Medical
 Community Room,
 121 S. Estes Dr. Ste.
 205, Chapel Hill

AAUW Fellows

Saturday, Feb. 16,
 2019 10:30 a.m.

The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote by Elaine Weiss

Book Discussion—facilitated by Mary Kolek

Nov. 14 at 10:30 a.m. to noon, Rm. C, Chapel Hill Public Library

This book has gotten excellent reviews. If you have time in your busy schedules, please join us for this discussion—and bring a friend!

As the decades long fight to ratify the ERA continues and the MeToo movement captures headlines daily, this book offers us insight and inspiration. Elaine

Weiss's critically acclaimed book:

"Follow[s] a handful of remarkable women who led their respective forces into battle, along with appearances by Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Frederick Douglass, and Eleanor Roosevelt, *The Woman's Hour* is an inspiring story of activists winning their own free-

dom in one of the last campaigns forged in the shadow of the Civil War, and the beginning of the great twentieth-century battles for civil rights." (https://www.bookbrowse.com/reviews/index.cfm/book_number/3720/the-womans-hour)

ERA-NC Annual Conference

On October 6, ERA-NC members met at the United Church of Christ in Winston-Salem to advocate for gender justice and elect a new board and officers. Longtime advocate and organizer, Roberta Madden, is stepping down from the presidency to organize all the letters and papers that she has gathered concerning the fight for equal rights for women for over 50 years. She hopes to house them in a university collection. Carol Robles-Roman gave an overview of

the progress made in the fight to put women in the constitution. We are one state short of having 38 states ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. In a push to get our legislature to ratify the amendment, a dynamic group of women are working hard to organize and convince our elected officials of its importance. Hence, the motto: **NC, DON'T BE LATE, BE 38!**

For those people who are still unconvinced of its necessity, remember the words of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, "**Certainly the Constitution**

does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't." Numerous court rulings have proved it so. Our branch is a member organization, and our board has signed a resolution in support of the amendment. Some of our members are individual supporters. If you want to become an individual member or donate to the cause, you can do both on their site:

<https://www.era-nc.org/>

Poverty in North Carolina: How the Working Poor Live

Speaker: Allan Freyer, Director, Workers' Rights Project

Saturday, November 17, 10:30 a.m.

Haven Medical Community Room

121 S Estes Dr. Ste 205, Chapel Hill, NC



Every time we go out to eat or shop, we interact with the working poor. Despite working two or three jobs, these folks, our neighbors and fellow citizens, may live in subsidized housing or rent rooms in apartments and houses with others in the same economic boat, and live frugally, often finding the cupboard very bare before the next paycheck. If you factor in being a single parent, the situation becomes more perilous because both parent and child (or children) face housing and food insecurity. Choices must be made

--pay the heating bill or the car insurance?

Allan Freyer is the Director of Workers' Rights at the North Carolina Justice Center, where he oversees the Center's policy and campaign efforts aimed at helping North Carolina's low-wage workers earn higher wages, receive adequate health and safety protections, and access crucial work family supports like paid leave and unemployment insurance. He also has extensive experience writing and advocating for smarter, more equitable economic development policies and is currently working with several local govern-

ments on updating their business incentive policies.

Everyone is welcome--all our programs are open to the public and parking is free and plentiful. The event is on the second floor and there is an elevator.



Financial Report
10/282018

Account Balances:

Checking: \$ 1,556.7
(\$120.00 reserved for membership assistance)

MM Checking: \$1,005.22

CD: \$4,892.68

Karen Piplani, Treasurer

Minutes/Report of Plenary Meeting on October 10, 2016

Please Be Generous!

Bring your checkbooks!!
It's time to Fund the Schwenning Scholarship for the next Academic year.

The Schwenning Scholarship has been a tremendous help for so many women. It has made the difference between finishing their degrees, or not; between being able to start a new life or not.

Our branch started the scholarship in 1928 as a loan of \$100.00 to a woman student, usually from North Carolina. Through the years, the amount increased, and became a scholarship instead of a loan. The home of recipients ranged from the United States to Seoul, Korea to Sumatra, Indonesia.

We look forward to carrying on this real help for so many deserving women. Please be generous!

By Karen Piplani, Researched by Kay White

The Carolina Women's Center, the UNC Center of Politics, and AAUW-ODC co-sponsored a Gender and Politics panel discussion at the Sonya Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History in the Hitchcock Room. The six panelists were: Maggie Horzempa, Chairwoman of the College Republicans, Stephanie Austin, President of Stephanie Austin & Associates, Inc. (Political Fundraiser), Javiera Caballero, Durham City Council Member, Sally Greene, Orange County Commissioner and member of AAUW-ODC, Verla Insko, State Representative, Democratic Whip, Natalie Murdock, Candidate, Durham County Water & Soil Commission. The panel was moderated by Dr. Gloria Thomas, Director of the Carolina Women's Center and a member of our branch.

The following questions were asked but given the number of panelists, not all panelists answered all questions.

- What drives women to engage in politics?
- What are the roadblocks encountered along the way?
- What political issues do women agree and disagree on?
- What do women find most rewarding and challenging as elected officials, or in their duties or aspirations to serve?
- What advice do women give to others interested in running for public office?
- How does raising campaign money factor into a woman's decision to run for office? In your experience, do you think men and women think differently about politics? If so, how?

Why should more women get into politics, and how can we strengthen that pipeline of future female leaders at UNC?

Encouragement for women to

enter politics

Never think you don't deserve to sit at that table! Women often need to be asked to run, however, men expect to lead. Early on in life, women learn that they are the helpmate, not the leader. Step forward, don't wait to be asked.

Roadblocks for women

It takes a lot of money. Money is a daunting issue, but fundraising is a game of checkers, not chess. Women may lack the professional networks that men have through their work. Women are raised to be nice and polite; the meanness in politics is unnerving. Both running for office and being in office takes up a lot of time. Time is a barrier especially if you are working and have children; the default parent is often the woman.

Women are less likely to work in firms which will absorb their workload.

Issues that are important to women

Access to quality public education, quality childcare, affordable housing, equal pay, and healthcare are important to women as are human trafficking and sexual assault.

Women disagree about the following issues

Women disagree on several issues: right to life versus right to choose, role of mothers—shared or primary, public education versus subsidies for private/charter schools, the depth and frequency of sexual violence in society, and immigration.

What is rewarding in politics?

A life as a public servant is hard and time consuming, but members of the panel enumerated many

positives: seeing your ideas become policy, learning a vast amount about your district and state, helping people, getting excited about politics, helping the underdog, helping Latinos, realizing the huge responsibility of your position, working with constituents to find a solution, feeling like you are making a contribution and a difference.

What are recent challenges you have faced?

These are some of the challenges the panelists faced: being a Republican in a very Democratic environment (and vice versa), taking care of parents who were very ill while campaigning, balancing personal needs, family and job, running against a person of color when you believe more people of color should be in government, dealing with gentrification and affordable housing and recognizing that resources are limited, and facing a serious lack of fundraisers (people get burned out).

Campaign money issues

Fundraising takes a tremendous amount of emotional energy and stamina plus you must develop confidence to ask for money. "Every no you get is closer to a yes." If you don't come from wealth, you must really work hard. You must network and keep up with people you know throughout the stages of your life. It takes \$10K to run for Chapel Hill Town Council, \$50K for the Durham City Council, \$100K for the Raleigh City Council, and \$5 million for Attorney

President’s Message (continued)

69% turned in ballots in Oregon versus what the *New York Times* termed “The Worst Voter Turnout in 72 Years”—an average of 36.4 percent.

2.) We need to make registration easier. People who move often (young people, renters) and people (mostly women) who change their names, may find it difficult to keep their registration current. Filling out an on-line registration form or access to mail-in forms should be available to everyone.

3.) Eliminate strict voter ID laws. Voter fraud is extremely rare. These laws target people of color, the poor and the elderly by making it a burden to vote.

4.) Make polls convenient and prevent unnecessary poll closures. In 40 counties in NC with large African-American

communities, there were 158 fewer early polling places in 2016 than there were in 2012. I do not know if they have been reinstated for the current election.

5.) Prohibit harmful voter purges. Purges particularly target legitimate voters with common names or the same names (sometimes a father and son). In *Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute* (2018), the Supreme Court gave states the right to strike inactive voters from the polls. This practice hits African-American and low-income voters the hardest. It is unclear to me what qualifies as “inactive”—how many voting cycles would one have to miss?

6.) Make voting day a national holiday.

7.) What can be done to spark interest in the voters who feel

that no one cares about them? Candidates should prioritize people of color, the poor, the struggling, and the young to encourage voter engagement in these groups, by learning from, listening to, and crafting proposals and policies that serve these communities. Political parties should strive for inclusivity and encourage diversity in their candidates. Voters are likely to respond to these overtures.

In a true democracy, we, the voters, should feel that we are participants in our government. There should be discussion, disagreement, and compromise. “We need to recover government as us rather than government as them.” (Joseph L. Ellis, *9 Questions*, *Time*, Oct. 29, 2018) The power of individuals is being diminished in this era of *Citizens United*, powerful lobbies and dark money used to influence elections.



Minutes/Report of Plenary Meeting (continued)

General.

Differences between life as a male politician and a female politician

On the positive, residents like to talk to women about issues. On the negative, men interrupt and cut off women in power. Women are asked more personal questions and are called “girl”. Men are more assertive, even aggressive. Communication styles are different.

Hopes for the future

Panelists mentioned a need for bipartisanship—both sides need the other. Also mentioned was a need for a fairer redistricting system. The audience asked several questions including opinions on the Silent Sam issue. The meeting was very well attended, almost all seats were filled, and the audience was very attentive and serious. Students from other universities came including 4 young women from the

AAUW college chapter at NCCU.

One professor suggested courses that were available at UNC-CH (and to students at other area schools) in the political realm.

