

State Legislative Day Focus: Funding Education That Puts Children First in SC

by Betty Bayless, AAUW of SC Public Policy Chair

Sign up now to participate with members of AAUW of SC, the League of Women Voters of SC (LWVSC), and the SC School Improvement Council (SCSIC) in our annual State Legislative Day on Tuesday, February 27, 2007. We will begin the day at the Columbia Marriott Hotel and conclude the day at the State Capitol.

We invited **Sen. Robert W. (Wes) Hayes, Jr. [R]**, Chair of the Joint Senate Education Funding Study Committee, and committee member **Sen. Linda H. Short [D]** to present the status of the committee's efforts and to share the recommendations the committee may make to the 2007 General Assembly. They will be available to answer your questions on this thorough and complete study of education funding and formulas.

Robert E. Davis, Chief Financial Officer of Richland County School District Two, **Dr. Baron Holmes**, Director of South Carolina Kids Count and **Ellen W. Saltzman**, Research Associate from the Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs, will share their thoughts on how recent tax policy changes impacted K-12 program funding in local school districts as well as K-4 program funding in selected school districts. Their experience and research will provide background for meetings with your legislators.

After lunch, **Dr. Jim Rex**, the newly-elected state superintendent of education, will define his goals to improve the system that educates the children of our state. His transition team evaluated five focus areas: choice; reinvigorating the teaching profession; fair and equitable funding; reforming accountability; and innovation. He will present his plans to the Joint Senate Education Funding Study Committee on January 17.

We will close the day by walking to the State Capitol to observe committee meetings and House/Senate sessions and to meet with our General Assembly members. We urge you to **contact your legislators in advance** to schedule an appointment with them.

Cost for Legislative Day is \$32 and covers morning beverages and muffins, materials, lunch and meeting space rental. **Mail your registration postmarked by February 20, 2007 using the form on page 3.** If you have questions, call me at 843-987-1930 or e-mail tbbayless@islc.net.

As our State Public Policy Chair, I am responsible for State Legislative Day plans in cooperation with Barbara Zia, Ph.D, former LWVSC Education Director, and SCSIC Executive Director Jean Norman, Ed.D.

Please join us for this special opportunity to learn and to network!

Legislative Day Schedule

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Palmetto Ballroom

Columbia Marriott Hotel,
1200 Hampton St., Columbia
1-803-771-7000

8:45 – 9:30 a.m.

Registration, beverages and muffins

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

*Joint Senate Education Funding
Study Committee Strategies*

*Sen. Wes Hayes, Jr. [R], Chair
Sen. Linda Short [D], Member*

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Health Break

10:45 – 11:45 a.m.

*Impact of Tax Policy Change on
Local School Systems & Programs*

*Robert E. Davis, Chief Financial
Officer, Richland Two;
Dr. Baron Holmes, Director,
South Carolina Kids Count;
Ellen W. Saltzman, Research
Associate, Strom Thurmond Institute
of Government & Public Affairs*

11:45 a.m. – Noon

Break – Setup for Lunch

Noon – 1:00 p.m.

Luncheon in Palmetto Ballroom

1:00 – 1:45 p.m.

*A Conversation with
SC Superintendent of Education*

Dr. Jim Rex

1:45 – 2:00 p.m.

Wrap Up the Day

2:00 p.m.

Meet with Legislators and/or observe
General Assembly activities

Historic Charleston site for AAUW of SC Spring Convention

by Audrey Henry, AAUW of SC Program Vice President

The 2007 annual State Convention is an event that no South Carolina AAUW member will want to miss. This convention will have everything, including a wonderful location, a special treat prepared by the host Charleston Branch, a 125th AAUW anniversary celebration, and most importantly, a program that will make you glad you came. Best of all, there will be no increase in price over last year's convention, either for hotel room rates or for registration fees.

The Convention will be held April 20-21 at the spacious Mt. Pleasant Holiday Inn, located just over the bridge from historic downtown Charleston.

Specific directions will be provided along with the registration form and convention schedule in the next *Palmetto Leaf*, which will be mailed in mid-February.

Members who wish to stay overnight at the Holiday Inn on April 20 and/or April 21 should make their own reservations. A block of rooms will be held for AAUW until March 20. The cost per night (at a rate much reduced from their normal rate) is \$85 plus tax. For reservations, phone (800) 290-4004 or (843) 884-6000 **by March 20**.

For a totally new AAUW Convention experience, the Charleston Branch members will be providing tapas and sangria on Friday evening. In addition, for our eating pleasure, a cake to celebrate AAUW's 125th anniversary will be unveiled at some time during the convention. The \$55 registration fee will include those treats and also a served chicken plate lunch on Saturday, complete with salad and dessert.

Whether you are a regular convention attendee, an occasional drop-in, or a member who has never been to a state convention, you really don't want to miss this one.



AAUW of SC President Bev James was involved in an accident in early January on the way to the Denmark Branch Meeting. She is nursing a broken collar bone and bruises, but is doing well. Her column will return in the February issue.

AAUW of SC Leadership Team 2006-2007

Bev James
President

Audrey Henry
Program Vice President

Pat Batten & Sue Norton
Co-Membership Vice Presidents

Lynn Shore
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Pat Hall
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Mildred Finch
Finance Committee Chair

Leslie Henderson
South Atlantic Regional Director

Contact information
for all officers
is available on
AAUW of SC website
www.aauw-sc.org
or from Branch Presidents

New Congress, New General Assembly, New Legislation

by Betty Bayless, AAUW of SC Public Policy Chair



Federal

The House of Representatives returned on January 4 and the Senate on January 9.

House Democrats promised one of their first acts will be to cut interest rates on federal student loans in half, from 6.8% to 3.4% for many loans, and to raise the maximum Pell Grant by more than \$1,000. AAUW supports both measures as part of efforts to make college more affordable.

On January 10, the House of Representatives passed HR 2 that would raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour over two years. The minimum wage is a working woman's issue. Of the 11.8 million workers who would receive a pay increase as the result of HR 2, 58% are women; in fact, 1.4 million working mothers, including 623,000 single moms, would benefit from the increase. It now goes to the Senate for consideration.

AAUW believes raising the minimum wage is an important step toward increasing the economic security of working women and their families, and should not be viewed as a pretext for more tax cuts. AAUW is urging Congress to pass a clean bill *devoid of any extraneous measures*. Contact your Senators NOW via AAUW's Two Minute Activist at <http://www.aauw.org>. Register support for the wage increase.

On January 8, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* was five years old and it is scheduled for reauthorization this year. Also known as the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), NCLB governs the main federal programs assisting

elementary and secondary schools.

Currently there is a large difference between program goals and implementation of those goals. While NCLB set lofty aspirations for public education, implementation of NCL requirements has left many states and school boards in dire straits. Without adequate federal funding, NCLB has become a burdensome unfunded mandate. Funding is just one of the key issues that will be address during reauthorization.

State

The General Assembly session opened on January 9. Legislators pre-filed several education bills.

AAUW SC will review legislation with these topics: **H 3124**, public school open enrollment choice, which could be amended to include tax credits and/or vouchers; **H 3097/S 0217**, establishment of the SC Virtual School Program; **H 3175**, provision for the SC Child Development Education Program for At-risk Children; and **H 3162**, establishment of the SC Teacher Loan Program Policy Board of Governance, its membership and duties. There will be bills to increase scholarship dollars for students majoring in science and math, and address home school issues.

The Joint Senate Education Funding Study Committee will probably not put forth any legislation this year. The committee is making an in-depth study of education funding that has not been done in 30 years. The issues are very complex and time is needed to insure that solid, long-term plans for funding are developed as opposed to the band-aid approach in recent years. Serious concerns about the ramifications of the property tax relief legislation passed last session are being evaluated.

To participate in AAUW of SC's Action Network, send your e-mail address to tbayless@islc.net.

State Legislative Day Registration

Tuesday, February 27, 2007 - Columbia Marriott Hotel, 1200 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC

Name _____
 Branch or Organization _____
 Address _____
 Daytime Phone _____ Fax _____
 E-mail _____

Advance Registration of \$32 must be postmarked by **Tuesday, February 20, 2007**.
 Lunch cannot be guaranteed without advance registration

Registration (*postmarked by February 20*) \$32.00 _____
 Late or on-site registration (*after February 20*) \$40.00 _____

Send this completed form and check payable to **AAUW of SC** to: Pat Hall, 1801 Ford Road, Gaffney, SC 29340

SAR shines with Leadership

by Leslie Henderson, South Atlantic Regional Director



Over two decades ago the South Atlantic Region was a fledgling organization, with not a lot of “clout” in Association. Helen Landers, as Regional Director (RD), began a campaign to develop leaders in our area, and the RDs who followed her continued to build us into a strong, well-respected and well-represented region.

We now boast the president of the Educational Foundation, various past and present members of AAUW boards, as well as off-board members of committees and task forces. We have a lot to be proud of.

Lynn Fountain, GA President, has just been appointed to the Foundation’s Research Advisory Council, and serves on the AAUW Organizational Structure Task Force with Nancy Shoemaker, NC President. Jennifer McDaniel (FL) and Michelle Staben (NC) have been appointed as AAUW liaisons to the National Science Foundation Grant STEM project. Coastal Carolina University (SC), Savannah College of Art and Design (GA), and University of West Florida have been awarded AAUW Campus Action Projects. It doesn’t get better than this.

Meanwhile, AAUW is going through a comprehensive change. This change has consumed enormous time and effort on the part of volunteers and staff.

I urge all AAUW of SC members to read the Roadmap (http://www.aauw.org/member_center/leader_corner/strategic_pp_2006.cfm), about why we’re making changes, and how we arrived at the decisions we made. I urge all of you to participate in an historic event at our Association convention in Phoenix – to make your voices heard, once again.

More information on the Association’s Strategic Process will be available in the next issue of *Palmetto Leaf*.

Many thanks for all that you do for AAUW,

Leslie

AAUW of SC Calendar of Meetings

- January** – Finance Committee Meeting
- January 20** – State Winter Board Meeting, Beaufort
- February 12** – Deadline for *Palmetto Leaf*
- February 27** – Legislative Day, Columbia
- April 20-21** – State Convention, Charleston
- May 18** – Deadline for *Palmetto Leaf*
- June 29-July 2** – AAUW National Convention, Phoenix

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