

Regional Science Consortium to host our January meeting at TREC

Join us at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center (TREC) located at 301 Peninsula Drive on Saturday, Jan. 11, at 10 a.m. in Room 112.

Our host, The Regional Science Consortium, a non-profit organization, will speak to us about its mission to promote and enhance our knowledge and understanding of the Lake Erie and Ohio River basins' ecosystems through research and education.

Jeanette L. Schnars PhD, the Executive Director of the RSC, earned a BS degree in Biology with a minor in Marine Science at Penn State University. Upon completing her degree, she worked for the U.S. Geological Survey researching the sea turtle population at Padre Island National Seashore in Texas. She continued her studies at the State University of New York in Buffalo and earned a master's degree in science while researching the migration of sea turtles in Costa Rica.

Dr. Schnars went on to complete a PhD in Wildlife and Fisheries Science at PSU Erie. Dr. Schnars has served as Executive Director of the RSC since 2007. She continues to conduct research on fisheries, turtles, and bacterial contaminations in Lake Erie.

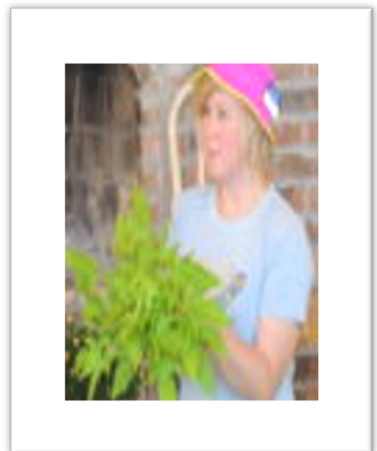


Jeanette Schnars

Our other guest host, **Jen Salem**, a member of the Regional Science Consortium since 2016, graduated from Edinboro University and taught Horticultural Science at Erie High School. Prior to joining the RSC in 2016 she served as TREC's Native Garden Coordinator. She currently manages the Regional Science Consortium plant lab and greenhouses. Ms. Salem is Director of the Weed Warriors of Presque Isle, a volunteer group that removes invasive plant species from Presque Isle State Park.

Ms. Salem, who has a background in greenhouse management, perennial production and landscape design, is also the founder of GoNativeErie, an organization that promotes the use of native plant species.

Plenty of free parking is available at the main entrance to the Tom Ridge Environmental Center. You can also visit the Gift Shop and view its wonderful treasures.



Jen Salem

President's Message

Greetings!

We all know that a well written constitution is one that is a living document.

We also know that this means it can be amended to adapt to changing times. Many less advanced countries keep re-writing their constitutions to please dictators, but we have a process of amending ours without affecting the founding principles of the Republic.

So, I looked up, not being a constitutional scholar myself, the three amendments that have taken the **longest** to be ratified. I'll go in reverse order: The 16th amendment on Federal government levying federal income taxes took 3 and a half years to be ratified. The 22nd Amendment on presidential term limits took almost 4 years to be ratified. But the 27th Amendment on congressional pay increases going into effect only after the following elections, took just over 202 and a half years to be codified in the US Constitution! In other words, some parts of the "living" document take a century or two to come to life...

The 22nd and the 16th took much less time even though they were highly significant principles to be added to the Constitution.

However, I can see why so many congressmen fought 202 years over giving themselves a pay raise and start collecting it immediately without the test of getting re-elected, first. Who would want this pay raise to be held up for another election cycle, especially if it might lead to losing one's seat? However, this long battle over pay raise limitations did not hurt the common citizens... it was about self-interest of the members of congress...

There are other "adaptability" examples of our "living" Constitution, such as Emancipation taking almost a hundred years (13th Amendment was ratified within months) and then another hundred years before the Civil Rights Act (based on the 14th Amendment) went into effect, codifying equal protection to all. These two hundred years deprived common citizens of basic rights and eroded their standing in society for generations.

We are now about to inflict similar harm to common citizens, who happen to be women and LGBTQ+, by missing the deadline for codification of their equal rights into the Constitution. The ERA has been in the works for 100 years already and has been voted in by three quarters of the states to earn its way into the Constitution as an amendment. A simple bureaucratic step remains, which is the archivist's publication of the amendment. If this is done now, it will be the amendment that took the **second longest** time to be ratified. What will future generations say about the slow pace at which the greatest democracy on earth recognized the equality of its citizens, by color of skin or by gender, second only to lawmakers protecting their pay raises?



Asuman Baskan

Con't. on Page 3

President's message

Con't. from Page 2

Recently, I have sent out two emails, the first and most detailed one on December 2nd, asking you to register your support for the ERA actually being written into the U.S. Constitution. A second email went out on December 6th with a single, very quick link. If you haven't done so, please go back to those emails and use the links, addresses and phone numbers therein and speak up. They will also be posted on our Facebook page. If you would like to know more about this issue, there is an explanation of the possible pathways for codifying the amendment in a separate article from the State AAUW Public Policy Chair, Sandra Miller, in this *Pressible* issue.

A gender equality amendment taking this long to enter our Constitution can only mean we are falling behind in terms of human values. As the Holidays approach, we should be thankful for our freedoms, but also live up to the guiding principle that all humans (not just white men) are created equal... Please take action now as this is an urgent fight which can only be won by getting President Biden do what it takes before January 20th.

Enjoy the Holidays and Happy New Year!
Asuman

In memoriam

Life Member Margaret Atkin passed away on Nov. 15 at Forestview Skilled Nursing Center, two months short of her 99th birthday. She was born on January 15, 1926, in Lawrence Park Township.

She graduated from Indiana University Pennsylvania and began teaching in Girard before marrying Ralph Atkin of Tidioute, PA. Together they had three sons and two daughters. She also leaves seven great-grandchildren.

An avid reader, Margaret asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be directed to the Erie County Library - Lawrence Park Branch, 4212 Iroquois Ave, Erie, PA 16511. Alternately, donations are welcomed to the Janet Rapp Scholarship Fund, Iroquois School District Foundation, 800 Tyndall Ave., Erie PA 16511.

Arrangements were handled by the Kloecker-Bailey Funeral Home and Crematory, Inc.

New position created to increase contact with branch members

Erie Branch hopes to increase contact with branch members.

At its December meeting, the board agreed to create a new Member Relations (MR) seat, which will be part of the Membership Committee. This will be an appointed position.

The duties will be to sustain contact with members who may find it difficult to attend our meetings in person and to communicate with donors.

At her discretion, the MR person will reach out to less active members, writing messages, cards or short letters, visiting or calling in person with updates of events and news of the Branch.

She will also send thank you notes to donors of time and money as appropriate.

In the event of illness or death of a member, the MR person will be the primary contact for communicating the preferences of the member/family about how much and what information shall be shared with general membership.

Please contact Asuman Bas-kan (irrepressibleturk@gmail.com)

LAF collection set Jan. 11

Due to the unfortunate cancellation of our December luncheon, there was no collection for the national Legal Advocacy Fund. For anyone who would like to contribute, there will be an opportunity at our Jan. 11 meeting.

Cash or checks payable to "AAUW Erie Branch, Inc" will be accepted. For details about the fund, please see the December *Pressible* or national's website, aauw.org.

Call for new Scholarship Committee members!

The Scholarship Committee has a minimum of two immediate openings for members to start as early as January. You will serve alongside Cindy Belczyk, Debbie Tonkin, and Matasha MurrellJones (Committee Chair). If you are interested, kindly reach out to any of the members.

Scholarship Committee members, according to the job description, will review scholarship applications and evaluate candidates based on the established criteria in the application guidelines. Members will collaborate to identify the most deserving recipients and ensure a fair selection process.

Responsibilities include reviewing and updating scholarship applications as needed and participating in discussions to refine the process. The committee will meet up to three times annually, either in person or via Zoom, to review applications, make award decisions, update the applications, and debrief post-selection.

By Dr. Matasha MurrellJones

Public Policy Highlights

For many years, a few Pennsylvania legislators elected by a tiny percent of Pennsylvania voters have controlled our state's voting maps, legislative agenda, legislative budget and the flow of unlimited campaign dollars. These few leaders can block policies and priorities shared by a large majority of Pennsylvania voters.

Current Pennsylvania law puts legislators in charge of redistricting (the process of re-drawing voting districts,) which happens every ten years to reflect population changes. When legislators manipulate district boundaries to keep themselves in office or to silence the opposition we all lose. Fair Districts PA is a nonpartisan statewide coalition of organizations and individuals working to fix legislative rules, create fair voting districts and map out a fair redistricting process representing all Pennsylvanians.

Reforming Pennsylvania's redistricting process will require amending the PA constitution. Pennsylvania is one of 24 states without a citizen initiative and referendum process. Fair Districts PA is working to change that by working to reform redistricting rules to reflect communities more accurately and to ensure that voters pick their politicians rather than politicians picking their voters.

Fair Districts and partner organizations are currently working to amend the PA constitution to create a commission composed of citizens with no vested interest in how districts are drawn. The commission would redraw congressional and PA House and Senate districts to reflect fair representation based on current census data.

Changes to the PA constitution must first be passed by the Pennsylvania legislature in two successive sessions.

The goal of Fair Districts Pa is to see a bill pass in 2025-26 and again in 2027-28 so that we can all have a chance to vote it into law before the 2030 redistricting cycle. The key to the initiative will be public attention and citizen advocacy for redistricting reform.

By Loretta Seigley

ERA Update from state public policy chair

There are two paths that AAUW is working on to move the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to fruition.

Congressional Path

There is a resolution to remove the deadline for the ratification of the ERA. This is stuck in committee and has not been scheduled for a floor vote. A discharge petition has been filed to move it to the floor. Once this bill is approved by the House, it will be sent to the Senate for a vote. After the passage of the Senate, with exact language, it will go to the President. All steps must be completed by 12/20/24 for this path to be successful.

Here are the cosponsors: Cosponsors - H.J.Res.25 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Removing the deadline for the ratification of the equal rights amendment. | Congress.gov | Library of Congress.

In order for this process to happen, it must be discharged from the committee and brought to a floor vote. The petition for this step to happen requires 218 sponsors. Here is the listing of the 214 members that have signed on so far: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives - Discharge Petition Details - 6. We are looking for House Republicans to sign on so the vote can happen. All of Pennsylvania's Democrats have signed on. There is hope that Brian Fitzpatrick will cross the aisle and sign on as he has signed on to the removal bill. So far that has not happened.

The other path is for the President to declare that sufficient states have ratified the ERA and give notice to the Archivist that it is ready for publication. There has been resistance due to the Trump Administration's DOJ opinions that it was not eligible for ratification. There are strong opinions (ABA included) that the archivist can disallow this DOJ advice and publish it.

AAUW is encouraging President Biden to use all of his powers to see that the ERA is published and both paths are valid means to get there.

Two AAUW resources are available for you to share: Affirm the Equal Rights Amendment – AAUW : Empowering Women Since 1881 Two-minute Activist!

Calls to the White House: American Association of University Women [AAUW] | Tell Biden: Affirm the Equal Rights Amendment!

If folks are having issues receiving AAUW emails, re-subscribe at aauw.us/emailoptions and sign up for Two-Minute Activist.

The League of Women Voters also has a great toolkit for the ERA: ERA Toolkit | League of Women Voters

We will be organizing opportunities to attend action days in Harrisburg to advocate for Paid Leave and early childhood education. They are called ECE caravan days! I will share the details once I receive them from the Coalition.

Equal Pay Day: In 2023, women saw the pay gap widen (from 83 cents in 2022 to 84 cents in 2023)! Next year's session dates for our state General Assembly are available and there are no appropriate days for an in-person event in Harrisburg. We will be encouraging members to do local outreach and more information will be coming in February.

*Sandra Miller
Public Policy Chair, AAUW-PA*



Global Friends Potluck

Members of Global Friends gathered in December for their holiday potluck. The event was enjoyed by all.

Computer instruction anyone?

If the time has come for you to face your lack of knowledge about computers and look into taking a course... maybe a refresher course... give me a call and we'll discuss how to find instruction to bring ourselves up to speed.

This may mean chipping in to pay an instructor. Or we may find a resource that is free.

If you would like to join this endeavor, please contact Loretto Bellicini loretto.bellicini1@gmail.com or 814-449-8839.

Children's Museum highlights



Food and Friends plans outreach for January meeting

The Food and Friends initiative for January will focus on outreach to underserved individuals in our community.

First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant opens its doors every Sunday of the year to offer a meal to individuals and families in our community who are in need.

This initiative serves up to 200 individuals each week. Erie community organizations and groups are invited to prepare and serve the meal.

Food and Friends plans to respond to that invitation and will purchase, prepare and serve Sunday Supper on Jan. 26.

Monetary donations to help with the cost of purchasing food will be greatly appreciated. Please send checks to Karen Miller at 3625 Bellaire Drive, Erie, 16506.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Want to get involved?

Stay engaged this year with national's Two-Minute Activist tool!

Branch Study Groups

Book Discussion

Book Discussion will meet on Thursday, Jan. 2, from 1-3 p.m. at Springhill 317.

Food and Friends

Food and Friends will focus on outreach to underserved individuals in our community on Sunday, Jan. 26, at First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant.

A variety of Erie community organizations and groups are invited to prepare and serve the meal. Food and Friends will purchase, prepare and serve Sunday Supper Jan. 26.

Checks to help with the cost of purchasing food will be collected by Karen Miller, 3625 Bellaire Drive, Erie, 16506.

Global Friends

Global Friends will meet on Monday, Jan. 27, at 7 p.m. at Edie's home, 638 Vermont Ave. Program: TBD

Gourmet

Gourmet will meet at Torero's, Peach Street Marketplace, 1940 Douglas Pkwy., at 5 p.m. on Jan. 24.

Please reserve your place as soon as possible by calling Nickie Azicri at 814-835-3780 or 814-504-8258 or email to speedyzeek8@gmail.com

Politalk

Politalk will meet Jan. 16 at 2 p.m. at Asuman's home, 3838 State St.

January 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Book Club 1-3 p.m. Springhill	3	4
	6 Board mtg. 6:30 p.m. Zoom	7	8	9	10	11 Branch mtg. 10 a.m. TREC
	13	14	15	16 Politalk 2 p.m. at Asuman's	17	18
	20	21	22	23	24 Gourmet Torero's 5 p.m.	25
26 Food & Friends Church of Covenant	27 Global Friends 7 p.m. at Edie's	28	29	30	31	



Erie Branch ♦ Founded in 1902

P.O. Box 9264 Erie PA 16505

AAUW's Mission

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through education, philanthropy, and research. By joining AAUW you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance. In principle and in practice AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in the organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability or class.

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Branch email: eriebranchaauw@gmail.com
Editor email: eriepressible@gmail.com
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friends of the erie county library

The Friends of the Erie County Library is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to the support and advancement of the Erie library system. Become a member and get involved to be a "Friend" to your library.

facebook.com/EriePAFriendsOfTheLibrary
erielibraryfriends.org

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2607 Buffalo Road
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536 West Tenth Street
 452-2456
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 Supervisor

www.dusckasfuneralhome.com

Chris Spoto
 image master

2827 West 26th St.
 Erie, PA 16506

814.838.6255

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