

Revamping the Reach of Legal Advocacy into the Private Sector

Delaware State LAF Chair, Dr. Kathy Jacobs

The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund began in 1980 as a fund of contributions to invest in preventing and combating sex discrimination and promote gender equity in higher education.

That mission has now been changed to include not only higher education but also the workplace in the private sector. Below are three actions the national AAUW LAF states it has taken to help women in all sectors of our society.

1. Financial case support for plaintiffs in sex discrimination cases in the educational arena;
2. Moral support for plaintiffs seeking redress for workplace discrimination, such as, Lilly Ledbetter, with whom AAUW has worked tirelessly on Capitol Hill for passage of legislation to restore the rights of pay discrimination victims decimated by the Supreme Court's decision in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber*.
3. Expertise support – AAUW participates frequently as amicus curiae in cases affecting women's rights specifically and civil rights generally arising in a wide array of settings (www.aauw.org).

At the February 2008 Joint meeting of the AAUW and Educational Foundation Boards, the decision was made to transition LAF to a strategy consistent with the guidance of members and the AAUW Strategic Priorities. The overall purpose was to use LAF for breaking down educational and economic barriers so that ALL women have a fair chance.

It is important to remember that LAF had already been moved to the Educational Foundation, making the EF Board the voting body and its staff will continue to work with branches to expand the online LAF Resources such as the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

LAF will continue to provide travel grants and stipends to LAF speakers this year and into the future as requested by branches, and will work proactively with potential speakers to encourage their participation, including those whom AAUW support as amicus curiae. Therefore, it will still be important to contribute to LAF in order to focus on strategic litigation and landmark cases that make a difference for all women. Contact your branch LAF chair to give your contributions and note that December 2008 is the deadline date for contributions that will count for this year.

Your financial support as AAUW members is critical to help us broaden our focus beyond the academic arena and target our resources to cases that establish significant legal precedents and help us broaden commitment to gender equity and fulfill our promise to break through educational and economic barriers so ALL women will have a fair chance.