



# HIGHLIGHTS

IN EQUITY

## AAUW Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst, Ohio Branch

A newsletter for members and friends who support gender fairness  
October 2024, Volume 2024-2025, Issue 2

### Citizens, not Politicians Amendment—Issue 1



AAUW HHL will meet Wednesday, October 23, 2024 in person at the Bertram Woods Branch, Shaker Heights Libraries, 20600 Fayette Road. We will gather in the Community Room and on Zoom at 6:30 for our program that begins at 6:45 pm.

Our speaker is Annette Tucker Sutherland. Ms. Sutherland is an

attorney who chaired the Shaker Heights chapter of the League of Women Voters for three years. She served 12 years on the Shaker Heights Board of Education. She comes to us well prepared to discuss voting issues and concerns.

Her presentation will include information about gerrymandering in Ohio, how the "Citizens Not Politicians" proposed amendment would end gerrymandering. The Citizens Not Politicians amendment would replace the Ohio Redistricting Commission, a panel of elected officials that's currently controlled by Republicans, with a citizen's commission that would be made up of equal parts Republicans, Democrats and political independents. The new commission would draw Ohio's state legislative and congressional district maps.

*Donna*



October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual worldwide campaign to promote regular screening and early detection of breast cancer.

According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, one in eight women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. It is the most common cancer among American women.

In the U.S., more than 270,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year and about 42,000 will die from the disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

However, through early detection, the 5-year relative survival rate for localized cancer that hasn't spread is 90%, according to the American Cancer Society.



October is also Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a nationwide effort to bring awareness to domestic violence and how it affects all of us. Domestic violence awareness month was first introduced back in 1981 by the National Coalition Against Domestic violence. It was created not only to bring more awareness to others but to connect and unify the millions of affected victims that had been battered due to domestic violence. Its hope is to break the chains of violence that currently have such a strong grip on our nation.

#### Topic: AAUW HHL October 23 Event - Redistricting in Ohio

Time: Oct 23, 2024 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83032374176?pwd=ZGMXbpKNBowBmSxQwKy3ejO9aaaV1K.1>

Meeting ID: 830 3237 4176

Passcode: 626467

#### One tap mobile

+16469313860,,83032374176#,,,,\*626467# US

+19292056099,,83032374176#,,,,\*626467# US (New York)

#### Dial by your location

• +1 646 931 3860 US

#### October birthdays:

None

#### November birthdays:

19 Donna Black

Cindy Goldberg



# Branch News: President's Column; More on Redistricting

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## President's Column—Kay Rasmusen



The first time I learned more about gerrymandering was when I read the book, *The Lost Child of Philomena* by Martin Sixsmith. This was a story about a young Irish gal who in the 50s got pregnant and was sent to a convent to

have her child, and then had to work there for three and half years as penance for being an unwed mother. Her child was taken away from her at age three and 'sold' to or adopted by an American couple.

The adopted son grew up in the Midwest and became an attorney and a top expert on congressional districting whose legal work for the Republican National Committee helped the GOP win the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. He used legal strategies, fighting with court cases to reverse gerrymandering decisions that had been designed to protect white Democrats back in the 80s. He was a high ranking member of the Ronald Reagan Administration.

The book is about how journalist Sixsmith helped to find Philomena's son. The story also was turned into an award-winning movie, *Philomena*.

Our speaker in October from Fair Districts Ohio will explain Issue 1 or the Citizens not Politicians amendment which is on our ballots. This is an amendment which hopes to end gerrymandering in Ohio.

Fair Districts Ohio is a coalition of grassroots organizations committed to fair state legislative and congressional maps. The coalition is led by Common Cause Ohio, ACLU Ohio, and the League of Women Voters Ohio and joined by the Ohio A. Phillip Randolph Institute, the Ohio Council of Churches, the Ohio Voters Rights Coalition, and other government organizations. — Kay



Jessie Balmert, [Columbus Dispatch](#)

## What is Re-Districting and Why Does It Matter?

Most lawmakers representing Ohio voters at the Statehouse in Columbus or Congress in Washington, D.C., run for election in districts.

Deciding what these districts look like is called **redistricting**.

Normally, redistricting happens every 10 years after the U.S. Census is complete. New population data determine how many seats each state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives. Ohio currently has 15 congressional seats, down from a high of 24 from 1963 to 1973.

The population numbers also help decide where these districts should be. If Columbus and Cincinnati are growing in population, they are entitled to more representation in Columbus and D.C. If Youngstown is shrinking, its representation should, too.

While the concept is simple – divide the state evenly into 15 congressional districts, 33 state Senate districts and 99 state House districts, the execution is often complicated and deeply political. That's because how you draw the districts can give one political party an advantage over the other.

## What is Gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is the act of redrawing the lines of a congressional district to give one political party a voting advantage over another. Technically, gerrymandering is illegal, but it's hard to prove. While both political parties deny that they gerrymander, it does tend to happen; and after every redistricting effort, the courts hear numerous cases of alleged gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is the act of redrawing the lines of a congressional district to give one political party a voting advantage over another. Technically, gerrymandering is illegal, but it's hard to prove. While both political parties deny that they gerrymander, it does tend to happen; and after every redistricting effort, the courts hear numerous cases of alleged gerrymandering.



The 2024 U. S. election will have a major impact on gender equity in education, women's economic security, and reproductive and civil rights. The good news? When women vote, we change the conversation.

## Ohio Update—Nancy Stellhorn



### AAUW Ohio Fall Summit in Summary and a Call to Action—

AAUW Ohio Fall Summit on Saturday, September 28, 2024 was a day focused on communication skills—how we use them in our branches and how we can use them to influence voters. If you did not attend, you missed a day of learning how to sharpen your communication skills to influence people today. This article is a summary that I hope will give you reason to attend the next statewide Ohio meeting in the spring.

Organized by AAUW Ohio’s Program Vice President Rush Rogers the Summit opened with a panel discussion of how we communicate. Erin Czerniak, speaking about AAUW Ohio and its public policy, recommended that we be informed about voting on down-ballot races and that we share trusted organizations for information.

The speaker stressed using messaging that encourages participation by listening to what *they* care about and then using issues that matter to our listeners. HHL can use short questions and answers on our newer Facebook Group page AAUW HHL, information with our newsletter, and easy links on our website.

So, what’s on the down-ballot? State Representative seats, County Judicial seats, State Supreme Court, US Congressional seats, and County Issues.

I suggest you print your ballot before you begin your research about candidates. That way, you know names of those on your ballot. Need help to print your ballot? Read the separate newsletter article titled *Get Ready and Vote*.

Get issue and candidate information from

2024 [Innovation Ohio](#) Elections HUB

The [Matriots](#) Ohio endorses women running for office.

You need to know your region and district.

[Judicial Votes Count](#) helps people understand judicial races and candidates

[Equality Ohio Candidate Scorecard](#) evaluates candidates on LGBTQ+ Equality and Inclusion

[Red Wine & Blue](#) Anti-Extremism Voting Guide

[Citizens Not Politicians](#) Read “Get the Facts” and read Issue 1, about redistricting and gerrymandering.

Erin spent time at Fall Summit speaking about data-driven information to determine groups to target if we want to be one of the trusted organizations. She used data from Galvanize Action, a group targeting women—most living in rural, small town, and suburban communities—who want progress on things like access to healthcare and climate. The Galvanize Action uses data science to understand what influences our civic behavior. They attempt to combat disinformation. Please note the difference between “misinformation” and “disinformation.” Read more about

Galvanize Action at their website <https://www.galvanizeaction.org/> To improve our outcomes based on our stated values, AAUW should study the group’s playbook/ toolkit and how partners used it.

If you vote early or vote by mail, it’s time to do your research to become informed. Visit the websites mentioned above and others you like.

Fall Summit attendees ended the day with selected slides from AAUW Action Fund’s webinar titled, *It’s my Vote! AAUW Priorities in the 2024 Election*. We focused on paid leave, reproductive rights and abortion access, voting rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment. These are AAUW’s Action Priorities. You can watch this webinar by clicking [here](#). When you land on the page, scroll down to “Trainings” and choose “It’s My Vote!: AAUW Priorities in the 2024 Election.”

The AAUW Ohio Statewide Fall Summit focus can be HHL’s target to be a conduit for trusted election information.

*Nancy*

### Get Ready and Vote—

Access your sample ballot online from the State of Ohio’s directory of County Board of Elections (BOE) website and encourage others to do the same. From Ohio’s directory [here](#), you can link to your county. Here is an example: click on C to find Cuyahoga County BOE or scroll down. There are several counties beginning with C, so scroll down the page to find Cuyahoga County. Click on the link to their website [boe.cuyahogacounty.gov](http://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov).

This year, you and the people you influence may only vote for two or three down-ballot issues or offices, but it’s a good start for growth. Vote to make your community the place you want to live.

*Nancy*

Check out our branch website for the latest branch information <https://hhl-oh.aauw.net> and our blog: <https://aauwahl.wordpress.com> and find us and like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AAUWHHL>

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## Diversity—Cindy Goldberg, Co-Chair



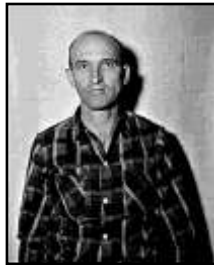
### Vote this November as if your life depends on it --for some it did

The right to vote is a privilege. It is found in democratic societies. It cannot be taken for granted. In the 1960s in the United States voting rights workers worked together; black-and-white, Christian and Jew to support voting rights in the South for African Americans. Notably, three voting rights workers lost their lives to protect the right to vote for all voters. The story of their violent deaths shook the nation. Perhaps for some it's been forgotten, or the story has not been told. Please read the following article about the death at age 92, in prison, of the only individual prosecuted for the death of these voting rights workers.

### Man convicted of 3 killing civil rights workers dies in jail—

By Emily Wagster Pettus and Rebecca Santana--January 12, 2018

Jackson, Miss. (AP) — Edgar Ray Killen, a 1960s Ku Klux Klan leader who was convicted decades later in the “Mississippi Burning” slayings of three civil rights workers, has died in prison at the age of 92, the state’s corrections department announced.



Killen was serving three consecutive 20-year terms for manslaughter when he died at 9 p.m. Thursday inside the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. An autopsy was pending, but no foul play was suspected, the statement Friday said.

His conviction came 41 years to the day after James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, all in their 20s, were ambushed and killed by Klansmen.

The three Freedom Summer workers had been investigating the burning of a black church near Philadelphia, Mississippi. A deputy sheriff in Philadelphia had arrested them on a traffic charge, then released them after alerting a mob. Mississippi’s then-governor claimed their disappearance was a hoax, and segregationist Sen. Jim Eastland told President Lyndon Johnson it was a “publicity stunt” before their bodies were dug up.

The slayings shocked the nation, helped spur passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and were dramatized in the 1988 movie “Mississippi Burning.” The movie title came from the name of the FBI investigation.

Killen, a part-time preacher and lumber mill operator, was 80 when a Neshoba County jury of nine white people and three Black people convicted him of three counts of manslaughter on June 21, 2005, despite his assertions that he was innocent. Prosecutors said Killen masterminded the slayings, then went elsewhere so he would have an alibi.

Killen was the only person ever to face state murder charges, and even then, it was the lesser charge of manslaughter that put him in state prison.

“It wasn’t even murder. It was manslaughter,” David Goodman,

Andrew’s younger brother, observed Friday.

“His life spanned a period in this country where members of the Ku Klux Klan like him were able to believe they had a right to take other people’s lives, and that’s a form of terrorism,” Goodman said. “Many took Black lives with impunity.”

Schwerner, a white New Yorker, moved to Mississippi in early 1964 to work on Black voter registration and other projects. Chaney was a Black Mississippian who befriended him. Andrew Goodman, another white New Yorker, underwent civil-rights training in Ohio and arrived in Mississippi a day before he, Schwerner and Chaney were killed. Investigators searching for their bodies found bodies of other Black men who had been killed in Mississippi, including two who were brutalized before being dumped in the Mississippi River.

Schwerner’s widow, Rita Schwerner Bender, said on the day Killen was convicted that the slayings were part of a larger problem of violence in Mississippi against Black people and others who challenged the segregationist status quo.

“Preacher Killen did not act in a vacuum and the members of the Klan who were members of the police department and the sheriff’s department, and the highway patrol didn’t act in a vacuum,” she said.

Goodman said Friday that Killen’s passing is a reminder that issues of racism and white nationalism remain today. He pointed to the violent rally of white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia, as an example.

Killen wouldn’t say much about the killings during a 2014 interview with The Associated Press inside the penitentiary. He said he remained a segregationist who did not believe in racial equality, but contended he harbored no ill will toward Black people. Killen said he never had talked about the events that landed him behind bars, and never would.

Long a suspect in the 1964 slayings, Killen had made a livelihood from farming, operating his sawmill and preaching to a small congregation at Smyrna Baptist Church in Union, south of Philadelphia, Mississippi.

According to FBI files and court transcripts from a 1967 federal conspiracy trial, Killen did most of the planning in the ambush killings of the civil rights workers. According to testimony in the 2005 murder trial, Killen served as a klavner, or organizer, of the Klan in Neshoba County and helped set up a klavern, or local Klan group, in a nearby county.

Nineteen men, including Killen, were indicted on federal charges in the 1967 case. Seven were convicted of violating

*(continued on page 5)*

**AAUW Diversity Policy:** In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

.(Continued from page 4)

the victims' civil rights. None served more than six years

Killen's federal case ended with a hung jury after one juror said she couldn't convict a preacher. During his state trial in 2005, witnesses testified that on June 21, 1964, Killen went to Meridian to round up carloads of Klansmen to ambush Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman, telling some of the Klan members to bring plastic or rubber gloves. Witnesses said Killen then went to a Philadelphia funeral home as an alibi while the fatal attack occurred.

The three bodies were found 44 days later, buried in a red-clay dam in rural Neshoba County.

In February 2010, Killen sued the FBI, claiming the government used a mafia hit man to pistol-whip and intimidate witnesses for information in the case. The federal lawsuit sought millions of dollars in damages and a declaration that his rights were violated when the FBI allegedly used a gangster known as "The Grim Reaper" during the investigation. The lawsuit was later dismissed.

In the AP interview, Killen repeated his contention that he was not a criminal, but a political prisoner. He spoke of his many friends, Sen. Eastland among them. Of one thing he was certain: "I could have beat that thing if I'd had the mental ability."

When she learned of Killen's death, Chaney's sister, the Rev. Julia Chaney Moss, said her first thought was that "God has been kind to him. And for that I am grateful."

"My last thought on this is just that I only wish peace and blessings for all the families as well as the families of the perpetrators," she said.

--Rebecca Santana reported from New Orleans. Associated Press writer Jack Elliott Jr. contributed to this report.

What is the connection between the death of three voting rights workers, and the world we live in today? There seems to be a regressive push in the politics of some to turn back the clock. The gains that have been made to ensure voting rights and other rights, including reproductive rights are being threatened. Let us never take for granted the freedoms and opportunities that we have today. Let us learn from the past that there are forces in the world that use violence, intimidation, and suppression to deny basic equality and civil rights. Let us remember the civil rights workers of the past and support those who work for equity and the protection of basic rights today.

Fondly submitted by *Cindy*,  
for the Diversity Committee

## Around Northeast Ohio District

The next Northeast Branch program is Tuesday, November 12, at Morley Library at 6pm. They will be having desserts as refreshments. Program is *Women in Islam*. The speaker is Faten Odeh, Executive Director of CAIR-Ohio.



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## Looking Forward—

Save the date for another diversity-themed theater outing, Sunday matinee on November 17 at 3pm --*The Elephant in the Room* by Priyanka Shetty. President Kay is working on getting us a group rate and handicapped accessible seats at the Cleveland Public Theatre where we went last year. Please let Kay know if you are interested in going, so we can order tickets.



Unapologetically Indian, Irreverently American, One-Woman Wonder, Priyanka Shetty's *The Elephant in the Room* is a witty dark comedy about just your typical Indian metalhead and software-engineer-turned-actor who must navigate life as an immigrant arriving in Trump's America. When Priyanka makes the bold move to defy her family by quitting her IT job and moving to the U.S. to pursue an acting career, things don't quite turn out how she imagined. The play navigates Priyanka's real-life journey as she transitions from her deeply embedded roots in India to finding context and common ground in America. Gear up for a funny, tumultuous ride through immiscible cultures, unforgettable love, irreparable loss, and the desperation of not belonging anywhere.



## Diversity in Action

AAUW HHL has enriched its history of diversity by seeking members of diverse backgrounds, by attending plays and reading books that provide learning experiences and provoke discussion. We support and attend AAUW Ohio's programs and actions on diversity, intentionality, and inclusion.

We support opening membership to all who want to speak for our vision of Equity for All. Since 1881, AAUW has worked for equity—first, for education and economic parity of women. Realizing we cannot have equity without equity for *all*, AAUW updated its vision and its work to achieve it.

Become a member. We welcome you to join our branch of the national AAUW. Our events are all hybrid. If you are looking for a community of activists, join us. Email us at [aauwhh@roadrunner.com](mailto:aauwhh@roadrunner.com).

## Forum Page—It's About Justice



It's About Justice—  
Meryl Johnson



Itsaboutjustice@gmail.com  
Listen to Meryl every Saturday on  
"Its About Justice?"  
1:00 to 2:00 pm  
WRUW. 91.1 FM

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cleveland has monthly forums which I often find very interesting. Recently their special guest was Rev. Marvin McMickle, an author, a professor and noted scholar on history and many other areas. His topic was "The Threat of Christian Nationalism and Project 2025". I have done 23 presentations on Project 2025. I tuned in because I wanted to learn more about Christian Nationalism, the national goal of the authors/supporters of this 930-page document. Here are Rev. McMickle's words:

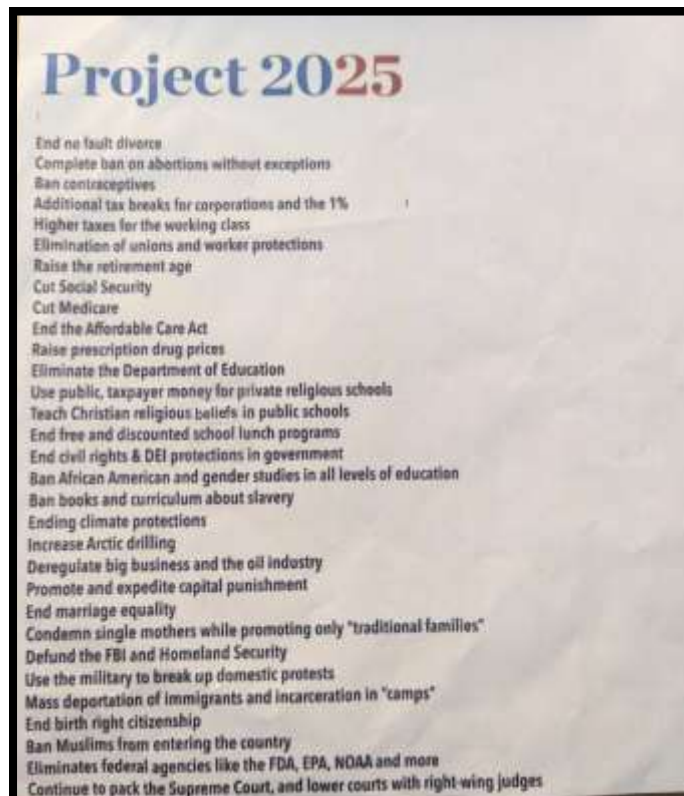
"Christian nationalism is the quasi-religious ideology being used to justify and endorse the political ideology of Project 2025 which asserts:

- 1) God has a preferential interest in and commitment to the United States
- 2) Christianity should be the official religion of the United States
- 3) White Christians (primarily males) should govern the country
- 4) A religious minority should be allowed to impose its agenda on an entire nation concerning immigration, gun ownership, human sexuality, reproductive rights, and an "America First" foreign policy."

Rev. McMickle made it very clear that we are in trouble. Someone asked what we can do if Donald Trump is elected and this agenda is implemented. Reverend McMickle's answer- "Nothing. They won." He said that when Barack Obama was elected, people were not just angry; they actually went mad/crazy and now are determined to keep another Black person, and especially a woman, out of the White House.

No matter what you care about, there's something in Project 2025 that will attack your way of life. Please use the flyer included in this article as talking points when you discuss the impending loss of our democracy if people don't exercise the power we all share through our vote. In an interview, Stacey Abrams, the woman who turned Georgia blue, said the following: "Our vote in November will determine if we are legally relegated to absolute powerlessness". **Don't let it happen!**

*Meryl*



# AAUW HHL Branch is involved in the community



## Collaborative to End Human Trafficking



We've talked about it before. Let's refresh. Human trafficking continues to be a world-wide problem. Human Trafficking is defined as the exploitation of humans for profit. US law defines human trafficking as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor against their will. Victims include male and female children and adults who are US citizens as well as foreign born individuals.

The Collaborative to End Human Trafficking reports that 21 million people are estimated to be trafficked globally. Forced labor generates \$150 BILLION per year with \$90 BILLION being generated from commercial sexual exploitation. They report that 54% of victims are female and 46% are male (children and adult).

The National Hotline is 1-888-373-7888; Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost can be reached at 800-282-0515 from 8am to 6pm.

Who thinks like this? I cannot think in these terms, even after a 13-year career in law enforcement as a Parole Officer. I am certain you cannot either. I am sure this is why this crime goes on unabated by wholesome individuals. I've seen a lot of perpetrators but none like these. But I'm willing to bet I've seen victims I never imagined were victims. I believe we see the consequences of these crimes on the lives of victims. We just don't realize it. That's the problem. I know people care. We just need our eyes opened. We need to learn how to be up to the task or nothing will change.

Go here to download your resource guide of Supportive Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in Northeast Ohio – <https://collabtoendht.org/human-trafficking/#resourceguide>.

## Luggage for Foster Kids:

Every Child Needs a Family. Unfortunately, not every family has the means to house a child that needs them. There are over 2000 children in DCFS custody through no fault of their own. Many continue to live unstable lives and can be moved from pillar to post because of the actions of adults who are not always able or competent to care for them. Last year, I asked you to imagine not being able to take any of your belongings with you if you were being relocated to the care of strangers. I asked you to imagine the psychological impact of having to move everything you own in a large garbage bag at a moment's notice. You listened and we were able to donate lightweight luggage to the Department of Child and Family Services. We won't stop at a few items. This year, we are looking to donate more small, carry-on sizes approximately 22 x 14 x 9 inches. Please help by contacting us on Facebook to arrange a pickup.



It costs you nothing to do this. Your help is needed to provide mammograms for those who cannot afford one.



We will also be participating in the Long-Sleeve Shirt Drive again this year, so begin to collect your contributions now. It will be the end of March so you have plenty of time to prepare your donations of a new or slightly used long-sleeve shirt to help farmworkers mitigate exposure to pesticide residues and reduce direct exposure to the heat.

If you have any other ideas about how AAUW HHL can be involved in the community, share those ideas with either Kay or Donna.