

AVA-BERLIN ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR DECEMBER 2025 – HIGHLIGHTS

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The previous AVA-Berlin Annual Business Meeting was held on December 5, 2024 at Ristorante Pizzeria Roma. Carolyn Prescott took minutes.
2. The following Executive Committee officers were re-elected for 2024-2025: ANN WERTHEIMER (chair); PAM SELWYN (vice chair); ALAN BENSON (treasurer); JANE HARTMANN (assistant treasurer); ISABEL COLE, JON WOLFE, and CAROLYN PRESCOTT (associates).
3. ANN WERTHEIMER continued as mailing list administrator and PAM SELWYN as mailing list administrator backup.
4. JON WOLFE continued as our web master.
5. KAREN AXELRAD was in charge of our presence on Facebook. CAROLYN PRESCOTT took care of our web site at www.avaberlin.org.
6. ANN WERTHEIMER continued as liaison to the United for Peace and Justice coalition, which we joined in 2006. As a local group with no employees, AVA-Berlin pays \$50 dues a year to UfPJ. See <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/member-groups/> and scroll down to UfPJ International Member Groups.
7. The dues for full membership with voting rights in AVA-Berlin are still €30 per year, or a self-assessed smaller amount. See www.avaberlin.org and then click on MEMBERSHIP for details. ALAN BENSON, with JANE HARTMANN as backup, kept dues records, answered questions, and wrote reminders.

You can actually be on our mailing list without paying anything, ever. But if you want to show your appreciation for what our group does here in Berlin, please pay your 30 euros or a self-assessed smaller amount. All members-in-good-standing will have the right to vote at the December business meeting.

8. We decided that our Stammtische would usually be in person but that we would try to have a Zoom Stammtisch several times a year. We have kept to the two Stammtisch guidelines recommended by DOUG HILLMER: First we go around the “room” and give everyone 1-2 minutes just to say what's on

their minds. This can be about the political or social issues of the day, or someone can just mention something personal. This precedes the actual Stammtisch discussion and gives everyone a chance to be heard early on. We just listen to each other to see what people are interested in or concerned about. Of course, during this first part of the meeting a topic may emerge. Then, during the Stammtisch discussion itself, if there is a back and forth conversation between two people, they should “self-regulate” their discussion after three or four exchanges by one or both saying that it is time to “yield the floor” to others. If nobody wants the floor, then the back-and-forth can continue. PAM SELWYN moderates when necessary.

9. As Americans living abroad concerned about the continuation of democracy and constitutional government in the United States, we asked ourselves: What can we do from here to support democratic processes and the rule of law in our country? As individuals we can, of course, sign petitions, make donations, write or call our Representatives and Senators in the states where we vote. As a group of Americans in Berlin, we MUST also keep informed about what’s happening in the United States and try to understand both the big picture and the details. Our monthly Stammtisch, which is face-to-face every first Thursday of the month and via Zoom once in awhile, has long provided us with an opportunity to keep ourselves informed about American politics. We have expanded that activity with AVA EXTRA.

With AVA EXTRA we recommend articles or podcasts that we feel are particularly informative and thoughtful about the turbulent events currently reshaping our politics and our government. Announcements of meetings and other information are sent out in separate emails as usual. Thank you to everyone who contributed EXTRA articles or podcasts.

10. A working group was formed to solve one of our biggest problems: a sound system for our protests. Tony Lyon has bought a speaker that is expandable, meaning one can add to this "system" if we need to depending on how things grow; a speaker stand that can get around 2-2.25 meters high; 2 mics with 2 mic stands. He is working on a backpack duffel solution for transport. Matthias Groh is his back-up and others in the working group are ready to help with logistics. Tony writes: “For the moment, this will be owned by me but available for free use for events.... If in the future we want to change thatwe can sort that out in the fullness of time.”

WHAT WE DID

1. Once again, Campact called on us to support the firewall between the democratic parties and the AfD: On Sunday, February 22 at 3:30 PM, starting at the Reichstag, we marched with our German friends to the main CDU offices at the Konrad-Adenauer-Haus.

*Wir sind der Aufstand der Anständigen! Gemeinsam mit unseren Nachbar*innen, Freund*innen und Kolleg*innen stehen wir auf gegen die AfD und für unsere Demokratie. So zeigen wir CDU-Chef Friedrich Merz: Keine Zusammenarbeit mit der AfD – niemals*

2. In relation to German politics, AVA has not been organizing its own demonstrations recently but has instead relied on Campact (<https://www.campact.de/>) to do the mobilizing. So in February we decided to donate €250 from our modest treasury to support Campact e.V. “Campact is a German non-governmental organization that aims at creating political pressure in a wide variety of issues through mass digital mobilization. In this regard it seems reasonably clear to us what we can do as a Berlin group. German civil society remains active. The firewall between the democratic parties and the extreme right has not (yet) crumbled. We can find allies in several German political parties, trade unions and professional organizations, religious congregations, even in neighborhood associations of various kinds.

3. In April of 2025, AVA joined other groups and individuals at the Hands Off! demonstration behind the American Embassy. (The front was roped off because of the half-marathon the next day.) Hands Off! demonstrations in the United States on that day were sponsored by Indivisible, MoveOn, Public Citizen, Stand Up America, Not Above the Law Coalition, The Postal Workers Union, Swing Left, Third Act and many, many other organizations and individuals. Here in Berlin American Voices Abroad Berlin joined the Democrats Abroad and many individual protestors to form a crowd of about 200 people. Ann Wertheimer delivered a speech, which you can see and hear on YouTube or on our web site at www.avaberlin.org.

4. On May 26 we invited everyone to an evening with Kevin Bell at Austausch e.V. on Badstrasse in Wedding. Kevin Bell is an energy policy analyst at UC Santa Cruz. He told us about the current state of energy and climate policy at the federal and state level under the Trump administration, and was happy to answer any questions we had. The evening was moderated by AVA's Isabel Cole and the Russian environmental journalist Angelina Davydova.

Kevin Bell is an energy policy analyst, advocate, and educator. He has worked in institutional, private, non-profit, and academic venues over roughly

four decades, including the Washington State Public Utilities Commission, Northwest Energy Coalition, Convergence Research, and University of California – Santa Cruz, to develop and implement regional-scale resource modeling and scalable sustainable energy development initiatives, with a primary focus on the western United States. He is currently a co-founder and Research Director for the Sustainable Systems Research Foundation, a non-profit sustainability incubator promoting a fundamental restructuring and distributed deconstruction of the electric utility industry to support local resilience and economic empowerment.

5. On June 14th, AVA sponsored a very successful No Kings rally in solidarity with the 2000 No Kings events in the United States. Eva Adams sang several songs at the beginning and at the end of the hour-long event, including the world premier of a composition for the occasion. Ann Wertheimer introduced the No Kings protest, and then we heard short speeches from Susan Neiman, author and director of the Einstein Forum in Potsdam; Isabel Cole, author and translator; and Richard Peterson, emeritus professor of philosophy at Michigan State University. See our web site <www.avaberlin.org> for Karen Axelrad's 8-minute version of the rally.

6. On July 4th, AVA joined the Democrats Abroad Berlin (DA) in their July 4th protest in front of the U.S. Embassy at Pariser Platz. About 200 of us walked down Unter den Linden to Bebelplatz to the site of the 1933 Nazi book burnings.

7. On September 4, we had a special Stammtisch featuring a talk (and discussion) by physicist Rich Rosen. The main goal of Rich's talk was to help us to better understand what causes climate change, and why it seems to be accelerating over the last 10 years or so. We discussed the main greenhouse gases and how they cause climate change. We also discussed how climate change is a consequence of the energy imbalance of the entire earth system including air, oceans, land, vegetation, animals, and ice, which, unfortunately, seems to be rapidly increasing. We discussed the extent to which climate scientists who utilize complex computer models of the earth system can or cannot predict the current rate of the increase in climate change, and what they might be leaving out of their calculations. Finally, we discussed what some of the biggest near-term impacts of climate change might be that we are already starting to see, and which so-called "tipping points" might occur that, by definition, we are not seeing yet.

8. On August 31, AVA joined DA in their Labor Day protest in front of the U.S. Embassy on Pariser Platz.

9. On October 18, AVA organized a very successful No Kings protest, building on the No Kings demonstration in June (see above). We had between 350 and 450 attendees, by conservative estimates. (We actually tell the truth; no exaggerations.) Most people stayed for the entire 2 hours!

Eva Adams sang her No Kings song and we sang with her. I did a very brief introduction. Then we read letters from home: some were shocking, some sad; some defiant, some sounding very vulnerable. During the second half of the demonstration, we had an open mic—an experiment that worked wonderfully. We got first-hand information from a wide variety of people—some Berliners, some just passing through.

Here is the link to Karen Axelrad's 8-minute film of the highlights of the No Kings Berlin protest : <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi6bTyyO5m8>>. Feel free to send the link to everybody you know.

We also got good coverage in the press. See the end of this short review in *Die Zeit*: <https://youtu.be/XG3X9UCJa7g?si=NZx3w6NDHK0wE2S>. And there was a terrific photo by Christian Kang of Reuters in *The New York Times*.

10. At the moment, AVA has several on-going working groups: Tech Sovereignty (Isabel Cole); Mail-In Voting (Bill Smith); Sound System (Tony Lyon).

OUR OTHER MODEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

1. Although AVA-Berlin has no affiliation with any political party in the U.S. or in Germany, we are always happy to explore our common interests with the Berlin chapter of Democrats Abroad and other American groups as well as with German groups like Campact.

2. AVA-Berlin is always happy to announce political and cultural events around town, especially if they are in English and/or are not widely publicized.

3. We are pleased to publicize your own films, exhibitions, publications, and performances. Just send the information to wertheim@zedat.fu-berlin.de.