

Is Progress Continuing to Roll Back for Women & Girls?

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RE: A paper on the importance of continuing to oversee policies to advance women's rights in this country and the world.

If women are ever to realize equality in this country, they must continue to participate and oversee what the Federal and State Governments are doing in every new administration. We must continue to teach the children and educate the apathetic public to civics and what human rights are all about, even though our education system no longer does. Without education of the unaware/uneducated public to our government and how it is structured, nothing will change. Women will continue to be seen as unequal in this country, as they have been, for over two hundred years...the small steps that have improved women's lives is being overshadowed by loop holes in the laws today.

Some of the States continue to fight for repeal of good legislation for women & children. ERA was first proposed in 1923 to affirm that women and men have equal rights under the law, but it is still not part of the U.S. Constitution. It was passed by Congress in 1972. But the ERA has never been ratified by the requisite number of states...so it is not part of the Constitution.ⁱ

The Equal Rights Amendment was reintroduced in the House of Representatives on July 21, 2009, as *H.J.Res. 61*. Lead sponsors are Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-IL). For ERA to become an amendment in the constitution, three more states must ratify it...

We need to continue to oversee the progress or lack thereof of the government administrations move to reverse progress for women and girls across the board when it comes to policies not adopted to improve women and girls lives in the twenty-first century. The few positive steps the Federal Government has taken to help women are continuing to be overshadowed by the overwhelming number of proposals that continue hurt them.

"The Administration's policies are reversing progress for women and girls across the board — their opportunities to succeed in work and in school, their economic security, and their health and reproductive rights," – Nancy Duff Campbell, NWLCⁱⁱ Co-President.

In the coming years, actions by the current Administration, as well as Congress and the courts, will be critically important to the lives of women and their families. The National Women's Law Center's broad Platform for Progress outlines steps that should be taken by the federal government to address the unmet needs of women and their families in schools and in the workplace, and in securing basic economic security and access to quality, affordable and comprehensive health care.

Why are reforms needed? ⁱⁱⁱ

- One in four girl's drops out of high school, resulting in an average annual income that falls \$9,100 below even the low wages earned by male high school dropouts.
- Women working full time today earn, on average, still only earn 77 cents for every dollar paid to men and face wage gaps and glass ceilings across a wide spectrum of occupations.
- More than 14 million women – one in eight – live in poverty, and single women, women of color and elderly women are especially vulnerable.
- More than 17 million women have no health insurance.
- Federal child care assistance is provided to only one in seven eligible children.
- Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended.
- Unemployment among single mothers, women of color are at the highest level since 2008 recession began.

On top of this list, legislation signed by President Obama in 2009 and other legislation passed within the past forty-years is a continuing concern within states which are in the process of trying to repel the Lilly Ledbetter legislation and other good legislation for women's human rights. Our efforts need to be center not only on the Federal Government, but more so today on individual states continuing to keep progress for women's rights in the dark ages.

Below is a list of legislation to look for that will reverse women's rights in the United States.^{iv}

- The Department of Education; without explanation, "archived" Title IX guidance on preventing sexual harassment in schools, making it unavailable to administrators and parents trying to protect children from sexual harassment.
- Department of Labor's website confirms [Wage Gap Continues](#).^v The Department of Justice to drop cases challenging sex discrimination in employment.
- The Labor Department repealed a rule to help employees obtain paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child. Individual States are continuing to repel federal laws enacted within the past ten years.
- The Department of Education reduced Title IX enforcement while it established a Commission to weaken athletics policies that open opportunities for female students.
- The Administration's budget would cut 300,000 children from child care programs by 2009.
- The Administration's tax cuts and resulting budget cutbacks are a double whammy for women because they cut services and programs women rely on while providing little tax assistance to low- and moderate-income women.
- A plan to privatize Social Security that the Administration supports would require deep cuts in Social Security benefits for all future retirees, whether they participate in a private account or not. For example, by the Administration's own analysis, a woman retiring in 2075 (working at an average wage) would receive benefits 46 % below current levels if she did not participate in a private account and 69 % below current levels if she participated in a private account. Even if she received an average return on a medium-risk portfolio from her private account, her *combined* income would be 21% below current benefit levels.

- The Administration's plan to "restructure" Medicaid, changing it from an entitlement program to a block grant will result in more women without health insurance.
- Women's reproductive rights are being taken away by Administration-backed laws criminalizing abortion and giving the rights and status of "personhood" to fetuses and embryos.
- Medical research is being undermined and scientific information distorted to serve an anti-abortion and antifamily planning agenda. For example, the National Cancer Institute posted information on its website that falsely suggested there may be a link between abortion and breast cancer.
- The Administration has selected judicial nominees opposed to critical rights for women and girls. One judicial nominee wrote that wives must "subordinate" themselves to their husbands.
- The Administration proposed funding emergency shelters, crisis hotlines and other domestic violence services at 26% below authorized levels.

Get involved by signing into as many websites as possible to send your opinion on the legislation to be passed. Or join grassroots groups and organizations like Coalition of Labor Union Women and help preserve women's human rights in our country. Or just write a letter or call your representative to let them know how you feel.

Some websites listed below. Please ACT NOW!

Coalition of Labor Union Women Human rights in our unions and our country
Link: <http://www.cluw.org/programs-payequity.html>

National Women's Law Center Legislation, jobs and benefits for women
Link: <http://www.nwlc.org/what-you-can-do>

Movements to Amend the Constitution Move to Amend the Constitution – Corporations: Personhood
Link: <http://movetoamend.org/motion-amend>

Sisters in the Trades-Unite Now! Social Justice Network of Women in the Building Trades
Link: <http://sistersinthetradesuniteknow.ning.com/>

National Council on Research on Women Current legislation for women , the Big Five
Link: <http://www.ncrw.org/programs/big5/160>

Congresswomen Jan Schakowsky 9th Congressional District of Illinois – Jobs, healthcare, social security, human rights, etc.
http://www.schakowsky.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2748:schakowsky-votes-to-save-and-create-jobs-for-teachers-extend-medicare-assistance-reduce-deficit&catid=21:2010-press-releases&Itemid=58

Secretary Clinton's Remarks at Commission on Status of Women
Link: <http://www.cedaw2010.org/index.php/press-room> Video

What Can I Do to End Discrimination Against Women?

Link: <http://www.cedaw2010.org/index.php/what-can-i-do>

Video

ⁱ National Ratification Status link: <http://equalrightsamendment.org/states.htm> as of 2003.

ⁱⁱ National Women's Law Center (NWLC)

ⁱⁱⁱ National Women's Law Center 2008

^{iv} NWLC continuing list of legislation and changes the laws to look out for.

^v Link: <http://youngwomenmisbehavin.com/2010/07/20/departement-of-labor-report-confirms-wage-gap-continues/>
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