

MINNESOTA WOMEN'S CONSORTIUM



Women's Action Plan

OCTOBER 2009

INTRODUCTION TO THE OCTOBER 2009 EDITION

The Minnesota Women's Consortium is a network of more than 170 organizations and thousands of individual members all focused on women's equality. This is by far the largest statewide coalition of women-focused organizations in the nation. **The mission of the Minnesota Women's Consortium is to achieve full equality for all women and girls by connecting organizations and individuals that share this goal.**

How is "equality" defined? Since its inception in 1980, the Consortium has used the *Houston Plan of Action* as its founding document. The *Houston Plan of Action* was developed at the 1977 U.S. National Women's Meeting in Houston, Texas. Consortium member organizations need not have a position on all of the "planks" in that document. However, they may not be actively opposed to any of those planks. This "big tent" approach has served the Minnesota women's community well.

Women elected from all 50 states to that meeting identified 26 "planks" as the changes needed to achieve equality. They provide an excellent definition of women's hopes for equality. Some of those dreams have been realized over the past 30 years—but in many cases we have a long way to go. **The *Minnesota Women's Action Plan* is intended to inspire and support action to finish the job.**

This Action Plan provides background information, key facts, current action, and contact information for follow-up action on each of the Houston Plan issues. It also includes information from the Beijing 1995 Platform adopted at the United Nations World Conference on Women a decade ago, with many overlapping issues and a more global awareness. In addition, this Action Plan includes several issues not formulated separately in 1977 but naturally growing out of that early work: child support, special health concerns such as HIV/AIDS, equal opportunity in athletics, elder abuse, prostitution, and trafficking.

Many thanks to all Consortium member groups, major information sources, and major resources for follow-up. Heartfelt thanks to Lorraine Hart and Bonnie Watkins on the Consortium staff for major production assistance and to Consortium interns Jen Piller, Suma Setty, Alanna Storey, and Cecelia Watkins for their thorough research.

The *Minnesota Women's Action Plan* is included on the Consortium website, www.mnwomen.org, for easy reference and frequent updating. Your comments and additional information are welcome. Please send them to us via email (erin@mnwomen.org), regular mail (MWC, 550 Rice Street, St. Paul MN, 55103), or telephone (651-228-0338). **Please make use of this information** by quoting or reprinting portions, asking questions of candidates and elected officials, talking with co-workers and neighbors, and identifying action projects for your group. We appreciate your citing the Minnesota Women's Consortium as the source. Please join our member groups and add your voice to this wonderful cause.

Erin Parrish
Director of Communications and Outreach

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CREDIT

Historically, most women did not have property rights, or access to credit in their own names. In the 1970s Congress amended the 1968 Truth in Lending Act and the 1968 Consumer Credit Protection Act to include credit protection without regard to sex or marital status. However, married women still could not obtain a loan without their husband's signature and would often lose their credit histories upon marriage. In 1974, Congress passed the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), which allowed married women to acquire independent credit without their husband's signature. The 1977 Houston Plan supports education and enforcement of the ECOA.

KEY FACTS

- Three quarters of all women-owned businesses are majority owned by women (51% or more), for a total of 7.2 million firms, employing 7.3 million people, and generating \$1.1 trillion in sales.¹ Most women use personal finances or family loans to start their businesses.²
- Factors such as debt and credit history are considerations for creditworthiness. These factors still sometimes work against married, separated, divorced, and widowed women because they have lost their credit histories when they married and changed their names, or creditors reported accounts shared by married couples in the husband's name only,³ or husbands or ex-husbands' histories are poor.
- Small businesswomen maintain a payback rate of nearly 100% in many credit programs.⁴
- The Small Business Administration reports that while the total dollars going to women-owned firms is increasing at a faster rate than among all firms, the average value of loans made to women-owned businesses is still less than the average value of loans made to all firms in all loan categories.⁵
- Women earning double the median income of the area where they live were 46 percent more likely to receive sub-prime mortgages than men with similar incomes.⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Ensure women adequate access to capital so they will not have to rely solely on credit cards and informal sources to begin small businesses.
- Publicize the equal credit law so women can recognize and properly report discrimination.
- Educate women about credit responsibility and building independent credit histories.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Golden Girl Homes, Inc., www.goldengirlhomes.us, 612-332-7200
- Life-Work Planning Center, www.lvpc.org, 1-800-369-5166
- The McDonough Group, 651-269-0222
- Meta 5 Displaced Homemaker Program/Women in Transition, 218-855-8010
- Minnesota Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-452-0549
- National Association of Women Business Owners, www.nawbo-mn.org, 651-290-6292
- Office on the Economic Status of Women, www.oesw.leg.mn, 651-296-8590
- Older Women's League of Minnesota, www.owl-mn.org, 651-228-9990
- Skyway of Minneapolis Business and Professional Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 612-616-1215
- St. Paul Business and Professional Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-228-1840
- WomenVenture, www.womenventure.org, 1-866-646-3808
- Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE), www.womenofwise.org, 651-646-3268

Last updated: April 2, 2009

¹ Center for Women's Business Research. [Key Facts About Women-Owned Businesses](http://www.cfwbr.org/facts/index.php). 2 April 2009. <<http://www.cfwbr.org/facts/index.php>>.

² Hart, Myra. "Cash and the Woman-Owned Business." September 13, 2004.

³ Federal Trade Commission. <<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit.ecoa.htm>>

⁴ International Center for Research on Women. "ICRW Reports and Publications." Washington: July 31, 1995.

⁵ National Women's Business Council. "Trends in SBA-Backed Financing to Women-Owned Businesses." 2008. 2 April 2009. <<http://www.nwbc.gov>>.

⁶ Guy, Sandra. "Women Help Explain Sub-Prime Mortgage Jitters." [Women's eNews](http://www.womenofwise.org). 2007.

WELFARE

Public assistance is an important source of income for women in poverty. Under the federal welfare reform legislation of 1996, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) replaced the old welfare programs known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The law ended federal entitlement to assistance and instead created TANF as a block grant that provides funds to states and tribes each year. At that time Minnesota created the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which provides a monthly cash grant to supplement family income, provides some help with child care costs, medical assistance, and employment services. MFIP has a limit of 60 months and work requirements for receipt of benefits. The monthly MFIP grant combines a cash portion and a separate food portion for qualifying families (with children under 18, or aged 18 and attending secondary school full-time) and pregnant women. Although the intent is to help families living in poverty, the amount received is only a fraction of what would be needed to provide women with real economic security. These changes have created more difficulties for women who need assistance. Many forms of public assistance have been stigmatized by society, which has contributed to welfare reform that has negatively affected needed programs. Stigmatization is still a problem and government aid does not provide enough resources to pull women on welfare out of poverty.

KEY FACTS

- About 90% of TANF recipients are women. The welfare caseload has declined dramatically over the last decade.⁷
- About 37,000 families used MFIP in an average month during 2006; about 9,900 families were child-only cases.⁸
- In 2006, a family of three with no other income receives \$884 a month including food support. This same family is forced off of MFIP when their combined work and benefit income is greater than \$1,542 a month, or 115% of the federal poverty line.⁹
- Census Data from 2006 indicates that some 15 million U.S. women live in poverty. Roughly 1 in 5 elderly women and 1 in 3 single mothers are poor. African American and Latina women are likely to be twice as poor than white women.¹⁰
- Poverty among women and children was higher in 2007 than in 2000 despite six years of growth in the overall economy. About one in eight (12.5%) adult women were poor in 2007; 14.4 million women lived in poverty. In 2007, the poverty rate for women (12.5%) was 42% higher than the poverty rate for men (8.8%).¹¹

POSSIBLE ACTION

- States should provide increased income support for working poor families. Families leaving welfare for work often do not earn enough to raise their families out of poverty. States can assist them through higher earnings, disregards for support assurance.
- Education and training opportunities should be provided for low-wage workers so they can find better, higher paying jobs.
- Low-income working parents can be assisted through work supportive services, including childcare and transportation assistance.
- Low-wage workers must have health insurance coverage.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Children's Law Center, www.clcmn.org, 651-644-4438
- Perspectives, Inc., www.perspectives-family.org, 952-926-2600

⁷ Department of Health and Human Services. Temporary Assistance For Needy Families: Seventh Annual Report to Congress. December 2006.

⁸ Minnesota Department of Human Services. Welfare in Minnesota: Facts and Figures. February 2007.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Stevens, Allison. "Single Moms' Poverty Spikes After Welfare Overhaul." Women's eNews July 2008.

¹¹ National Women's Law Center. "Poverty Among Women and Families, 200-2007: Getting Worse Even Before the Downturn." 2008.

- Sisters of St. Joseph and Consociates Justice Commission, www.csjstpaul.org, 651-690-7054
- YWCA of Minneapolis, www.ywcampls.org, 612-332-0501
- YWCA of St. Paul, www.ywcaofstpaul.org, 651-222-3741

Last updated: April 3, 2009

CHILD SUPPORT

The Houston Plan urges, “In divorce, provide for children’s needs and sharing of economic burden...” Women have long been concerned with adequate financial support for children because women remain the primary caregivers for children, both during marriage and after divorce. Although most Minnesota mothers are in the labor force, their earnings continue to be far lower than men’s earnings.

In the past thirty years, great progress has been made in society’s recognition that families and children in poverty are a significant cost in the form of welfare. State and federal laws require government’s assistance in collecting child support from non-custodial parents in the form of wage garnishment and other mechanisms, and state laws govern the level of child support awarded at the time of divorce. The principle is also now firmly embedded in law, that “fault” is not a factor that should not affect the amount needed to support a child, and that both parents should be encouraged to maintain strong ties to the child.

Minnesota’s child support enforcement program scores better than other states on four of five federal government performance measures.¹² However, Minnesota’s children are still far from receiving payment in full, and single-parent families remain a major part of the poverty population.

KEY FACTS

- For state fiscal year 2007, Minnesota’s child support programs served about 250,000 cases, collecting and disbursing \$615 million.¹³
- Child support is 30% of family income for poor families that receive it. The average child support payment received by low-wage families is nearly \$4,000 per year. When families do not receive this money, they are more likely to need public assistance.¹⁴
- Young girls often experience academic difficulties when their parents separate; however, receipt of child support has been found to ameliorate these negative academic effects.¹⁵
- More than 17 million children and their families received \$24 billion in child support in 2006 through the help of the child support program.¹⁶
- Cumulative past due child support owed as of September 30, 2007 was about \$1.7 billion. Average debt owed in cases with child support was \$8,454. Approximately 79% of child support cases have debt.¹⁷

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Review guidelines for determining the level of support ordered, and court compliance with the guidelines, to ensure that they fully meet the needs of the children.
- Strengthen the enforcement of support to ensure it is actually paid fully and in a timely manner.
- Ensure that financial support for the children is not used as an excuse for monitoring and managing the behavior of the custodial parent or requiring an unreasonable level of reporting and paperwork.
- Educate custodial parent on their rights to child support and remedies for unpaid support.
- Oppose federal and state funding cuts that reduce the level of child support enforcement.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Office on the Economic Status of Women, www.oesw.leg.mn, 651-296-8590
- Twin Cities Area Chapter of ACES (Association for Children for Enforcement of Support), 651-458-9482

Last updated: April 3, 2009

¹² Office of the State Legislative Auditor State of Minnesota. “Child Support Enforcement.” February 2006.

¹³ Minnesota Department of Human Services. “Child Support in Minnesota: Facts and Figures.” January 2008.

¹⁴ Center for Law and Social Policy. “Child Support Funding Stimulates an Economic Recovery.” January 2009.

¹⁵ Center for Law and Social Policy. “Child Support Payments Benefit Children in Non-Economic as Well as Economic Ways.” October 2004.

¹⁶ Center for Law and Social Policy. [Child Support and Low-Income Fathers](http://www.clasp.org/publications.php?id=4&type=3#0). 3 April 2009.

¹⁷ <http://www.clasp.org/publications.php?id=4&type=3#0>.

¹⁷ Minnesota Department of Human Services. “Child Support in Minnesota: Facts and Figures.” January 2008.

EDUCATION

In 1972, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Act to prohibit discrimination in all areas of education including admissions, athletics, financial aid, extracurricular activities, and academic programs. Title IX and women's increased educational attainment have made a great difference. However, girls still receive less preparation for math and science careers and women are under-represented on math and science faculties. In addition, the federal Education Department issued guidelines in spring of 2005 making it easier for colleges to avoid compliance with Title IX's provisions requiring equal access to sports programs.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act established new standards for elementary and secondary education, imposing many new requirements but without new funding. Meanwhile, children of color are not achieving or graduating at the same rates as white children.

KEY FACTS

- In 2007, a larger proportion of women (85%) than men (84%) had a high school diploma. However, a larger proportion of men (28.2%) than women (26.7%) had completed college and had completed an advanced degree.¹⁸
- Women with a high school diploma earned about \$21,000 a year compared to men with a high school diploma earning \$23,000 a year. Women with an advanced degree earned about \$51,000 a year, which was less than the \$57,000 a year that men with a bachelor's degree earned.¹⁹
- One of every four girls fails to complete her high school diploma in four years, and the numbers are worse for girls of color. Compared to their male peers who drop out of school, girls who do not complete high school experience higher rates of unemployment, earn significantly lower wages, and are more likely to need to rely on public support programs to provide for their families.²⁰
- Recent research shows that states were making more progress in raising student test scores in the 1990s than they have since enactment of the federal No Child Left Behind Act in 2002.²¹
- 855,000,000 people in the world are illiterate. 70% of them are female.²²
- Two-thirds of the world's children who receive less than four years of education are girls.²³

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Oppose vouchers for private schools, to focus state resources on serving all children.
- Ensure that girls receive the same encouragement as boys to enroll in science and math classes.
- Ensure that all schools provide a supportive climate free of bullying and sexual harassment.
- Correct racial imbalances and ensure equal public educational opportunities for all Minnesota children through adequate financing and programs of comparable quality, with access to a good education not dependent on the wealth of individual school districts.
- Check to make sure your local schools are in compliance with Title IX.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Abigail Quigley McCarthy Center for Women, www.stkate.edu/centerforwomen, 651-690-6783
- American Association of University Women- Minnesota, www.aauwmn.org, 952-891-2876
- Anne Pederson Women's Resource Center, Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/wrc/, 612-330-1028
- Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities Women's Studies Program, www.associatedcolleges-tc.org
- Born Free, 651-249-2364
- College of St. Benedict Center for Women, www.csbsju.edu, 320-363-5601
- Dead Feminist Society, www.meetup.com/Dead-Feminist-Society-of-Minnesota/, 651-488-2468

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007." Issued January 2009.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ National Women's Law Center. "How to Keep Girls in School: Recommendations to Address the Dropout Crisis." October 2007.

²¹ National Education Association. "Student Achievement Gains Have Slowed Since NCLB." July 2007.

²² Women's Learning Partnership. "Facts and Figures: Education." 2009. Retrieved 7 April 2009.

<<http://www.learningpartnership.org/en/resources/facts>>.

²³ Ibid.

- Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, University of Minnesota, www.gwss.umn.edu
- Dunwoody College of Technology Women's Resource Center, www.dunwoody.edu, 612-381-3326
- Education Minnesota, www.educationminnesota.org, 651-227-9541
- Laura Jeffrey Academy Charter School, www.laurajeffreyacademy.org, 651-290-7683
- Macalester College Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department, www.macalester.edu/wgs
- Minneapolis Branch American Association of University Women, www.aauwmpls.org, 612-870-1661
- Minneapolis Women's Rotary, 612-259-6566
- Minnesota ACE Network, www.minnesotaacenetwork.org, 612-381-3338
- Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, www.mnafcs.org, 651-687-0930
- National Women's Studies Association Journal, www.cehd.umn.edu/nwsaj/, 612-626-3818
- St. Cloud State University Women's Center, www.stcloudstate.edu/womenscenter, 320-308-4958
- St. Paul American Association of University Women, www.aauwstpaul.org, 651-602-9839
- University of Minnesota, College of Continuing Education, www.cce.umn.edu, 612-624-4000
- University of Minnesota Women's Center, www.umn.edu/women, 612-325-9837
- Women's Center- Minnesota State University, Mankato, www.mnsu.edu/wcenter, 507-389-6146
- Women's Studies at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, 612-659-6050
- Women's Studies Program, Minnesota State University Moorhead, www.mnstate.edu/women, 218-477-4606

Last updated April 7, 2009.

TRAINING AND CURRICULUM

Women need specific training for better paying jobs with adequate benefits. Women are particularly affected by the growing gap between the skills they have and those demanded by employers. Today, women make up 60% of low-wage workers, but federal programs set up to give them access to training are inadequate. Please see related sections of this plan: welfare, immigrant women, employment, management and non-traditional careers, homemakers, disabled women, and women offenders.

KEY FACTS

- Training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable economic development.²⁴
- In North America and Europe, more men are enrolled in vocational training programs than women.²⁵
- Women are underrepresented in engineering, manufacturing, construction, science, and agriculture due to a lack of training in those areas. Women are more likely to be trained and concentrated in a small number of typically female fields, such as secretarial work.²⁶
- In 2002, female students made up 96% of students enrolled in cosmetology, 87% of students enrolled in child care courses, and 86% of students enrolled in courses that prepare them to be health assistants. Male students made up 94% of students in training courses for plumbers and electricians, 93% in welding and carpentry courses, and 92% of those studying automotive technologies.²⁷
- The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act, dating back to the 1970s, contained provisions to ensure women and girls equal access to vocational education. During reauthorization in 1998, these provisions were eliminated from the Act, decreasing services to students and reducing funding for state and local programs ensuring gender-equity standards.²⁸

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Develop and implement training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and women reentering the labor market, to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context.
- Provide information to women and girls on the availability and benefits of vocational training, training programs in science and technology, and programs of continuing education.
- Improve access for and retention of girls and women in science, mathematics, engineering, environmental sciences and technology, information technology, and high technology.
- Urge the U.S. Department of Education to monitor Title IX compliance in vocational education.
- Urge Congress to restore the state-level gender equity coordinator for vocational education.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Abigail Quigley McCarthy Center for Women, www.stkate.edu/centerforwomen, 651-690-6783
- American Association of University Women- Minnesota, www.aauwmn.org, 952-891-2876
- Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities Women's Studies Program, 651-690-6867
- Association of Women in Computing Twin Cities Chapter, www.awctc.org
- Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, University of Minnesota, www.gwss.umn.edu
- Dunwoody College of Technology Women's Resource Center, www.dunwoody.edu, 612-381-3326
- Emerging Leaders Network, www.health.state.mn.us/emergingleaders/, 651-201-3877
- Jobs NOW Coalition, www.jobsnowcoalition.org, 651-290-0240
- Macalester College Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department, www.macalester.edu/vgs

²⁴ Fourth World Conference on women. "FWCW Platform for Action." 9 April 2009
<<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/educa.htm>>.

²⁵ UNESCO. "Women and Technical and Vocational Education and Training." 2003. 9 April 2009
<http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=39270&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>.

²⁶ Feminist Majority Foundation. "Origins of Affirmative Action for Women." 2000. 9 April 2009
<<http://feminist.org/other/ccri/aafact1.html>>.

²⁷ National Women's Law Center. "Title IX and Equal Opportunity in Vocational and Technical Education: A Promise Still Owed to the Nation's Young Women." 2002.

²⁸ National Council of Women's Organizations. "The ABCs of Women's Issues." 2004.

- Minneapolis Branch American Association of University Women, www.aauwmpls.org, 612-870-1661
- Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, www.mnafcs.org, 507-359-2445
- St. Paul American Association of University Women, www.aauwstpaul.org, 651-602-9839
- University of Minnesota, College of Continuing Education, www.cce.umn.edu, 612-624-4000
- Women in the Trades, www.mnwit.org, 651-228-9955
- WomenVenture, www.womenventure.org, 651-646-3808
- Women's Studies at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, 612-659-6050
- Women's Studies Program, Minnesota State University Moorhead, www.mnstate.edu/women, 218-477-4606
- YWCA St. Paul, www.ywcaofstpaul.org, 651-222-3741

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INSURANCE

The Houston Plan urged adoption of a model regulation to eliminate unfair sex discrimination in insurance. Despite much progress, in the 2005 Minnesota legislative session a bill enabling small employers to make joint health insurance purchases would have also allowed coverage exclusions for pregnancy and mammography. Meanwhile, women's lower average earnings and the rising cost of health care have left many women and their children without access to affordable and accessible care. Of the 17 million women who are uninsured they are "more likely to postpone care than their insured counterparts and often forego important preventative services."²⁹

KEY FACTS

- Under a practice known as gender rating, insurance companies are permitted in most states to charge men and women different premiums. Insurers who practice gender rating charged 25-year-old women anywhere from 6% to 45% more than 25-year-old men; charged 40-year-old women from 4% to 48% more than 40-year-old men; and charged 55 year-old women premiums that ranged from 22% less to 37% more than 55-year-old men.³⁰
- Insurance companies justify higher premiums for women because women are more likely to use health care services than men- more likely to use prescription medications, more likely to have chronic conditions requiring ongoing treatment, and required regular checkups for reproductive health.³¹
- Women pay 68% percent more than men for out-of-pocket healthcare costs. This is due in part to the cost of reproductive health care costs.³²
- Most uninsured women do not qualify for Medicaid, do not have access to employer-sponsored plans, or cannot afford individual insurance policies. That means that almost one out of every five American women under age 65 is *uninsured*.³³

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Broaden eligibility and outreach for health care programs so that low-income women have access.
- Improve access to employer-based coverage for women and their families and ensure it's affordable.
- Adopt a universal, single payer healthcare system.
- Improve public access to provider cost and quality data.
- Build purchasing coalitions and oppose exclusion of conditions important to women's health.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Deborah E. Powell Center for Women's Health, www.womenshealth.umn.edu, 612-626-1125
- Family Tree Clinic, www.familytreeclinic.org, 651-645-0478
- Gray Panthers of the Twin Cities, www.graypantherstwincities.org, 612-822-1011
- Jobs NOW Coalition, www.jobsnowcoalition.org, 651-290-0240
- Midwest Health Center for Women, www.midwesthealthcenter.org, 612-332-2311
- Minnesota Breast Cancer Coalition, 651-459-7923
- Minnesota Nurses Association, www.mnnurses.org, 651-414-2800
- Minnesota SAFPLAN, www.safplan.org, 612-840-5491
- Minnesota Universal Health Care Coalition, www.muuhcc.org
- NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota, www.prochoiceminnesota.org, 651-602-7655
- Nucleus Clinic, 763-755-5300
- Older Women's League of Minnesota, www.owl-mn.org, 651-228-9990
- Planned Parenthood, www.ppmns.org, 651-698-2401

²⁹ The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. "Fact Sheet: Women's Health Policy Facts." 2004.

³⁰ The National Women's Law Center. "Nowhere to Turn: How the Individual Health Insurance Market Fails Women." 2008.

³¹ The New York Times. Editorial "Gouging Women on Health Insurance." November 3, 2008.

³² Schakowsky, Rep. Jan. "Women Hit Hard as Companies Shift Health Costs to Employees." The Hill. 2008. 2009 April 8. <<http://thehill.com/op-eds/women-hit-hard-as-companies-shift-health-costs-to-employees-2008-09-23.html>>.

³³ The Older Women's League. "Give 'Em Health Revisited: Medicare for All." 2007.

- Progressive Majority Minnesota, www.progressivemajority.org, 612-332-9553
- SEIU Minnesota State Council, www.seiumn.org, 651-203-0401
- Tubman, www.tubmanfamilyalliance.org, 612-825-3333
- Wayside House, www.waysidehouse.org, 952-405-7636
- West Suburban Teen Clinic, www.wstcmn.org, 952-474-3251
- Women's Health Center of Duluth, www.whcduluth.org, 218-727-3352

Last Updated: April 8, 2009

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Abortion was illegal in all states except to save a woman's life until 1973, when the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling made it legal in the first two trimesters of pregnancy. In Minnesota, the *Doe v. Gomez* decision requires Medical Assistance to cover the cost of abortions for low-income women. The Houston Plan in 1977 called for "support for [the decision] guaranteeing reproductive freedom; make certain all methods of family planning are available to all women... oppose involuntary sterilizations; full access to family planning and education in responsible sexuality for teens; full education programs with child care for teen parents." Similarly, the Beijing Platform affirmed, "the choice of each woman to govern her own body and choose the number of children she will bear." Regardless, many state and federal laws have created barriers to reproductive freedom for women and girls.

KEY FACTS

- 87% of U.S. counties and 96% of Minnesota counties have no abortion provider.³⁴ 62% of Minnesota women lived in these counties. In the Midwest census region, where Minnesota is located, 19% of women having abortions traveled at least 50 miles, and 9% traveled more than 100 miles.³⁵
- More than 40 million women of reproductive age are sexually active and want to prevent unintended pregnancy.³⁶
- In 2005, there were 11 abortion providers in Minnesota. This represents no change from 2000, when there were 11 abortion providers.³⁷
- Thirteen states allow some health care providers to refuse to provide services related to contraception.³⁸
- Before *Roe v. Wade*, 50,000 women died annually from complications from illegal abortions.³⁹
- Thirty-three states experienced an increase in the number of women in need of publicly funded contraceptive care between 2000 and 2006; in 15 of these states, the change exceeded 10%.⁴⁰

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Reinstate full U.S. support for international family planning and anti-AIDS initiatives.
- Support upholding the *Roe v. Wade* principles of privacy and self-determination in federal and state courts.
- Pass legislation providing comprehensive, fact-based sex education and pregnancy prevention programs.
- Maintain state funding for family planning grants; oppose deceptive "Crisis Pregnancy Centers."
- Protect minors' rights to confidential care, women's access to birth control and emergency contraception.
- Oppose "gag rules" prohibiting mention of abortion, constitutional amendments to criminalize abortion, legislative abortion bans and bans on government funding of abortions for low-income women.
- Join or volunteer for a pro-choice group, lobby your elected officials, vote for pro-choice candidates.

RELATED MEMBER GROUPS (direct service and advocacy, others support pro-choice politics)

- Abortion Rights Council Political Action Committee (ARC-PAC), www.arcpacofmn.com
- Concerned United Birthparents (CUB), www.cubbirthparents.org, 952-938-5866
- Democratic Women Leadership Coalition, 612-306-3981
- Family Tree Clinic, www.familytreeclinic.org, 651-645-0478
- Midwest Health Center for Women, www.midwesthealthcenter.org, 612-332-2311
- Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, and Parenting, www.moappp.org

³⁴ NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota. "Abortion." 2009 April 9.

<<http://www.prochoiceminnesota.org/issues/abortion.shtml>>.

³⁵ Guttmacher Institute. "State Facts About Abortion: Minnesota." 2009 April 9.

<<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/sfaa/minnesota.html>>.

³⁶ Guttmacher Institute. "Facts in Brief: Contraceptive Use." 2005.

³⁷ Guttmacher Institute. "State Facts About Abortion: Minnesota." 2009 April 9.

<<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/sfaa/minnesota.html>>.

³⁸ Guttmacher Institute. "State Policies in Brief: Refusing to Provide Health Services." 2009. 2009 April 9. <

<http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/index.html>>.

³⁹ NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota. www.prochoiceminnesota.org.

⁴⁰ Guttmacher Institute. "Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2006." 2009. 2009 April 9.

<<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/win/index.html>>.

- Minnesota Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, www.mnrcrc.org, 612-870-0974
- Minnesota SAFPLAN, www.safplan.org, 612-840-5491
- Minnesota Valley NOW, www.mnvalleynow.org, 651-222-1605
- Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Women's Group, www.mnvalleyuu.org, 952-884-8956
- Minnesota Women's Political Caucus, www.mnwpc.org, 651-228-0995
- NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota, www.prochoiceminnesota.org, 651-602-7655
- National Council of Jewish Women Minnesota State Public Affairs, www.ncjwmpls.org, 952-933-4646
- National Organization for Women- Minnesota, www.mnnow.org, 651-222-1605
- Nucleus Clinic, 763-755-5300
- Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, www.ppmns.org, 651-698-2401
- Pro-Choice Resources, www.prochoiceresources.org, 612-825-2000
- West Suburban Teen Clinic, www.wstcmn.org, 952-474-3251

Last Updated: April 9, 2009

SPECIAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Women have special health concerns. Women of color and low-income women face disparities in access to preventive care, diagnosis, and treatment. The Houston Plan calls for “establishment of a national health security program acknowledging the special needs of women... substance abuse efforts, representation in professions and on policy boards; increase review of drugs, custodial care, surgical procedures.”

KEY FACTS

- At the end of 2006, women made up one-quarter (278,400) of people living with HIV in the U.S. In 2006 the HIV prevalence rate for black women was 18 times the rate for white women, the prevalence rate for Hispanic/Latina women was four times the rate.⁴¹
- Within one year of having their first recognized heart attack, 38% of women will die as compared to 25% of men.⁴²
- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the U.S. and second most common cause of cancer deaths. Black women have the highest rates of female breast cancer deaths.⁴³
- Approximately 1 in every 57 women in the U.S. will develop ovarian cancer, which causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system.⁴⁴
- Every year, over 11,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer and over 3,900 women die from the disease.⁴⁵
- Depressive disorders are estimated to affect 12 million women each year.⁴⁶
- Women suffer disproportionately higher levels of firearm-related suicide, homicide, and unintentional death in states where guns are more available.⁴⁷

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Support universal access to comprehensive, affordable health insurance.
- Ensure testing options so women can be aware of their own and their partners' HIV and STD/STI status.
- Ensure options/encourage women to have regular gynecological exams, self-care, and preventive care.
- Provide more funding for research on breast and ovarian cancer and other threats to women's health.
- Prevent, educate, and advocate about gun violence and reduce the number of guns on our streets.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS (in addition to those working on reproductive choice)

- African Health Development, www.africanhealthmn.org, 612-203-0078
- American Heart Association, www.americanheart.org, 952-835-3300
- Citizens for a Safer Minnesota, www.endgunviolence.com, 651-645-3271
- Compassion and Choices, www.compassionandchoices.org, 952-929-1955
- Deborah E. Powell Center for Women's Health, www.womenshealth.umn.edu, 612-626-1125
- DES Action, www.desaction.org, 763-757-0693
- Melpomene, www.melpomene.org, 651-789-0140
- Minnesota Breast Cancer Coalition, 651-459-7923
- Minnesota Nurses Association, www.mnnurses.org, 651-414-2800
- Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000

⁴¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “HIV/AIDS Among Women.” 2008. 7 May 2009.

<<http://www.cdc.gov/HIV/topics/women/resources/factsheets/women.htm>>.

⁴² The Office on Women's Health. “Quick Health Data Online.” 7 May 2009.

<<http://www.healthstatus2010.com/owh/index.html>>.

⁴³ The Office on Women's Health. “Breast Cancer: Frequently Asked Questions.” 2008. 7 May 2009.

<<http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/breast-cancer.cfm>>.

⁴⁴ The Office on Women's Health. “Quick Health Data Online.” 7 May 2009.

<<http://www.healthstatus2010.com/owh/index.html>>.

⁴⁵ The Office on Women's Health. “Cervical Cancer.” 2008. 7 May 2009.

<<http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/cervical-cancer.cfm>>

⁴⁶ ⁴⁶ The Office on Women's Health. “Quick Health Data Online.” 7 May 2009.

<<http://www.healthstatus2010.com/owh/index.html>>.

⁴⁷ Citizens for a Safer Minnesota. “Guns and Domestic Violence.” 7 May 2009. <<http://www.endgunviolence.com>>

- Minnesota Universal Health Care Coalition, www.muicc.org
- Minnesota Women in Psychology, www.womenpsychologists.org, 320-743-5694
- Minnesota Women Physicians, 651-407-1873
- Perspectives, www.perspectives-family.org, 952-926-2600
- Third District Nurses, www.nursece.org, 952-920-9860
- Trans Youth Support Network, www.transyouthsupportnetwork.org, 612-875-8164
- Tubman, www.tubman.org, 612-825-3333
- Wayside House, Inc., www.waysidehouse.org, 952-405-7636
- West Suburban Teen Clinic, www.wstcmn.org, 952-474-3251

Last updated: May 7, 2009

ATHLETICS

Title IX has given women and girls the opportunity to participate in school athletics and receive the same opportunities as men in the educational system. However, in March 2005, the Department of Education issued a new policy that “lifts the burden of providing equal athletic opportunity off school administrators and places it squarely on the shoulders of female students.” This policy eliminates that schools must prove compliance with Title IX based on indicators, which include participation rates in club or intramural sports and interviews with coaches, administrators, and students. The law allows proof of compliance with Title IX based on an optional email survey that girls and women are asked to complete based on their athletic abilities and interest. If enough of them fail to complete the survey, schools can claim compliance with Title IX by default.⁴⁸

KEY FACTS

- The enactment of Title IX has helped increase participation opportunities for girls and women in sports. Female high school athletic participation has increased by 904% and female collegiate athletic participation has increased by 456%.⁴⁹
- If a girl does not participate in sports by the time she is 10, there is only a 10% chance she will participate when she is 25.⁵⁰
- Women in Division I colleges, while representing 53% of the student body, receive only 44% of the participation opportunities, 37% of the total money spent on athletics, 45% of the total athletic scholarship dollars, and 32% of recruiting dollars. Title IX does not require schools to spend equal amounts of money on male and female athletes. It does, however, require equal treatment of male and female teams.⁵¹
- A ranking of the top 20 international athletes in 2007 included one female athlete: Russian tennis player Maria Sharapova. Sharapova dropped five spots from eighth in 2006 to 13th in 2007.⁵²
- On the 2006 United States Olympic Committee Board of Directors, only 27.3% of the members were people of color. There was no representation of people with disabilities.⁵³

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Work with people in your school district to combat sex-based discrimination at your local school.
- Encourage young girls and women to pay close attention to athletic opportunities and properly assess the status of Title IX in their schools. Help them file a complaint if their school does not comply.
- Support amateur girls’ and women’s sports and pro women’s sports as a spectator, contributor, and athlete.
- Encourage and model increased physical activity and self-care for all girls and women.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- American Association of University Women- Minnesota, www.aauwmn.org, 952-891-2876
- Foundation IX, www.foundationix.org, 763-442-0051
- Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys, www.girlscoutsrv.org, 651-227-8835
- The Marsh, www.themarsh.com
- Melpomene, www.melpomene.org, 651-789-0140
- Minneapolis Branch American Association of University Women, www.aauwmpls.org, 612-870-1661
- Minnesota Coalition of Women in Athletic Leadership, 612-770-8213
- Modern Indian Dance Academy R.G.K. Dance & Fitness Studio, www.rgkdance.org, 763-227-0740

⁴⁸ International Women’s Health Coalition. “Title IX: Trying to Weaken Equality in School Athletics.”

⁴⁹ Women’s Sports Foundation. “Understanding Title IX and Athletics 101.” 2008. 27 May 2009. <<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/Issues-And-Research/Title-IX.aspx>>.

⁵⁰ Minnesota Coalition of Organizations for Sex Equity in Education. “Title IX: Providing Equal Opportunity for Girls.”

⁵¹ National Women’s Law Center. “Title IX and Women’s Athletic Opportunity: A Nation’s Promise Yet To Be Fulfilled.” 2008. 9 June 2009. <<http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=2735§ion=athletics#rat>>.

⁵² Women’s Sports Foundation. “Women’s Sports & Fitness Facts & Statistics.” 2009. 9 June 2009. <<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/Content/Articles/Issues/Business/S/Sports-Market-FACTS-AND-STATISTICS.aspx>>.

⁵³ Ibid.

- Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, www.tuckercenter.org, 612-625-7327
- YWCA of Minneapolis, www.ywcampls.org, 612-332-0501
- YWCA of St. Paul, www.ywcaofstpaul.org, 651-222-3741

Last Updated: June 9, 2009

BATTERED WOMEN

In 753 B.C. wife beating was accepted under the Laws of Chastisement. This law gave a husband rights to physically discipline his wife, commonly known as “The Rule of Thumb,” because he was permitted to beat his wife with a rod or switch no larger than the width of his thumb.⁵⁴ Now, men are no longer legally able to beat their wives and numerous policies have been enacted. For example, in 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act, which funds services for victims of rape and domestic violence, allows women to seek civil remedies for gender-related crimes, and provides training to increase police and court officials’ sensitivity.⁵⁵

KEY FACTS

- In 2008, at least 21 Minnesota women were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, or intimate partner, or the perpetrator was a family member or household member of the deceased woman.⁵⁶
- In fiscal year 2006, 37,010 women and children in Minnesota were served by community advocacy programs for battered women.⁵⁷
- In fiscal year 2006, 5,295 battered women in Minnesota utilized emergency shelter services.⁵⁸
- In 2005, the Minneapolis Police Department received 20,210 domestic violence calls through 911. There was a 19% increase in domestic calls between 2004 and 2005 and the number of domestic with weapons calls increased 20%.⁵⁹
- One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.⁶⁰
- The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$5.8 billion each year, \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health services.⁶¹
- About one in four teens reports verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse each year.⁶²

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Financially support and volunteer for local battered women’s shelters.
- Call local elected officials, legislators, and the Governor’s office and urge them to support increased funding for domestic violence, domestic violence prevention, and community education programs.
- If you know someone who you suspect is being abused by her partner, call your local domestic violence program to find out what you can do about her safety.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Citizens for a Safer Minnesota, www.endgunviolence.com, 651-645-3271
- Hnub Tshiab: Hmong Women Achieving Together, www.hmongwomenachieve.com, 651-276-0957
- Houston County Women’s Resources, www.hcwr.org, 507-894-2676
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000
- Minnesota Network on Abuse in Later Life, www.mnall.org, 651-636-5311
- Minnesota Valley NOW, www.mnvalleynow.org, 651-222-1605
- National Organization for Women Minnesota, www.mnnow.org, 651-222-1605

⁵⁴ Minnesota Center Against Violence & Abuse. “Herstory of Domestic Violence...” 2003.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. “2008 Femicide Report.” 2008. 9 June 2009. <<http://www.mcbw.org/femicides>>.

⁵⁷ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “Domestic Violence Facts: Minnesota.” 9 June 2009. <<http://www.ncadv.org>>.

⁶⁰ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “Domestic Violence Facts.” 9 June 2009. <<http://www.ncadv.org>>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Choose Respect. “Get the Facts... Dating Abuse Statistics.” 9 June 2009. <<http://www.chooserespect.org/scripts/teens/statistics.asp>>.

- Outfront Minnesota, www.outfront.org, 612-822-0127
- Perspectives, Inc., www.perspectives-family.org, 952-926-2600
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1442
- St. Joseph Worker Program, www.stjosephworkers.org, 651-690-7049
- Tubman, www.tubman.org, 612-825-3333
- WATCH, www.watchmn.org, 612-341-2747
- Women's Advocates, www.wadvocates.org, 651-227-9966
- Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights, www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org

Last Updated: June 9, 2009

RAPE PREVENTION

Rape was always an illegal act but it had its legal origins in property. For instance, it was more common for someone to be prosecuted if they had raped a married white woman—the “property” of her husband. However, African American women slaves were unprotected by law from rape by slave-owners because the women were considered the slave-owner’s property. In the 1970s, feminists began to organize rape crisis hotlines, support groups, and “Take Back the Night” rallies to draw attention to the urgency of violence against women. Today, rape crisis organizations are still under-funded and the judicial process continues to be insensitive to rape survivors. “Date rape” on college campuses and elsewhere, sometimes including the use of paralytic drugs, is epidemic. The Houston Plan calls for revision of criminal codes to correct inequities against rape victims; rape crisis centers and prevention and self-protection programs, support for the National Center for the Prevention/Control of Rape, and victim compensation. The Beijing Platform opposes violence against women and recognizes rape as an instrument of war.

KEY FACTS

- Of the 2,341 reported actual rapes that occurred in Minnesota in 2007, 2,196 were by force while 145 were recorded as attempted rapes. There were 2,124 female victims and 217 male victims reported.⁶³
- The total number of rapes in Minnesota in 2007 represented 15% of the total violent crimes with six averaged per day.⁶⁴
- In 2007, there were 248,300 victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. (These figures do not include victims 12 years old or younger). There are 525,600 minutes in a non-leap year. That makes 31,536,000 seconds/year. So, 31,536,000 divided by 248,300 comes out to 1 sexual assault every 127 seconds, or about 1 every 2 minutes. That translates to one person every two minutes.⁶⁵
- 60% of rapes/sexual assaults are not reported to the police. Factoring in unreported rapes, only about 6% of rapists ever serve a day in jail.⁶⁶
- In fiscal year 2005, there were 55 programs in Minnesota for victims of sexual assault. These programs served 7,805 primary victims and 4,249 secondary victims.⁶⁷
- Sexual assault in Minnesota cost approximately \$8 billion or \$1,540 per resident in 2005.⁶⁸
- It was not until 1993 that marital rape became a crime in all 50 states. However, in 30 states, there are still some exemptions given to husbands from rape prosecution. In most of these states, a husband is exempt when he does not have to use force because his wife is most vulnerable (e.g., she is mentally or physically impaired, unconscious, asleep, etc.) and is legally unable to consent. Because of the marital contract, a wife’s consent is assumed.⁶⁹

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Educate communities to properly provide services to rape survivors.
- Support and fund programs that train law enforcement officials, prosecutors, courts, and the medical community to be sensitive toward the needs of rape survivors.
- Balance punitive measures against (for example) sexual predators with funds for prevention efforts.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Houston County Women’s Resources, www.hcwr.org, 507-894-2676
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993

⁶³ Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Criminal Justice Information Systems. “Uniform Crime Report.” 2007.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network. “How Often Does Sexual Assault Occur?”. 2008. 18 June 2009.

<<http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/frequency-of-sexual-assault>>.

⁶⁶ Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network. “Reporting Rates.” 2008. 18 June 2008. <<http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/reporting-rates>>.

⁶⁷ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. “OJP Fact Sheet: Sexual Violence.” 2006.

⁶⁸ Minnesota Department of Health. “Violence Data Brief: Sexual Violence 2002 to 2007.” 2009.

⁶⁹ National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women. “Marital Rape: New Research and Directions.” 18 June 2009. <http://new.vawnet.org/category/Main_Doc.php?docid=248>.

- Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1442
- WATCH, www.watchmn.org, 612-341-2747
- Women's Center- Minnesota State University Mankato, www.mnsu.edu/wcenter, 507-389-6146
- Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights,
www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org

Last Updated: June 18, 2009

CHILD ABUSE

The Houston Plan calls for “support for prevention and treatment of abused children including training for public awareness, parent counseling, service and justice agencies,” and the Beijing Platform supports “the right of each child to be free from physical and mental harm at the hands of adults.” In 1974, Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. In 2003, this act was amended with the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act. In 2008 The Protect Our Children Act was signed into law, which funds law enforcement assigned to child abuse cases. These laws provide federal funding to states and non-profit organizations in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities of child abuse. Please see the related section in this document on “Prostitution and Trafficking.”

KEY FACTS

- Fathers who batter mothers are twice as likely to seek sole custody of their children. 40% - 60% of men who abuse women also abuse children. Each year, an estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to violence by family members against their mothers or female caretakers.⁷⁰
- Each day in America, four children are killed by abuse or neglect. 79% of these victims are under the age 4.⁷¹
- Only three in ten U.S. residents who experienced sexually abusive behaviors as children told an adult about the incident while still a child. Of residents who did tell an adult, only three in ten recalled that the incident was reported to authorities.⁷²
- 83% of child sexual abuse cases in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area involved family and extended family members. Up to 50% of those who sexual abuse children are under the age of 18.⁷³
- Most childhood sexual abuse, nearly 88%, is never reported.⁷⁴
- Estimated prevalence rates of child sexual abuse in the United States range from 8–14% for males and 7-32% for females.⁷⁵

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Support community-based child abuse prevention programs.
- Implement programs that start at birth such as parent support and early childhood education programs.
- Reduce poverty through education, vocational training, substance abuse rehabilitation, housing services, health insurance, domestic violence counseling, and child welfare services.
- Add poverty reduction to TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families- welfare) policies.
- Build awareness of mutual self-help groups that are free, confidential, anonymous, non-judgmental, and promote positive non-abusive parenting and parent leadership.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Child Care Works, www.childcareworks.org, 612-455-1055
- Children’s Law Center, www.clcmn.org, 651-644-4438
- Houston County Women’s Resources, www.hcwr.org, 507-894-2676
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000
- Perspectives, Inc., www.perspectives-family.org, 952-926-2600

⁷⁰ Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. “Facts About Domestic Violence in Minnesota and the United States.” 18 June 2009. <<http://www.mcbw.org/handouts>>.

⁷¹ Child Help. “National Child Abuse Statistics.” 2006. 18 June 2009. <<http://www.childhelp.org/resources/learning-center/statistics>>.

⁷² Stop It Now! Minnesota. “Facts About Child Sexual Abuse and Prevention.” 2005. 18 June 2009. <<http://www.stopitnow.com/mn/facts.html>>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1442
- Tubman, www.tubman.org, 612-825-3333
- WATCH, www.watchmn.org, 612-341-2747
- Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights, www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org

Last Updated: June 19, 2009

ELDER ABUSE

Women are more likely to be victims of elder abuse than men—because women tend to live longer than men, making up a larger percentage of the elderly population and because of women’s greater physical and financial vulnerability throughout their lives. Statistics on elder abuse are sparse due to insufficient data collection and underreporting but reports of abuse are common at county agencies. The Houston Plan of Action supports programs that guarantee older women the right to live with “dignity and security.” The Elder Justice Act was reintroduced in 2007. This act would provide states with resources to prevent elder abuse; however, it has failed to move any further.

KEY FACTS

- Between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited, or otherwise maltreated by someone on whom they depend for care or protection. It is estimated that one out of eight cases of elder abuse are reported.⁷⁶
- On average 1,700 calls are reported monthly to Adult Protection Intake. For 2008, the 20,821 total allegation reports fell into the following categories: 9% emotional or mental abuse, 11% physical abuse, 4% sexual abuse, 17% financial exploitation, 33% neglect by a caregiver, 25% neglect of self.⁷⁷
- An estimated 1.4 million women between the ages of 45 – 64 were physically abused by their spouses.⁷⁸
- Of 1500 shelters for battered women nationwide, few offer programs specifically designed to meet the needs of older battered women.⁷⁹
- Nearly 400,000 older women living in institutions are victims of physical or sexual abuse. In one study, more than 36% of care providers in institutional facilities had witnessed at least one incident of physical abuse by another staff person, and four in five had witnessed an incident of psychological abuse.⁸⁰

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Monitor and review laws and review the enforcement of laws concerning vulnerable adults.
- Support older women by encouraging them to be involved in the community and public policy.
- Ensure that accurate and uniform data is continuously collected at state and national levels so that abuse trends can be tracked and studied.
- Help girls and women reach financial independence early in life to prevent abuse in older years.
- Combat ageism and support inter-generational cooperation (suggestions from Gray Panthers): Stop lying about your age, let your hair be its natural color, write local news media about ageist headlines/cartoons, monitor advertising, challenge stereotypes, refuse to buy derogatory birthday cards, question the responsiveness of institutions to age, get to know people across age boundaries.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Gray Panthers of the Twin Cities, www.graypantherstwincities.org, 612-822-1011
- Houston County Women’s Resources, www.hcwr.org, 507-894-2676
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000
- Minnesota Network on Abuse in Later Life, www.mnall.org, 651-636-5311
- Older Women’s League of Minnesota, www.owl-mn.org, 651-228-9990
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1442
- Tubman, www.tubman.org, 612-825-3333
- Women’s Advocates, www.wadvocates.org, 651-227-9966

Last Updated: June 19, 2009

⁷⁶ Elder Care Rights Alliance. “Elder Abuse.” 19 June 2009. <http://eldercarerights.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={49DFD1F3-CD1F-47B2-B5C8-2E4C9F3142EE}>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. “Facts About Violence Against Mid-Life and Older Women.” 19 June 2009. <<http://www.mcbw.org/handouts>>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

PROSTITUTION AND TRAFFICKING

The Beijing Platform notes that “Poverty can... force women into situations in which they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation,” including prostitution and related sex industries such as pornography, and also that “the effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade is a matter of pressing international concern.” Trafficking may also refer to the use of women and girls for forced labor. Sex trafficking is a federal crime under the Trafficking Victims Protection. Minnesota laws passed in 2003 and 2005 define both forms of trafficking as crimes and authorize funds to study the problem. Prostitution and trafficking are still realities of women’s lives, internationally and in Minnesota.

KEY FACTS

- Minnesota has become one of the thirteen most heavily sex and slavery trafficked states in the nation. The U.S. government estimates that approximately 20,000 foreign nationals are trafficked into the U.S. each year. Minnesota is particularly affected by trafficking because we are a border state.⁸¹
- The average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years.⁸²
- Based on intake interviews at Breaking Free, an agency that assists women to leave prostitution, there are between 6,000 and 8,000 women in prostitution in Minnesota. A profile of the women shows that women used in street prostitution are between 14 and 45 years old; two-thirds are women of color (primarily African American and Latina), and have been in prostitution for an average of six years.⁸³
- A recent study found that in the United States 86% of women engaged in prostitution were physically abused by pimps and 50% of these women were assaulted frequently or daily. In addition, 71% of the women were isolated, confined, or restrained by pimps.⁸⁴
- The same study found that 50% of U.S. women engaged in prostitution tried to leave prostitution. 52% were forcibly returned, stalked, physically abused and threatened.
- Approximately 600,000 to 800,000 victims annually are trafficked across international borders worldwide. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. Trafficking is tied with arms dealing as the second largest criminal industry in the world.⁸⁵

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Gather information on human trafficking in Minnesota, including identification of cultural, language, and other barriers to providing assistance.
- Strengthen and enforce state and federal anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution laws.
- Fund human and social services to assist women and children escaping prostitution and trafficking.
- Fund human and social services to address poverty among women in order to prevent prostitution and trafficking.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Houston County Women’s Resources, www.hcwr.org, 507-894-2676
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1442

⁸¹ Civil Society. “Human Trafficking in Minnesota.” 2007. 19 June 2009.

<<http://civilsocietyhelps.org/test/html/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=8>>.

⁸² Prostitution Research and Education. “Prostitution: Factsheet on Human Rights Violations.” 2004. 23 June 2009.

<<http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/factsheet.html>>.

⁸³ Hughes, Donna M. “Race and Prostitution in the United States.” 2005. 23 June 2009.

<<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/pubtrfrep.htm>>.

⁸⁴ Hughes, Donna M. “Domestic Sex Trafficking and Prostitution in the United States.” 2005. 23 June 2009.

<<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/pubtrfrep.htm>>.

⁸⁵ National Human Trafficking Resource Center. “About Human Trafficking.” 23 June 2009.

<<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/index.html>>.

➤ Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights,
www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org

Last Updated: June 23, 2009

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

In no country are women represented in public institutions in proportion to their numbers in the population. The Houston Plan calls for “increased participation of women in foreign policy... international human rights conventions... peace and disarmament, international education/communication.” The Beijing Platform cites “the effects of armed... conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation. Internationally, women are denied education, not allowed to drive, vote, run for office, confined to the home, “inherited” by male relatives, subjected to dress restrictions, female genital mutilation, and more.

KEY FACTS

- CEDAW is an international convention adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and is an international bill of rights for women. 180 countries have ratified CEDAW but the United States remains one of eight that have not, alongside Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Iran, Nauru, Palau, and Tonga.⁸⁶
- 24,865 Iraqi civilian deaths were reported during the first two years of U.S. occupation. Almost 20% of these casualties were women and children. Among the victims under the age of 18, 22.7% were female. A UN study, based on figures provided by the Baghdad Medico-Legal Institute and the Iraqi Ministry of Health, estimates 34,452 Iraqi civilian deaths for 2006. Female casualties have been under-reported.⁸⁷
- In Afghanistan, burning down schools, particularly girls’ schools, and threatening or assaulting girls who attend school have become increasingly common in recent years. At least 172 violent attacks on schools took place in the first six months of 2006.⁸⁸
- Rape and other forms of sexual violence are used in armed conflicts to dehumanize women, as a form of torture to extract information and to control women and their communities.⁸⁹
- Several countries do not have universal suffrage or only grant partial suffrage to women. Among them denying women the right to vote are Brunei Darussalam and Vatican City. Women currently cannot vote in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates but may be granted the right in 2010.

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Learn about the United Nations programs for women, and join one of the groups promoting global justice.
- Read about women the world over and attend Minnesota events such as International Women’s Day.
- Support non-violent solutions to global challenges and reduce military expenditures and armaments.
- Ask Minnesota’s U.S. Senators to ratify CEDAW and support U.S. funds for international family planning.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Association of Latina Women of Minnesota, 651-228-0338
- Bosnian Women’s Network, 763-788-0685
- Girls International Forum, www.girlsforum.org, 651-645-3636
- Give Us Wings, www.giveuswings.org, 651-789-5606
- Hadassah, www.uppermidwest.hadassah.org, 952-924-4999
- Minneapolis Club of Zonta International, www.zontaminneapolis.com, 651-644-6346
- Organization for Burmese Refugees Abroad, 651-690-4733
- Soroptimist International of Greater Minnesota, www.soroptimist.org, 612-926-3319
- Tibetan Women’s Association, 952-888-0577
- Women Against Military Madness, www.worldwidewamm.org, 612-827-5364

⁸⁶ Division for the Advancement of Women. “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.” 23 June 2009. < <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm>>.

⁸⁷ Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. “Disaffirming Resolution 1325.” 24 June 2009. <http://wilpf.org/1325_and_iraq>.

⁸⁸ Amnesty International. “Violence Against Girls in Schools: Key Facts.” 24 June 2009. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/key-facts/violence-against-girls>>.

⁸⁹ Amnesty International. “Violence in Conflict and Post Conflict.” 24 June 2009. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/campaigns/stop-violence-against-women/issues/implementation-existing-laws/violence-in-conflict>>.

- Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights, www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, www.wilpfn.org, 651-458-7090

Last Updated: June 23, 2009

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN

Immigrants and refugees are displaced within their own borders, or into another country, because of ethnic cleansing, inadequate education, poor medical care, lack of food, potable water and firewood, and trafficking in women. Women who become refugees suffer extreme isolation, not knowing languages, and customs, how to purchase food or comply with laws, often preyed upon in the job market and subject to domestic violence. Minnesota is home to many Hmong, Somali, Latina, Sudanese, and other immigrants.

KEY FACTS

- Four out of five of the world's 42 million refugees are women, children and adolescents. Women and adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to exploitation, rape and abuse.⁹⁰
- Women, children and young people who seek asylum in the U.S. are often held in detention, where they may be subjected to inhumane conditions and denied access to legal representation.⁹¹
- In World War II, over 200,000 Korean “comfort” women were drafted by the Japanese into sexual slavery. Today in Darfur, every refugee family has at least one woman who has survived rape. They are further traumatized by unwanted pregnancy, HIV infections, and nonexistent help with reproductive health care.⁹²
- Minnesota has the highest proportion of refugees (compared to total legal immigrants) of any state in the nation. Nationwide, Minnesota has the largest population of Somali immigrants and the second highest population of Hmong and the largest urban Hmong population in the United States.⁹³ In recent years legislative sessions, proposals are advancing that would encourage racial profiling of immigrants and make it harder for them to vote.
- Refugee and immigrant women in Minnesota who suffer domestic abuse face language barriers, less education than their abusers, community pressure not to report abuse and fear that victim, spouse or both will face deportation—all obstacles that isolate them from safety and services.⁹⁴

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Ensure adequate funding for English, literacy instruction, and full education for immigrants and refugees.
- Empower immigrant and refugee women to become self-sufficient and learn business/employment skills.
- Ensure fairness in the courts for female immigrants in naturalization, domestic abuse, and child welfare cases.
- Improve interpreter services, shelters, police DV units, and legal services to immigrant/refugee women.
- Ensure fairness in voting rights and procedures and police procedures for all immigrants.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- African Health Development, www.africanhealthmn.com, 612-203-0078
- Aronson & Associates, www.aronsonimmigration.com, 612-455-1177
- Association of Latina Women of Minnesota, 651-228-0338
- Bosnian Women's Network, 763-788-0685
- Generous Alternatives, 651-583-0833
- Hnub T'shiab: Hmong Women Achieving Together, www.hmongwomenachieve.org, 651-276-0957
- League of Women Voters Minnesota, www.lwvmn.org, 651-224-5445
- Minnesota African Women's Association, www.mawanet.org, 612-588-7666
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (Indian women not U.S. born), www.miwrc.org

⁹⁰ Women's Refugee Commission. “Fact Sheet.” 2009. 24 June 2009.

<<http://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/about>>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ League of Women Voters. “State Study of Immigration in Minnesota.” 2004. 24 June 2009.

<<http://www.lwvmn.org/EdFund/EdFundImmigrationStudy.asp>>.

⁹⁴ Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights. “The Government Response to Domestic Violence Against Refugee and Immigrant Women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Area: A Human Rights Report.” 2004.

- Mujeres Unidas of the Red River Valley (Women United), 218-236-9884
- Organization for Burmese Refugees Abroad, 651-690-4733
- Professional Hmong Women Association, www.superhmongwomen.org, 651-523-0540
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1442
- St. Joseph Worker Program, www.stjosephworkers.org, 651-690-7049
- Tibetan Women's Association of Minnesota, 952-888-0577
- What About Us, www.amamedia.org, 612-376-7715
- Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights, www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org
- Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE), www.womenofwise.org, 651-646-3268
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, www.wilpfn.org, 651-458-7090

Last Updated: June 24, 2009

EMPLOYMENT

Women are mostly concentrated in lower-paid “women’s work,” and face barriers like sexual harassment, lack of child care assistance, and lack of opportunities for advancement. The Houston Plan calls for “a federal full employment policy; enforcement and extension of anti-discrimination laws; efforts to reduce occupational segregation and promote upward mobility; special attention to minority women; amendment of the Veteran’s Preference Act; extensions of the labor standards and the rights to unionize, and support for flextime jobs.”

KEY FACTS

- Minnesota women have the highest labor force participation rates in the nation.⁹⁵ Nationally, women make up 46.5% of the total U.S. labor force.⁹⁶
- Most women work in “female” jobs associated with low pay and poor benefits; women are more likely to work part time; and women are likely to join a union—all patterns associated with lower pay and lack of access to adequate benefits.⁹⁷
- Anti-discrimination laws are difficult to enforce, requiring women to file administrative complaints or secure attorneys to pursue lawsuits in lengthy and expensive procedures. In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act that ensures workers discriminated on the basis of gender have a fair chance to sue their employers.⁹⁸
- The three most prevalent occupations for employed women in 2008 were secretaries and administrative assistants (3,168,000), registered nurses (2,548,000), and elementary and middle school teachers (2,403,000).⁹⁹ Secretarial and administrative employment is the number one occupation for women since 1950.¹⁰⁰

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Monitor and enforce anti-discrimination and affirmative action laws.
- Support apprenticeship training, unionization, and women’s active engagement in their unions, childcare, flexible work schedules, and part-time work with benefits that recognize the realities of women’s lives.
- Maintain groups that provide self-help, mutual support, education, work-life balance, and financing for lawsuits to address problems in workplaces and communities.

RELATED MEMBER GROUPS

- Association of Women in Computing, www.awctc.org
- Born Free, 651-429-2364
- Dunwoody College of Technology Women’s Resource Center, www.dunwoody.edu, 612-381-3326
- Education Minnesota, www.educationminnesota.org, 651-227-9541
- JOBS NOW Coalition, www.jobsnowcoalition.org, 651-290-0240
- Life-Work Planning Center, www.lwpc.org, 507-345-1577
- Meta 5 Displaced Homemaker Program/Women in Transition, 218-855-8010
- Minnesota Business Women, www.bpwmn.org, 651-452-0549
- Minnesota Nurses Association, www.mnnurses.org, 651-414-2800
- Minnesota Women in Psychology, www.womenpsychologists.org, 320-743-5694

⁹⁵ Office on the Economic Status of Women. “Labor Force Participation of Women: Minnesota and United States.” 2004. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/fs/fs.htm>>.

⁹⁶ United States Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau. “Quick Stats on Women Workers, 2008.” 2008. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>>.

⁹⁷ International Labour Organization. “Women Swell Ranks of Working Poor.” 25 June 2009. <http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Press_releases/lang--en/WCMS_008066/index.htm>.

⁹⁸ Pickert, Kate. “Lilly Ledbetter.” *Time* 29 Jan. 2009. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1874954,00.html>>.

⁹⁹ United States Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau. “Quick Stats on Women Workers, 2008.” 2008. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>>.

¹⁰⁰ Office on the Economic Status of Women. “Labor Force Participation of Women: Minnesota and United States.” 2004. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/fs/fs.htm>>.

- Minnesota Women Lawyers, www.mwlawyers.org, 612-338-3205
- Minnesota Women Physicians, 651-407-1873
- National Association of Women Business Owners, www.nawbo-mn.org, 651-290-6292
- Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota, www.mnwomen.org/pecom.htm, 651-271-1462
- Qwest Women, 612-672-8931
- School Nurse Organization of Minnesota, www.minnesotaschoolnurses.org, 651-698-6834
- SEIU Minnesota State Council, www.seiumn.org, 651-203-0401
- Skyway of Minneapolis Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 612-616-1215
- St. Paul Business and Professional Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-228-1840
- Third District Nurses, www.nursece.org, 952-920-9860
- Upper Midwest Pension Rights Project, www.tccaring.org, 651-641-8612
- Women in the Trades, www.mnwit.org, 651-228-9955
- WomenVenture, www.womenventure.org, 651-646-3808
- Women's Programs of Employment Action Center, www.eac-mn.org/WomenProg/WomenProg-Home, 612-752-8444
- Workplace Justice, 952-996-9291

Last Updated: June 25, 2009

MANAGEMENT AND NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS

Women have difficulty gaining access to training and employment in nontraditional fields—which almost always provide higher pay and more benefits than “women’s work.” Despite impressive gains in recent decades promotions for women in business, the professions, and academia often come up against a “glass ceiling.” The skilled trades and “men’s work” such as firefighting and peace officers still only rarely welcome women. The Beijing Platform calls for correction of “inequalities between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels” and “insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women.” The Houston Plan supports efforts to “reduce occupational segregation and promote upward mobility, and enforcement and extension of anti-discrimination laws.” Please see sections of this Plan that refer to education, training, and other related topics.

KEY FACTS

- A nontraditional occupation for women is one in which women comprise 25 percent or less of total employment. Nontraditional jobs are attractive to women because they generally offer higher entry-level wages and a career ladder with pay between \$20 and \$30 per hour.¹⁰¹
- As of 2009, there were 13 women chief executive officers in the Fortune 500 corporations¹⁰² and women now hold 15% of corporate officer positions.¹⁰³
- Women accounted for 51 percent of all workers in the high-paying management, professional, and related occupations.¹⁰⁴
- Women are extremely underrepresented in the trades. For instance, women make up 22.4% of computer programmers; 17% of chefs and head cooks; 8.9% of industrial truck and tractor operators, 1.5% of operating engineers and other construction equipment operators; and 0.4% of brickmasons, blockmasons, and stonemasons.¹⁰⁵
- Women remain underrepresented in the highest echelons of higher education. They make up more than one-half of assistant professors, but they represent only one-third of associate professors and one-fifth of full professors. On average, compared to men, women earn less, hold lower-ranking positions, and are less likely to have tenure.¹⁰⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Support affirmative action programs at all levels of government and in the private sector.
- Promote networks of women helping each other at all levels of employment.
- Encourage women to consider non-traditional careers in management, technology, and the trades.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Association of Women in Computing, www.awctc.org
- Dunwoody College of Technology Women’s Resource Center, www.dunwoody.edu, 612-381-3326
- Minnesota Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-452-0549
- Minnesota Women in Psychology, www.womenspsychologists.org, 320-743-5694
- Minnesota Women Lawyers, www.mwlawyers.com, 612-338-3205
- Minnesota Women Physicians, 651-407-1873
- National Association of Women Business Owners- Minnesota, www.nawbo-mn.org, 651-290-6292

¹⁰¹ Women’s Bureau, United States Department of Labor. “Quick Stats on Nontraditional Occupations for Women.” April 2009. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2008.htm>>.

¹⁰² Jones, Del. “Women CEOs Slowly Gain on Corporate American.” *USA Today* 2 Jan. 2009. 25 June 2009. <http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/management/2009-01-01-women-ceos-increase_N.htm>.

¹⁰³ Kirdahy, Matt. “America’s Highest Paid Female CEOs.” *MSNBC* 15 Aug. 2008. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26127522>>.

¹⁰⁴ Women’s Bureau, United States Department of Labor. “Quick Stats on Women Workers, 2008. 2008. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>>.

¹⁰⁵ Women’s Bureau, United States Department of Labor. “Quick Facts on Nontraditional Occupations for Women.” April 2009. 25 June 2009. <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2008.htm>>.

¹⁰⁶ American Association of University Women. *Tenure Denied: Cases of Sex Discrimination in Academia*. 2004.

- Professional Hmong Women Association, www.superhmongwomen.org, 651-523-0540
- Qwest Women- Minnesota, 612-672-8931
- Skyway of Minneapolis Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 612-616-1215
- St. Paul Business and Professional Women, www.mnbusinesswomen, 651-228-1840
- Women in the Trades, www.mnwit.org, 651-228-9955
- WomenVenture, www.womenventure.org, 651-646-3808

Last updated: June 25, 2009

HOMEMAKERS

Worldwide and in Minnesota, women have long undertaken central roles at home. Society depends heavily on this work, although it is not yet recognized as part of the Gross National Product. The Houston Plan called for policymakers to “revise marital property, social security, and pension laws; in divorce provide for children’s needs and sharing of economic burden; support displaced homemaker programs.” The Beijing Platform similarly calls for correcting “inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and access to resources.” Over the past thirty years, fast-food restaurants have changed the way Americans live, men have taken on more homemaking tasks, and women’s work in the paid labor force has skyrocketed. However, women are still the overwhelming majority of unpaid homemakers. Policymakers continue to extol the value of homemakers and many women find this work vital and satisfying, but homemakers are often financially penalized and still too frequently just “one man away from welfare.”

KEY FACTS

- Fifty-eight percent of women in the U.S. (66% in Minnesota) are in the labor force.¹⁰⁷ However, women are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, to work part-time, to work at lower-wage jobs, and to postpone higher education when they undertake homemaking as their primary role.
- Minnesota has a network of programs serving displaced homemakers. State-eligible displaced homemakers are those who have provided unpaid household services for two or more years and were dependent on someone else’s income which is now gone due to separation, divorce, death or disability of a partner or other family member.¹⁰⁸ About 2% of all displaced homemakers served have been male.¹⁰⁹
- Six vendors provide program services to 51 of the 87 Minnesota counties. Of the 1,167 participants served in fiscal year 2008, 49.3% gained employment and 83.9% reached other positive goals such as higher education. The average hourly wage of newly employed displaced homemakers was \$11.33.¹¹⁰

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Continue gender-fair curriculum that teaches boys as well as girls homemaking skills, and teaches girls as well as boys skills that will be useful in the paid workforce.
- Honor the valuable work that women do, including funding/expanding displaced homemaker programs.
- Provide adequate family, personal and sick leave; provide flexible work schedules and benefits to all employees including part time workers; recognize real-life skills as transferable to the workplace.
- Enforce state and federal family and medical leave laws and expand them to include paid leave; increase state and federal minimum wages; enforce court-ordered spousal support payments.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Life-work Planning Center, www.lwpc.org, 1-800-369-5166
- Meta 5 Displaced Homemaker Program/Women in Transition, 218-855-8010
- Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, www.mnafcs.org, 507-359-2445
- Women in Transition, 612-752-8444, www.eac-mn.org/WomenProg/WomenProg-Home
- Women’s Programs of Employment Action Center, www.eac-mn.org/WomenProg/WomenProg-Home, 612-752-8444

Last updated: July 22, 2009

¹⁰⁷ Office on the Economic Status of Women. “Labor Force Participation of Women: Minnesota and United States.” 2004. 21 July 2009. <<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/fs/fs.htm>>

¹⁰⁸ Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. “Displaced Homemaker Program.” 2009. 21 July 2009. <<http://www.deed.state.mn.us/wpd/dhp/>>

¹⁰⁹ Life-Work Planning Center. “Our Services.” 2009. 21 July 2009. <<http://www.lwpc.org/services.php>>

¹¹⁰ Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. “Displaced Homemaker Program: Annual Program Summary.” January 2009. 21 July 2009. <<http://www.deed.state.mn.us/programs/disphome.htm>>

PAY EQUITY

Unequal pay is a root cause of most gender-based inequalities. But pay equity won't be achieved for more than seventy-four years at the current rate of change. And the usual "earnings gap" measure—comparing full-time year-round employed women and men—underestimates the disadvantage for women who work part-time or take time out of the labor force. Because of lower earnings, the reward for a lifetime of "women's work" is often poverty. Minnesota has made great strides by enforcing the State Government Pay Equity Act of 1982 and the Local Government Pay Equity Act of 1984. Both require public employers to evaluate all jobs and correct gender-based pay differences. However, these laws only affect twelve percent of the state workforce. Pay equity has made some strides on the national level. On January 29, 2009 President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law, making it the first legislation of his administration. The Act reverses the Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling in 2007 (*Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.*) and restores the ability of victims of wage discrimination to hold their employer accountable.

KEY FACTS

- The U.S. earnings gap fluctuated from women earning an average of 64 cents to the male dollar in 1955, to 77.8 cents in 2007. The lowest ratio was 58 cents in 1967, and the highest was 77.8 percent in 2007.¹¹¹
- Based on the median earnings of full-time, year-round workers, women's earnings were \$35,102 and men's earnings were \$45,113. Median earnings for women of color are generally even lower. In 2007, the earnings for African American women were \$31,009, 68.7 percent of men's earnings; Asian American women's earnings were \$40,374, 89.5 percent of men's earnings, and Latina's earnings were \$26,612, 59 percent of men's.¹¹²
- Minnesota's gap is larger than the U.S. gap, despite the high percentage of women in the state labor force.¹¹³
- Taking into account the earnings gap, women's lower work hours and years with zero earnings, women workers in their prime earning years made only 38% of what men earned.¹¹⁴
- A woman born in 1970, working at the 2004 median female earnings throughout her lifetime, would have Social Security benefits \$60,480 lower than those of her male counterpart.¹¹⁵ The actual disparity would be larger because men's earnings generally increase as they age, while women's earnings remain relatively flat.
- As a result of Minnesota's pay equity laws, state government-employed women now earn 97% of the earnings for their male counterparts—up from 72% in 1982 when the law was passed.¹¹⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Require government contractors to evaluate jobs and eliminate gender-based patterns of inequity.
- Clarify equal pay laws to prohibit gender bias in jobs with different duties but equal levels of responsibility.
- Continue other strategies: education, affirmative action for men and women who choose non-traditional jobs, livable wage, wage clubs, negotiating skills, benefits such as child care, flextime, etc.
- Honor—by reducing economic penalties for—women's unpaid work at home and in families.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- American Association of University Women- Minnesota, www.aauwmn.org, 952-891-2876
- Center on Women and Public Policy, www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/wpp/index.html, 612-625-7176
- JOBS NOW Coalition, www.jobsnowcoalition.org, 651-290-0240

¹¹¹ National Committee on Pay Equity. "The Wage Gap Over Time: In Real Dollars, Women See a Continuing Gap." August 2008. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.pay-equity.org/info-time.html>>

¹¹² AFL-CIO. "Professional Women: Vital Statistics." 2008. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.pay-equity.org/info.html>>

¹¹³ Minnesota Office on the Economic Status of Women. "Status Report: Earnings in Minnesota." 2002. and "Status Report: Earnings of Women in the United States." 2004. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/fs/fs.htm>>

¹¹⁴ Institute for Women's Policy Research. "Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long-Term Earnings Gap." February 2008. 22 July 2009. <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/C366_RIB.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Social Security Administration. "Benefit Calculators." 22 July 2009. <<http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/AnypiaApplet.html>>

¹¹⁶ Minnesota Management and Budget. "Minnesota Local Government Pay Equity Compliance Report." January 2009. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/comp-pay-equity>>

- Minneapolis Branch American Association of University Women, www.aauwmpls.org, 612-870-1661
- Minnesota Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-452-0549
- Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota, www.mnwomen.org/pecom.htm, 651-271-1462
- SEIU Minnesota State Council, www.seuimn.org, 651-203-0401
- Skyway of Minneapolis Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 612-616-1215
- St. Paul Business and Professional Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-228-1840
- Workplace Justice, 952-996-9291

Last updated: July 22, 2009

CHILD CARE

The Houston Plan calls for the federal government to “assume a major role in directing and providing comprehensive, voluntary, flexible-hour, bias-free, non-sexist, quality child care and developmental programs, including child care facilities for federal employees, and should request and support adequate legislation and funding for these programs.” Because Minnesota women work at one of the highest rates in the nation, childcare is a necessity for families in Minnesota.

KEY FACTS

- According to Child Care WORKS, about 30,000 Minnesota children are in child care through the Child Care Assistance Programs. As of October 2008, over 7,000 families are on waiting lists.¹¹⁷
- In Minnesota, approximately 353,500 married women and 108,271 single women with children under the age of 18 participate in the labor force.¹¹⁸
- 287,148 Minnesota children under the age of six have both parents or their single parent in the labor force.¹¹⁹
- State general fund spending for childcare assistance dropped by 26 percent from FY 2000 to FY 2009. Increased federal funding made up for some of the lost dollars, but total federal and state childcare spending in Minnesota in FY 2009 is still 16 percent below FY 2000 levels.¹²⁰
- After severe cuts to child care assistance programs in the 2003 and 2005 Minnesota legislative session, 11,000 fewer children accessed childcare assistance. Furthermore, one-fifth of families in Hennepin County that became ineligible for child care assistance reported losing their jobs. In addition, Minnesota lost 1,100 licensed childcare providers.¹²¹
- A recent study by the Minnesota Department of Human Services shows that children from lower income families who attended accredited childcare centers performed at the same level of school readiness as children from higher income families.¹²²

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Increase state and federal funding for child care assistance.
- Adequately fund early care and education programs such as Head Start, after school programs, etc.
- Support paid parental leave, adequate health care, flexible work time, and other family supports.
- Support career enhancement and pay equity for child care providers and staff.
- Support elected officials and candidates who prioritize these issues.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Child Care WORKS, www.childcareworks.org, 612-455-1055
- YWCA of Minneapolis, www.ywcamppls.org, 612-332-0501
- YWCA of St. Paul, www.ywcaofstpaul.org, 651-222-3741

Last updated: July 22, 2009

¹¹⁷ Child Care WORKS. “Legislative Agenda 2009.” February 2009. 22 July 2009.

<http://www.childcareworks.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={5A6F7875-FC80-4626-B803-FF733C97E42F}>

¹¹⁸ National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. “2009 Child Care in the State of Minnesota.” March 2009. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.naccrra.org/randd/data/docs/MN.pdf>>

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Minnesota Budget Project. “The Lost Decade.” December 2008. 22 July 2009.

<<http://www.mncn.org/bp/lostdecade.htm#child>>

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Women owned businesses create revenue that supports the economy and supplies jobs for the community. The Houston Plan recommends “support for women entrepreneurs through government related activities and contracts; inclusion of women owned businesses in Small Business Administration targeting.” The Beijing Platform cites “inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and access to resources...”

KEY FACTS

- As of 2006, there are an estimated 10.4 million privately held businesses in which a woman or women owns at least 50 percent of the company. Among them, 7.7 million are majority-owned.¹²³
- Firms owned by women of color now represent 21% of all privately held, majority-owned firms in the U.S. and they are growing in numbers at fully six times the rate of all U.S. firms. More than three-quarters (77%) of Asian American women-owned employer business locations in existence in 1997 were still in operation three years later, compared with 75% of Native American/Alaska Native women, 73% of Latina, and 68% of African American women-employed business locations.¹²⁴
- While women-owned family businesses are somewhat smaller in size compared with the average annual revenues of their male-owned counterparts (\$26.4 million vs. \$30.4 million), they generate their sales with fewer median employees, employing 26 individuals compared with 50 at male-owned family firms. This means female-owned family businesses are 1.7 times more productive than male-owned family firms.¹²⁵
- As of the last census survey in 2002, women owned firms made up 27.9% of the states privately held firms. These firms generated nearly 16 million dollars in sales and employed 123,333 workers. Minnesota ranked 33rd among states for percentage of firms owned by women.¹²⁶
- The Consortium added a category for “Friends,” recognizing for-profit members, in 2004.

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Develop and support networks of businesswomen to help them and reach out to others.
- Ensure that women-owned businesses receive equal access to credit, government contracts, etc.
- Assist women in identifying opportunities for economic self-sufficiency through business ownership.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Minnesota Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-452-0549
- Minnesota Rural Partners, www.minnesotaruralpartners.org, 651-303-5263
- National Association of Women Business Owners Minnesota, www.nawbo-mn.org, 651-290-6292
- Skyway of Minneapolis Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 612-616-1215
- St. Paul Business and Professional Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-228-1840
- WomenVenture, www.womenventure.org, 651-646-3808
- Friends of the Consortium for-profit members: Apporte LLC, Aronson and Associates, Black Heart Inc., Forward Thinking Woman, Leadership Paradigms, Inc., Life Illumination Presentations and Coaching, Minnesota Women’s Press, New Moon Girl Media, Platinum Airport and Car Service, Side by Side Associates, The Marsh, The McDonough Group, and The Smitten Kitten. Contact information for the listed groups can be found at www.mnwomen.org.

Last updated: July 22, 2009

¹²³ National Women’s Business Council. “Women Business Owners and their Enterprises.” July 2007. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.nwbc.gov/ResearchPublications/keyFacts.html>>

¹²⁴ National Women’s Business Council. “African American Women and Entrepreneurship.” “Asian American Women and Entrepreneurship.” “Latinas and Entrepreneurship.” “Native American/Alaska Native Women and Entrepreneurship.” June 2006. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.nwbc.gov/ResearchPublications/keyFacts.html>>

¹²⁵ National Women’s Business Council. “Women Business Owners and their Enterprises.” July 2007. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.nwbc.gov/ResearchPublications/keyFacts.html>>

¹²⁶ Office on the Economic Status of Women. “Women-Owned Businesses in Minnesota.” 2006. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/fs/fs.htm>>

PENSIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Since women tend to live longer than men, on average, and their lifetime earnings are still much lower than men's, women face major disadvantages in retirement income. Today, fifty-eight percent of Social Security beneficiaries age 62 and older are women.¹²⁷ For a majority of these women, Social Security is their major source of retirement income.¹²⁸ In addition, most women do not receive private pensions. For instance, in 2004, only 24 percent of unmarried women aged 65 or older were receiving their own private pensions (either as a retired worker or survivor), compared to 30 percent of unmarried men.¹²⁹ However, in recent years the amount of companies offering pensions has declined for men and women alike. Yet, participation in employer-sponsored retirement plans is increasing for women in today's workforce. In 2007, 52.6 percent of women employed full-time participated in an employer-sponsored plan compared to 51.6 percent of men.¹³⁰

KEY FACTS

- Since women's life expectancy is nearly 5 years longer than men (80 for women vs. 75 for men), women rely disproportionately on survivors' benefits and on the full cost of living adjustment in Social Security, which protects them from inflation as they age.¹³¹
- Nearly 20% of unmarried women 65 and older live below the poverty line, compared with 5% of married elderly women. Without Social Security benefits, more than two-thirds of unmarried elderly women would live in poverty.¹³²
- Social Security provides benefits to living and surviving spouses. Despite women's increasing employment and improved lifetime earnings, 34% of women aged 62 and older rely on spousal benefits (based on their husbands' or ex-husbands' earnings records) for their retirement security; another 28% rely on benefits partly based on their husbands' or ex-husbands' earnings records and partly on their own earnings.¹³³
- Older women of color are poorest in retirement: 27.5% of African American and 22% of Hispanic women age 65 and over are living below the poverty level.¹³⁴

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Work to reform the Social Security System so that it equitably and adequately reflects the work and life patterns of all women and oppose efforts to privatize and remove funds from the system.
- Increase Social Security survivor benefits to help decrease the number of elderly widows living in poverty.
- Ensure that all women workers, including part-time and temporary workers, have adequate pension coverage and protection and make pensions portable and equitable.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Golden Girl Homes, Inc., www.goldengirlhomes.us, 612-332-7200
- Gray Panthers of the Twin Cities, www.graypantherstwincities.org, 612-822-1011
- JOBS NOW Coalition, www.jobsnowcoalition.org, 651-290-0240
- Older Women's League of Minnesota, www.owl-mn.org, 651-228-9990
- SEIU Minnesota State Council, www.seiumn.org, 651-203-0410
- Upper Midwest Pension Rights Project, 651-641-8618

Last updated: July 24, 2009

¹²⁷ Social Security Administration. "Social Security Information for Women." 2009. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/women/>>

¹²⁸ Social Security Administration. "Social Security is Important to Women." 2008. 22 July 2009. <<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/factsheets/women.htm>>

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Institute for Women's Policy Research. "Six Key Facts on Women and Social Security." May 2005. 23 July 2009. <http://womenandsocialsecurity.org/Women_Social_Security/figures.htm>

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Older Women's League. "Women and Retirement Income." 23 July 2009. <http://www.owl-national.org/Issues_Fact_Sheets.html>

CONSUMER RIGHTS

Consumer rights include equal access to resources needed for quality of life and access to accurate information about those resources. Also, consumer rights include the opportunity to take legal action and receive just compensation if one is harmed by a product known to be dangerous. Changes to bankruptcy regulations are a current concern for many women that will make it more difficult to declare bankruptcy even in circumstances of job loss and medical problems. Globally, access to affordable housing and clean water are consumer rights that many women struggle with. Please also see sections of this Plan on health and environmental issues.

KEY FACTS

- Women are responsible for buying 80% of household goods as well as business purchases and are the primary consumers of health care products and services for themselves and their families.¹³⁵
- More than 100 million women rely on IUDs worldwide, but the method accounts for less than 1% of the U.S. contraceptive market, compared to sterilization, 25.6%, and birth control pills, 24.9%. Once popular with Americans, IUDs lost favor in 1975 when the Dalkon Shield was withdrawn amid reports of serious infections and deaths. New research shows that the IUDs were safe but doctors were afraid of being sued.¹³⁶
- Non-economic damages compensate injured consumers for intangible but real “quality of life” injuries, like permanent disability, disfigurement, trauma, loss of a limb, blindness or other physical impairment. Certain injuries that happen primarily to women are compensated almost exclusively through noneconomic loss damages. These injuries include sexual or reproductive harm, pregnancy loss, and sexual assault injuries. Caps on non-economic damages make it very difficult for many sick and injured women, children, seniors and those who are poor, to obtain adequate compensation, destroying yet another safety net for many vulnerable children and families.¹³⁷
- Pharmacists refusal not only infringes on consumer’s rights but also access to health care. Women are particularly affected by pharmacists refusal because the majority of drugs refused encompass reproductive healthcare.¹³⁸

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Oppose limits on lawsuits challenging unsafe products, inappropriate procedures, or loss of privacy.
- Maintain Minnesota’s laws and policies requiring equal coverage for obstetrical/gynecological problems.
- Read labels and other product information and support businesses that direct marketing to women as intelligent adults.

RELATED MEMBER GROUPS

- Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, www.mnafcs.org, 507-359-2445
- Twin Cities ACES, Association for Children for Enforcement of Support, Inc., 651-458-9482

Last update: August 7, 2009

¹³⁵ Women and the Economy. “Women as Consumers.” 2006. 30 July 2009. <<http://www.unpac.ca/economy/consumers.html>>

¹³⁶ The Kaiser Network. “Can the IUD Make a Comeback.” 2001. 30 July 2009. <http://www.kaisernetwork.org/Daily_reports/rep_repro_recent_reports.cfm?dr_cat=2&show=yes&dr_DateTime=06-14-01>

¹³⁷ Center for Justice and Democracy. “Compensation Caps- The War on Women, Children, Seniors, and the Poor.” 7 August 2009. <<http://centerjd.org/>>

¹³⁸ National Organization for Women. “Testimony of Kim A. Gandy, President National Organization for Women: Submitted to the House Committee on Small Business Hearing on Freedom of Conscience for Small Pharmacies.” 2005. 7 August 2009. <<http://www.now.org/issues/abortion/testimony7-25-05.html>>

ELECTIVE AND APPOINTIVE OFFICE

The Houston Plan calls for a “joint effort by federal and state governments, political parties, and other organizations to increase women in office, policy-making positions and judgeships.” Almost twenty years later on a worldwide scale, the Beijing Platform notes “inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels.” While progress has been made, women are far from achieving equality in elected and appointed office—and unfortunately, not all elected and appointed women are supportive of women and women’s issues. Many women gain expertise and build their base by starting with appointive and/or local elected offices before running for state legislature or statewide elective office.

KEY FACTS

- In 2009, 90 women serve in the U.S. Congress. Seventeen women serve in the Senate, and 73 women serve in the House. The number of women in statewide elective executive posts is 72, while the proportion of women in state legislatures is at 24.3 percent.¹³⁹ Three women, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Congresswoman Michelle Bachmann, and Senator Amy Klobuchar serve on Minnesota’s ten-member Congressional delegation.
- 70 women serve in the Minnesota legislature, representing 34.8% of state legislatures.¹⁴⁰
- Of the 90 women serving in the 111th U.S. Congress, 21, or 23.3% are women of color, all serving in the House. In addition, an African American woman and a Caribbean American woman serve as Delegates to the House from Washington D.C. and the Virgin Islands. Women of color constitute 3.9% of the total 535 members of Congress. No women of color serve in the U.S. Senate. Furthermore, no woman of color has ever served in Minnesota’s congressional delegation or in a statewide elected office.¹⁴¹
- Women are 30% of the judges on state supreme courts, 24% of district courts, 25% of judges on circuit courts, and 11% of the U.S. Supreme Court.¹⁴²
- In 2008, Minnesota women held 37.6 percent of school board seats and 28.1 percent of city council seats.¹⁴³ More than half of Minnesota counties have no women county commissioners.¹⁴⁴

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Identify and support pro-choice women to run for office at all levels including financial support, volunteer assistance, coaching, and training—and/or run yourself! Consider also supporting male candidates who support women’s issues like those in the Houston Plan.
- Stay in touch with pro-choice candidates, once elected, to help them succeed in addressing women’s concerns.
- Identify openings on appointive boards, commissions, and other leadership positions at the state and local level and encourage progressive women to seek appointment.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Abortion Rights Council Political Action Committee, www.arcpacofmn.com
- Democratic Women Leadership Coalition, 612-306-3981
- DFL Feminist Caucus, www.dflfeministcaucus.org, 651-251-6323
- League of Women Voters Minneapolis, www.lwvmpls.org, 612-333-6319
- League of Women Voters Minnesota, www.lwvmn.org, 651-224-5445
- League of Women Voters St. Paul, www.lwvsp.org, 651-789-0118

¹³⁹ Center for American Women in Politics. “Fast Facts: Levels of Office.” 2009. 30 July 2009. <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/index.php>

¹⁴⁰ Center for American Women in Politics. “Women in Elective Office.” 2009. 30 July 2009. <<http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/index.php>>

¹⁴¹ Center for American Women in Politics. “Women of Color in Elective Office 2009.” 2009. 30 July 2009. <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/index.php>

¹⁴² The Infinity Project. “Talking Points.” 30 July 2009. < <http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/wpp/infinity/>>

¹⁴³ SCAN: The Magazine of the College of St. Catherine. “Educated to Lead and Influence.” February 2009. 30 July 2009. < <http://www.stkate.edu/scan/09-feb/article3.html>>

¹⁴⁴ Women’s Foundation of Minnesota. “Status of Women in Minnesota Counties.” 2004. 30 July 2009. < <http://www.wfmn.org/research/?51>.

- Minnesota Women's Political Caucus, www.mnwpc.org, 651-228-0995
- National Organization for Women, www.mnnow.org, 651-222-1605
- The White House Project, www.thewhitehouseproject.org, 651-556-1376
- womenwinning, www.womenwinning.org, 651-251-0727
- Women Candidate Development Coalition, www.mnwomen.org/WCDC.htm, 612-724-6348

Last updated: July 30, 2009

STATISTICS

The Houston Plan calls for “analysis of all data collected by the government on the basis of sex and race to assess the impact of programs on women.” The mission statement of the Beijing Conference includes “establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world’s women.” Three decades of women’s activism made it clear that gathering information and making information available to the general public are necessary preconditions for change—and that this mechanism cannot be taken for granted. In the past several years, the federal government has taken much helpful information off the website of the Women’s Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor and many efforts are underway to cease collecting information about the earnings gap between employed men and women.

KEY FACTS

- In the 2005 legislative session, the Minnesota Legislature abolished the Commission on the Economic Status of Women, the best statewide source of information about the lives of Minnesota women, which has been used for twenty-nine years as a factual basis for much positive policymaking. Although the Commission itself—originally five members of the House and five members of the Senate—will not continue, some positions are maintained within the Legislative Coordinating Commission’s Office on the Economic Status of Women.
- Since 2000, the federal government has attempted to remove data about women from several federal websites but failed to do so. According to a United Nations report, the lack of vital statistics broken down by sex hampers developing countries when making economic, health, and education decisions.¹⁴⁵
- The ten largest countries that did not conduct a census, 1995-2004 are: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Peru, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. Combined, these countries represent 7 per cent of the world’s population.¹⁴⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Support international efforts to gather, analyze, and disseminate information about all aspects of women’s lives as a vital foundation for global efforts toward gender equity.
- Contact federal policymakers and advocate for retaining and expanding the data collected about women’s lives and the effects of all programs on women in all departments and for making that information easily available to the general public.
- Support strengthening and expanding the positions previously existing in the Commission on the Economic Status of Women and maintaining and expanding the information available on its website to ensure wide access to accurate, relevant, state-level information on all aspects of women’s economic lives.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Abigail Quigley McCarthy Center for Women’s Research, www.stkate.edu/centerforwomen, 651-690-6783
- Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities Women’s Studies Program, www.associatedcolleges-tc.org/majors&minors/womens.htm
- Center of Women and Public Policy, www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/wpp/index.html, 612-625-7176
- Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, University of Minnesota, www.gvss.umn.edu
- Hnub Tshiab: Hmong Women Achieving Together, www.hmongwomenachieve.org, 651-276-0957
- Macalester College Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department, www.macalester.edu/wgs
- National Women’s Studies Association Journal, www.cehd.umn.edu/nwsaj/, 612-626-3818
- Office on the Economic Status of Women, www.oesw.leg.mn, 651-296-8590
- St. Cloud State University Women’s Center, www.stcloudstate.edu/womenscenter, 320-308-4958
- Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, www.tuckercenter.org, 612-625-7327
- Women’s Studies at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, 612-659-6050
- Women’s Studies Program, Minnesota State University Moorhead, www.mnstate.edu/women

Last Updated: August 7, 2009

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “The World’s Women 2005: Progress in Statistics.” 2005. 7 August 2009. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/statistics_and_indicators_60.htm>

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

If the long struggle for obtaining the right to vote was the hallmark of the first wave of the American women's movement, the so far unsuccessful effort to pass an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is the hallmark of the second wave. While enormous gains have been made toward full equality for women in laws, policies, and court decisions, these represent a patchwork of laws that can be repealed or weakened at any time. Women's rights often depend on the state in which they reside. The 1977 Houston Plan of Action included a call for ratification of the ERA, but the number of states needed to ratify the Congressional adoption of the ERA was not met by the deadline imposed.

KEY FACTS

- The Equal Rights Amendment has been ratified by thirty-five states with only three more needed for final ratification by a three-fourth majority of the states.¹⁴⁷
- Opponents argue that the deadline for ratification expired in 1982. However, a precedent was set for a longer ratification period in 1992 when the twenty-seventh amendment was ratified—concerning congressional pay raises—two hundred and three years after it was originally introduced. Although some states have rescinded their ratification votes, proponents argue that the Constitution makes no provision for rescission.¹⁴⁸
- The Equal Rights Amendment has been reintroduced in every Congress since 1982.¹⁴⁹
- The 15 states whose legislatures have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia.¹⁵⁰
- While many believe the ratification of the ERA to be symbolic, the ERA would require courts to go beyond the current application of the 14th Amendment by adding sex to the list of suspect classifications protected by the highest level of strict judicial review.¹⁵¹

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Re-energize the effort to ratify a federal ERA.
- Educate the public about the positive benefits of full equality for women and avoid the scare tactics used to defeat it in many states.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- American Association of University Women—Minnesota, www.aauwmn.org, 952-891-2876
- Minneapolis Branch American Association of University Women, www.aauwmpls.org, 612-870-1661
- Minnesota Business Women, www.mnbusinesswomen.org, 651-452-0549
- Minnesota Valley NOW, www.mnvalleynow.org, 651-222-1605
- Minnesota Women's Political Caucus Education Council, www.ewomenwin.org, 651-228-0995
- Mujeres Unidas of the Red River Valley, 218-236-9884
- National Organization for Women—Minnesota, www.mnnow.org, 651-222-1605
- St. Paul American Association of University Women, www.aauwstpaul.org, 651-602-9839

Last Updated: August 7, 2009

¹⁴⁷ Equalrightsamendment.org. "The Equal Rights Amendment." 7 August 2009.
<<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/>>

¹⁴⁸ Equalrightsamendment.org. "The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment." 7 August 2009.
<<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/era.htm>>

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Equalrightsamendment.org. "Frequently Asked Questions." 7 August 2009.
<<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/faq.htm>>

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

GLBTQIA ISSUES/SEXUAL PREFERENCE

The Houston Plan called for “legislation eliminating discrimination based on sexual preference in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, public facilities, funding, military; repeal of laws restricting private behavior between consenting adults; evaluation of child custody suits based solely on parenting capacity.” Minnesota includes sexual orientation among other prohibited forms of discrimination in the state Human Rights Act, many cities have similar anti-discrimination provisions, and many large corporations provide for benefits such as health insurance to domestic partners. However, federal law provides few protections against this form of discrimination. In the military, the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy prevails with many negative results. And the recent wave of regression based on “moral values” has led to many anti-GLBT initiatives, including moves to amend the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. Supporters of GLBT rights note that there are thousands of financial and legal privileges afforded to legally married couples, that same-sex marriages are already prohibited by state law in Minnesota and the constitutional amendment is an attempt to permanently enshrine discrimination, and that the “gay marriage” issue is used as a strategy to inflame religious conservatives for other purposes.

KEY FACTS

- Currently, Minnesota law restricts the ability of certain public employer’s to offer the same types of benefits that many of Minnesota’s private sector employers offer.¹⁵²
- Several states offer some form of legal recognition of same-sex couples. Massachusetts (2003), Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), and Vermont (2009) permit same-sex couples to marry, while several other states offer something similar to marriage such as civil unions or domestic partnerships.
- A study by the Senior Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE) found that approximately two-thirds of the lesbian and gay seniors interviewed lived alone—a higher rate of isolation than among the general elderly population.¹⁵³
- A 2007 Gallup poll showed that 68% of Americans favored expanding hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity.¹⁵⁴
- In the U.S., approximately 75% out of 1 million green cards or immigrant visas are issued to family members of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. However, the current definition of "family" in U.S. immigration law does not include same-sex partners. Therefore, thousands of same-sex couples are separated or live in constant fear of being stopped by officials who demand to see documentation and threaten detention.¹⁵⁵
- In thirty states it is legal to fire somebody based on their sexual identity or preference. In seven states, it is illegal to fire gays, lesbians, or bisexuals for solely that reason, but it is legal to fire transgenders.¹⁵⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Prevent passage by the state legislature of the proposed anti-gay state constitutional amendment.
- Contact federal policymakers in support of the federal anti-discrimination measures.
- Provide legal recognition for same-sex couples with federal benefits and full-faith and credit in every state and territory.
- Include sexual orientation in all civil rights laws, especially those that prohibit workplace discrimination.
- Support and advocate for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, and intersexual people in high schools and in all walks of life.

¹⁵² OutFront Minnesota. “Employee Benefits: The Competitive Edge.” 2008. 4 September 2009. <<http://www.outfront.org/library/issues/dpbenefits>>.

¹⁵³ Human Rights Campaign. “Unique Housing Challenges for Seniors.” 2009. 4 September 2009. <<http://www.hrc.org/issues/aging/5348.htm>>.

¹⁵⁴ Human Rights Campaign. “The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act / Matthew Shepard Act.” 2009. 4 September 2009. <http://www.hrc.org/laws_and_elections/5660.htm>.

¹⁵⁵ Human Rights Campaign. “About International Rights & Immigration.” 2009. 4 September 2009. <http://www.hrc.org/issues/int_rights_immigration/5899.htm>.

¹⁵⁶ EqualityGiving.org. “Non Discrimination: Workplace Discrimination and Beyond.” 2009. 4 September 2009. <<http://www.equalitygiving.org/Workplace-Discrimination-Transgender-Discrimination-and-Beyond>>.

RELATED MEMBER GROUPS

- Calliope Women’s Chorus, www.calliopewomenschorus.org, 612-285-5835
- Family Tree Clinic, www.familytreeclinic.org, 651-645-0478
- Midwest Health Center for Women, www.midwesthealthcenter.org, 612-332-2311
- Minnesota Valley NOW, www.mnvalleynow.org, 651-222-1605
- National Organization for Women—Minnesota, www.mnnow.org, 651-222-1605
- OutFront Minnesota, www.outfront.org, 612-822-0127
- PFLAG, www.pflagtc.org, 612-825-1660
- Trans Youth Support Network, www.transyouthsupportnetwork.org, 612-875-8164

Last Updated: September 4, 2009

WOMEN OF COLOR

The Houston Plan adopted at the National Women's Meeting in 1977 specified "all parts of this plan [all 26 issues] apply equally to minority women and must recognize their extra burden due to racism." Many Consortium groups work for racial justice as well as gender equity and women of color have been leaders in the Minnesota women's movement for over 25 years. Today, women of color represent a larger proportion of the state's population than ever before. Women of color have made important contributions as well as progress on some indicators, but due to racism and discrimination are far from obtaining the same status as white women.

KEY FACTS

- There are 283,020 women of color in Minnesota, those of African, Asian, Native American, and Hispanic origin account for 11% of the state's population.¹⁵⁷
- The lowest wages of all Minnesota women are among Hispanic women, a median of \$23,500, and they are the least likely group of women in the state to be college educated.¹⁵⁸
- African American, Hispanic, and Native American women in Minnesota have two- or four-year college degrees, or more, at lower rates than do white women.¹⁵⁹
- No woman of color has ever served in Minnesota's congressional delegation or statewide elected office.¹⁶⁰
- American Indian women are seven times more likely to receive inadequate care or no care during their pregnancies than White women. Women of Color were two to three times more likely to receive inadequate or no prenatal care during their pregnancies. In 2003-2007, 2.3 percent of White women received inadequate or no care.¹⁶¹
- Although rates of teen births have decreased for African Americans and American Indians since 2003, these rates remain 3.8 to 5.5 times the White rate. The Asian rate was over 2.5 times the White rate. The Hispanic teen birth rate is nearly six times the White rate.¹⁶²
- The lowest wages of all Minnesota women are among Hispanic women, who also are the least likely to be educated.¹⁶³
- Asian American women in Minnesota are almost 10 percentage points less likely to have a two- or four-year college degree than they are nationally.¹⁶⁴
- Women of color are more likely than white women to be arrested, convicted, and incarcerated at rates higher than their representation in the free world population.¹⁶⁵
- A recent study noted that immigrant women face multiple barriers, more than others, in reporting and getting help for domestic violence and sexual assault.¹⁶⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Attention to health disparities including funds for state and local health departments.
- Recreate a state agency addressing the concerns of women offenders.
- Enforce affirmative action policies, pay equity laws, and entrepreneurship options.

¹⁵⁷ Women's Foundation of Minnesota. "Status of Women of Color in Minnesota." 2005. 4 September 2009. <<http://www.wfmn.org/research/?51>>

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Minnesota Department of Health. "Populations of Color in Minnesota: Health Status Report." 2009. 4 September 2009. <<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/POC/>>

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Women's Foundation of Minnesota. "CORNERSTONE Creating Economic Justice For Women: Fast Facts." 4 September 2009. < <http://www.wfmn.org/econjustice.shtml>>

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Drug Policy Alliance. "Women in Prison." 2009. 4 September 2009. < <http://www.drugpolicy.org/communities/women/womeninpriso/>>

¹⁶⁶ Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. "The Government Response to Domestic Violence Against Immigrant and Refugee Women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area." 2004. 4 September 2009. < http://www.mnadvocates.org/Battered_Immigrant_Women_Project2.html>

- Support true welfare reform that provides support for escaping poverty in the long term.
- Attention to the special needs of recent immigrant populations of women.
- Empowerment and increased visibility of women of color in all aspects of the state's cultural, social, economic, and political process.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- African Health Development, www.africanhealthmn.org, 612-203-0078
- Association of Latinas of Minnesota, 651-228-0338
- Black Heart, Inc. dba One Nation News, 612-861-9006
- Generous Alternatives, 651-583-0833
- Hnub Tshiab: Hmong Women Achieving Together, www.hmongwomenachieve.org, 651-276-0957
- Minnesota African Women's Association, www.mawanet.org, 612-588-7666
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2008
- Mujeres Unidas of the Red River Valley, 218-236-9884
- Professional Hmong Women Association, www.superhmongwomen.org, 651-523-0540
- Tibetan Women's Association of Minnesota, www.rtwamn.blogspot.com, 952-888-0577
- What About Us, www.amamedia.org, 612-376-7715
- Women's Foundation of Minnesota, www.wfmn.org
- Women's Human Rights Program at the Advocates for Human Rights, www.mnadvocates.org
- Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment, www.womenofwise.org, 651-646-3268
- YWCA of Minneapolis, www.ywcamppls.org, 612-332-0501
- YWCA of St. Paul, www.ywcaofstpaul.org, 651-222-3741

Last Updated: September 4, 2009

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Women with physical and other disabilities face additional barriers because of women's vulnerability generally; because "beauty," narrowly defined, is considered an important attribute for women; because physical handicaps pose extra barriers to full independence; and because all women's employment opportunities are too often limited. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers to make "reasonable accommodations" for those with disabilities, but this law is not always fully enforced. Information and communications technologies can help women with disabilities develop workforce skills and express their full potential. Yet, training opportunities for low-income women with disabilities are limited and gender bias still exists in many aspects of technology education.

KEY FACTS

- There are an estimated 28 million (21.3%) women living with a disability in the United States.¹⁶⁷
- Women with disabilities are disproportionately likely to have poor access to health care, decreased screening for conditions common in all women, increased incidence of secondary complications, and diminished quality of life.¹⁶⁸
- Most women with disabilities do not receive the same preventive healthcare services as their non-disabled peers. They are given Pap tests, breast exams, and mammograms, for example, at rates consistently below those of the rest of the population. They are also less likely to be screened for tobacco and alcohol use. Nor are they as likely to be asked by their healthcare providers about their sexual activity and need for contraception.¹⁶⁹
- Women have a higher rate of disability than men, primarily because of women's higher average longevity.¹⁷⁰
- Although 65 percent of American adults are married, only 50 percent of women with activity limitations are currently married. In contrast, 64 percent of women with no activity limitations are married. Among men, having a disability appears to have little impact on marriage status: 68 percent of men with activity limitations are married compared with 69 percent of men with no such limitations.¹⁷¹

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Ensure full access to education and training for women with disabilities and focus on abilities.
- Support strong enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and state anti-discrimination laws.
- Ensure full access to high-quality, affordable health care and related services for everyone.
- Accommodate the special needs of women with disabilities in systems of care and advocacy related to problems such as violence and poverty.
- Improve the images of women and girls in the media to reflect real women's strengths and bodies.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Calliope Women's Chorus, www.calliopewomenschorus.org, 612-285-5835
- Family Tree Clinic, www.familytreeclinic.org, 651-645-0478
- Older Women's League of Minnesota, www.owl-mn.org, 651-228-9990
- Perspectives, Inc., www.perspectives-family.org, 952-926-2600
- Tubman, www.tubman.org, 612-825-3333
- Wayside House, Inc., www.waysidehouse.org, 952-405-7637

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¹⁶⁷ Women with Disabilities Education Program. "Homepage." 4 September 2009. <<http://www.womenwithdisabilities.org/>>

¹⁶⁸ Women with Disabilities Education Program. "Introduction to WWD." 4 September 2009. <<http://www.womenwithdisabilities.org/modules/index.html>>

¹⁶⁹ Women with Disabilities Education Program. "Women with Disabilities Educational Programs for Providers." 4 September 2009. <<http://www.womenwithdisabilities.org/modules/index.html>>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

OLDER WOMEN

The Houston Plan calls for “support by governments, public and private institutions of services promoting dignity and security in housing, health services, transportation education, social security; recognition of the changing image of older women and their capacity to contribute to policy-making.” Age discrimination in employment (to age 70) is prohibited by state and federal law. Yet, older women still too often face the accumulated results of society’s devaluing of all women: economic insecurity, violence, media stereotyping, and neglects of the vital contributions that could be made in advocacy and policymaking.

KEY FACTS

- Women represent 58% of all Social Security recipients at age 65, and 71% of recipients at age 85. Social Security provides 90% of income for 46% of elderly, unmarried women; 25% have no other source of income.¹⁷²
- The poverty rate for all elderly women is 12.5%. However, for widows (18.6%), divorced (22%), and never married (20%) it is much higher. Older women of color are the poorest in retirement: 27.4% of African American and 21.7% of Hispanic women living alone are below the poverty line.¹⁷³
- Women live an average of 5.2 years longer than men. Fifty-nine percent of women over age 65 are single, either widowed (44.3%), divorced or separated (8.6%), or never married (3.7%). Most women marry men older than themselves who die at younger ages. Women are therefore three times more likely than men to be widowed, and at age 85, 78.3% are widowed. Because they live longer, women become increasingly dependent on Social Security as they age.¹⁷⁴
- Adult Protective Services agencies investigated 461,135 reports of abuse in 2004, representing a 15.6% increase since the previous national survey in 2000. However, for every report of elder mistreatment that is made to Adult Protective Services, it is estimated that at least five cases go unreported. Female elders are abused at a higher rate than males. In two-thirds of reports to Adult Protective Services, the victim is an older or disabled woman.¹⁷⁵
- Older women have more complex conditions than men, and are more likely to require services not covered by Medicare, such as greater numbers of more costly pharmaceuticals, further increasing out-of-pocket expenses. A typical Medicare home health care patient is female and 75 years of age or older. Half of Medicare beneficiaries have an annual family income under \$20,000 and the average annual out-of-pocket cost for Basic Medicare Advantage plans was \$1,917.¹⁷⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Ensure comprehensive accessible health care coverage that is publicly administered and financed and includes long-term care.
- Ensure access to affordable and accessible housing for midlife and older women
- Support fairness for women in the Social Security system through more equitable and adequate Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits.
- Support improved economic conditions for older women including pension reform and elimination of workplace discrimination based on age and sex.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Compassion & Choices, www.compassionandchoices.org, 952-929-1955
- Elder Economic Security Initiative, 651-228-0338

¹⁷² Older Women’s League. “Older Women and Poverty Factsheet.” 10 September 2009. <http://www.owl-national.org/Issues_Fact_Sheets.html>

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Older Women’s League. “Elder Abuse: A Women’s Issue.” 2009. 10 September 2009. <<http://www.owl-national.org>>

¹⁷⁶ Older Women’s League. “Women and Medicare Factsheet.” 10 September 2009. <http://www.owl-national.org/Issues_Fact_Sheets.html>

- Gray Panthers of the Twin Cities, www.graypantherstwincities.org, 612-822-1011
- Minnesota Network on Abuse in Later Life, www.mnall.org, 651-636-5311
- Older Women's League of Minnesota, www.owl-mn.org, 651, 228-9990
- Upper Midwest Pension Rights Project, www.tcaging.org, 651-641-8612

Last updated: September 10, 2009

RURAL WOMEN

The Houston Plan recommends “rural education policy to meet isolation, poverty, and underemployment affecting women; improved data; full ownership rights to farm wives; review conditions affecting plantation/migratory workers.” In Minnesota, the economy of many rural areas depends on farming. In 2007, the annual income of a Minnesota rural household was \$31,029.¹⁷⁷ Female-headed households in rural areas are reported to be the poorest of the poor, especially those headed by women of color and elderly women. Rural women are not only affected by poverty, but are at high risk for domestic abuse and homicide. Because rural women are physically isolated and may not have access to transportation or shelters, it is more difficult for them to escape domestic abuse. These problems are further compounded for women in migrant worker families and recent immigrants who may also face racism, language barriers, and cultural differences.

KEY FACTS

- Women living in rural Minnesota are more likely to be below the poverty line than women in metro areas.¹⁷⁸
- In Minnesota, women were 7.9% of total principal operators of farms. Farms with women as the principal operators tend to be smaller in acreage and in the smallest economic classes than those operated by men.¹⁷⁹
- Women living in rural areas face unique barriers when escaping domestic violence. A lack of resources such as public transportation and domestic violence shelters make it more difficult for rural women to escape an abuser. Other barriers include: Long arrival times for police and medical vehicles, extreme weather conditions, poor roads thwart transportation, farm families are often one-income families limiting a woman’s access to finances, etc.¹⁸⁰
- Many weapons, especially firearms, are more readily available in rural households. Increased availability of these weapons increases the risk and deadliness of domestic attacks upon rural women.¹⁸¹
- A combination of poverty, uninsurance, provider shortages, and geography create significant obstacles to basic health care for women in greater Minnesota. Rural women of color and American Indian women experience all of these barriers in addition to cultural differences, racism and discrimination, language barriers, and migratory patterns.¹⁸²

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Help rural communities form Coordinated Community Responses with health care, community, criminal justice, clergy, and social service groups working together to prevent and address domestic violence.
- Strengthen ties between and with rural women through increased use of the internet and other technology.
- Fund Greater Minnesota programs working to address the special needs of rural women.
- Ensure that rural women have full access to all aspects of health care and other services.

RELATED MEMBER GROUPS

- Houston County Women’s Resources, www.hcwr.org, 507-894-2676
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.mncasa.org, 651-209-9993
- Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, www.mcbw.org, 651-646-6177
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, www.miwrc.org, 612-728-2000
- Minnesota Rural Partners, www.minnesotaruralpartners.org, 651-303-5263
- Mujeres Unidas of the Red River Valley, 218-236-9884

¹⁷⁷ USDA Economic Research Service. “State Fact Sheets: Minnesota.” 2009. 4 September 2009.

<<http://www.ers.usda.gov/StateFacts/MN.htm#PIE>>

¹⁷⁸ McMurry, Martha and Tom Gillaspay. “The Demographics of Rural Women: Now and the Future.” *Rural Minnesota Journal* 3 (2008): 1-9.

¹⁷⁹ Mold, Doris. “The Changing Role of Women in Minnesota Agriculture.” *Rural Minnesota Journal* 3 (2008): 57-79.

¹⁸⁰ Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. “Rural Battered Women.” 4 September 2009.

<<http://www.mcbw.org/handouts>>

¹⁸¹ Rural Assistance Center. “Domestic Violence Frequently Asked Questions.” 2009. 4 September 2009. <http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/public_health/dvfaq.php#ruraldv>

¹⁸² Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. “Rural Women Health.” 2009.

<<http://www.ppmns.org>>

➤ Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, www.pavsa.org, 218-726-1931

Last updated: September 10, 2009

WOMEN OFFENDERS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Women in prison and juvenile girls in the justice system share unique experiences that require special attention by the feminist community. They are often subject to discrimination within the criminal justice system. Women's prisons and resources for female offenders continue to be under-funded, often leaving female offenders uninformed about their rights and how to access attorneys and other legal resources. Some programs exist to help female offenders maintain and improve relationships with their children and other family members but much more is needed. Female offenders need to be ensured equal access to resources, legal advice, and educational opportunities to lower the possibility of recidivism.

KEY FACTS

- More than one million women are currently under the supervision of the criminal justice system
- In the U.S. Women in state prisons in 2003 were more likely than men to be incarcerated for a drug offense (29% vs. 19%) or property offense (30% vs. 20%) and less likely than men to be incarcerated for a violent offense (35% vs. 53%).¹⁸³
- Black women represent 30% of all females incarcerated under state or federal jurisdiction and Hispanic women 16%. In 2005, black women were more than three times as likely as white women to be incarcerated in prison or jail, and Hispanic women 69% more likely.¹⁸⁴
- 60% of incarcerated women were not employed full-time when they were arrested, and 37% had incomes under \$600 in the month leading up to their arrest, compared with 40% and 28% of men. Nearly one-third (30%) of women were receiving welfare benefits prior to their arrest.¹⁸⁵
- Overall, drug offenses constituted half (49%) of the increased number of women in state prisons between 1986 and 1996.¹⁸⁶
- To date, 46 states have no legislation that restricts the shackling of pregnant women in prisons, jails, and detention centers, leaving the practice to the discretion of individual facilities.¹⁸⁷
- In 2004 females accounted for 38% of the employees of the Minnesota Department of Correction. The largest category of females is correctional officers (29%), followed by MAPE (Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, which include case managers and probation officers) at 21% and clerical employees (19%).¹⁸⁸

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Support government funding for women's and girl's correctional facilities.
- Volunteer as a courtroom monitor to help make the justice system more effective.
- Support organizations that work towards prevention for girls and women at risk.
- Support women working in the criminal justice field promoting humane care and rehabilitation.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Children's Law Center of Minnesota, www.clcmn.org, 651-644-4438
- Girls Coalition of Minnesota, www.mngirls.org, 651-267-3506
- Office on the Economic Status of Women, www.oesw.leg.mn, 651-296-8590
- WATCH, www.watchmn.org, 612-341-2747

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¹⁸³ The Sentencing Project. "Women in the Criminal Justice System." 2007. 10 September 2009. <<http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=136>>

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Clark, Anna. "Giving Birth in Chains: The Shackling of Incarcerated Women During Labor and Delivery." RH Reality Check. 10 September 2009. <<http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2009/07/06/giving-birth-chains-the-shackling-incarcerated-women-during-labor-and-delivery>>

¹⁸⁸ Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women. Public Hearing on Female Offenders and the Criminal Justice System. Nov. 2004. 10 September 2009. <<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/hearings.htm>>

ARTS AND HUMANITIES

The Houston Plan calls for “equitable representation in management, governance, and decision-making structures in libraries, museums, media, and higher-education; blind-judging when possible.” The Women’s Art Registry of Minnesota (WARM) often asserts a goal of having at least as many female painters represented on the walls of major art museums as female bodies portrayed in the paintings (by men) that hang there already. Women’s creative contributions are important and many women in the arts and humanities help each other, formally and informally, breaking through the ways women’s voices are silenced.

KEY FACTS

- In 2008, women comprised 16% of all directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers, and editors working on the top 250 domestic grossing films. This represents a decline of 3 percentage points from 2001 and an increase of 1 percentage point from 2007. Women accounted for 9% of directors in 2008, an increase of 3 percentage points from 2007. This figure represents no change from the percentage of women directing in 1998.¹⁸⁹
- Overall, women comprised 25% of all creators, executive producers, producers, directors, writers, editors, and directors of photography working on situation comedies, dramas, and reality programs.
- Women writers and directors of photography experienced substantial increases this year. The percentage of women writers increased from 23% in the 2007-08 season to 29% in 2008-09. The percentage of women directors of photography increased from a meager 1% in 2007-08 to 4% in 2008-09.¹⁹⁰
- In 2008, all but 10 of the Pulitzer Prize finalists for Fiction and Poetry were women.¹⁹¹
- Only 21 women have won writing awards in the 80 years of the Oscars.¹⁹²
- 51% of visual artists are female and women hold 53% of art degrees, but 80% of art faculty members are male.¹⁹³ 68% of total art income in the U.S goes to men and 73% of all grants and fellowships in the arts go to men.¹⁹⁴
- In 2000, of 18 modern-dance choreographers who received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, 13 were men. The men received a total of \$200,000, with a typical grant of \$10,000; the women received a total of \$45,000, with a typical grant of \$5,000.¹⁹⁵
- The American Symphony Orchestra League 2002/03 Repertoire Report shows that less than 1% of works programmed in the 2002/03 season represent works by women. Of the 484 composers programmed in the 2002/03 season by 104 significant League member orchestras only 5% were women.¹⁹⁶

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Join with others to support women in the arts by purchasing, participating in, and enjoying their work.
- Support public funding for arts and media that encourage diverse voices and new venues for creative work.
- Discover your own creativity and put it to work. Try something new!

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- AVA Special Event Membership the Sweet Honey in the Rock Project, www.avaspecial.com, 612-408-6781
- Calliope Women’s Chorus, www.calliopewomenschorus.org, 612-285-5835
- Theatre Unbound, www.theatreunbound.com, 612-721-1186

¹⁸⁹ Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film. “The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women in the Top 250 Films of 2008.” 2009. 11 September 2009. <<http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/research.html>>

¹⁹⁰ Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film. “Boxed In: Employment of Behind-the-Scenes Women in the 2008-09 Prime-time Television Season.” 2009. 11 September 2009. <<http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/research.html>>

¹⁹¹ A Room of Her Own. “Why We Do What We Do.” 11 September 2009. <http://www.aroomofherownfoundation.org/get2know_considerfacts.php>

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ WomenArts. “Women’s Employment in the Arts.” 11 September 2009. <<http://www.womenarts.org/swan/employment.htm>>

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

- Twin Cities Women's Choir, www.twincitieswomenschoir.org, 612-333-8292
- Women's Art Registry of Minnesota, www.thewarm.org, 651-292-1188
- Women's Drum Center, www.womensdrumcenter.org, 651-695-1941

Last updated: September 11, 2009

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

The Houston Plan recommends “increased opportunity for women in professional and policy-making roles in the media, enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, and improving the image of women in the mass media.” However, gender-based stereotyping in public, private, local, national, and international media organizations still feeds unrealistic images of women’s capabilities and standards of beauty to girls, women, and the public.

KEY FACTS

- Women hold only 3% of what are considered to be “clout” positions in media, publishing, and entertainment. Female news directors manage only a quarter of TV newsrooms. Only 10-15% of radio programmers and managers are women. And the number of female reporters across genres has either stayed the same—or gone down.¹⁹⁷
- Most revenue from electronic games is from boys and men, with 25% more boys than girls in ages between two to seven, and 49% more teenage boys than girls using this medium. Concerns have been raised about the impact of violence in games. Protagonists are usually males, while females are often depicted as sexualized objects to be used, possessed, or brutally killed.¹⁹⁸
- In a study of female students at Stanford University, 70% of women reported feeling worse about themselves and their bodies after looking at magazines. Roughly 50% of teen girls in the U.S. read teen or adult fashion magazines.¹⁹⁹
- A survey by the International Women’s Media Foundation found that most female journalists (98%) felt they faced obstacles that their male colleagues didn’t, such as discrimination in receiving career-enhancing assignments, and discrimination in promotion. Respondents in previous surveys also noted inequality in pay among men and women journalists with similar experience.²⁰⁰
- According to a study released in 2001, in the most powerful media companies, women hold about 10% of executive positions.²⁰¹

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Promote women’s full and equal participation in the media including management and programming.
- Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and sexual objects—instead promoting them as creative human beings, key actors, and contributors to society.
- Take effective measures, including appropriate legislation, against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.
- Increase the visibility of women’s issues by writing opinion pieces and improving media connections.
- Use information technology on a national and international level to influence policies as well as behavior to improve the condition of women and girls.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Black Heart, Inc. dba One Nation News, 612-861-9006
- Forward Thinking Woman, www.forwardthinkingwoman.org, 218-739-5201
- New Moon Girl Media, www.newmoongirlmedia.com
- Minnesota Women’s Press, www.womenspress.com, 651-646-3968
- TVbyGIRLS, www.tvbygirls.tv, 612-823-1809
- What About Us, www.amamedia.org, 612-376-7715

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¹⁹⁷ Women’s Media Center. “Bias, Punditry, and the Press: Where Do We Go From Here?” 11 September 2009. <http://www.womensmediacenter.com/wmc_publications.html>

¹⁹⁸ Association for Progressive Communications Media Brief. “Cultivating Violence Through Technology: Exploring the Connections Between Information Communication Technologies and Violence Against Women.” 2006. 11 September 2009. <<http://www.genderit.org/en/index.shtml?w=r&x=94942>>

¹⁹⁹ Girls, Women, and Media Project. “What’s the Problem? Facts About Girls, Women, and Media.” 11 September 2009. <<http://www.mediaandwomen.org/problem.html>>

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

GIRLS

We must inspire girls and young women to be strong, smart, and independent. Internationally, there is a widespread “son preference” and in many places female infanticide is prevalent. Girl children often die because they are given less food, poor or no medical attention, and less education than boys. In Minnesota, girls are more fortunate but still face unequal treatment and receive inadequate help.

KEY FACTS

- For girls ages 8-12, aspirations after high school are largely educational and professional: 93% for college education; 76% for a career; 67% for marriage; and, 63% for children.²⁰² In Minnesota, 59.6% of girls respond that they want to go to college and another 31.3% respond that they want to go to both college and graduate school.²⁰³
- The more physically active girls are, the greater their self-esteem and the more satisfied they are with their weight, regardless of how much they weigh. Eighty-three percent of very active girls say that physical activity makes them feel good about themselves. Many girls ages 11–17 say they do not play sports because they do not feel skilled or competent (40%) or because they do not think their bodies look good (23%).²⁰⁴
- A daughter's dissatisfaction with her weight is greater if her mother is also dissatisfied with her own weight, in spite of how much a daughter actually weighs.²⁰⁵
- In 2007, 48.1% of Minnesota 12th grade girls were sexually active and each day approximately 20 adolescents became pregnant. Pregnancy rates per thousand for 15-19 year old Minnesota girls are 18% for white, 49.8% for Asian/Pacific Islander, 107.6 for American Indian, 68.4% for African American, and 114.6% for Hispanic/Latina girls.²⁰⁶
- The average age of recruitment into prostitution is 12-14.²⁰⁷
- In a 2008 study, 90% of girls reported experiencing sexual harassment at least once. Specifically, 67% of girls reported receiving unwanted romantic attention, 62% were exposed to demeaning gender-related comments, 58% were teased because of their appearance, 52% received unwanted physical contact, and 25% were bullied or threatened with harm by a male. 52% of girls also reported receiving discouraging gender-based comments on math, science, and computer abilities, usually from male peers, and 76% of girls reported sexist comments on their athletic abilities, again predominantly from male peers.²⁰⁸

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Enforce Title IX and bring gender and multicultural equity and awareness to every aspect of schooling.
- Fund and support community, family, and youth-serving agencies addressing the special concerns of girls.
- Offer support services to reclaim young women from prostitution and reacclimatize them into society.
- Encourage magazine editors to use advertisers featuring a diversity of female models.
- Promote responsible adolescent pregnancy prevention including comprehensive sexuality education.
- Support girls as leaders and advocates for themselves; be a mentor to a girl and encourage her to take risks.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

➤ Children's Law Center, www.clcmn.org, 651-644-4438

²⁰² Girl Scouts of the USA. “Education.” 11 September 2009.

<http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts_findings/education.asp

²⁰³ Women's Foundation of Minnesota. “Status of Girls in Minnesota.” 2008. 11 September 2009.

<<http://www.wfmn.org/StatusofGirlsResearch.shtml>>

²⁰⁴ Girl Scouts of the USA. “Sports and Physical Activity.” 11 September 2009.

<http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts_findings/sports_and_physical_activity.asp>

²⁰⁵ Girl Scouts of the USA. “Physical and Mental Health.”

<http://www.girlscouts.org/research/facts_findings/physical_and_mental_health.asp>

²⁰⁶ Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, and Parenting. “2009 Minnesota Adolescent Sexual Health Report.” 2009. <<http://www.moapp.org/index.html#publications>>

²⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. “Child Prostitution.” 11 September 2009.

<<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/ceos/prostitution.html>>

²⁰⁸ Leaper, Campbell and Christia Spears Brown. “Perceived Experiences with Sexism Among Adolescent Girls.” *Child Development* 79:3 (2009): 685-704.

- Foundation IX, www.foundationix.org, 763-442-0051
- Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys, www.girlscoutsrv.org, 651-227-8835
- Girls Coalition of Minnesota, www.mngirls.org, 651-267-3506
- Girls International Forum, www.girlsforum.org, 651-645-3636
- Laura Jeffrey Academy Charter School, www.laurajeffreyacademy.org, 651-290-7683
- Minnesota African Women's Association, www.mawanet.org, 612-588-7666
- Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, and Parenting, www.moapp.org
- New Moon Girl Media, www.newmoongirlmedia.com
- Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, www.tuckercenter.org, 612-625-7327
- TVbyGIRLS, www.tvbygirls.tv, 612-823-1809
- West Suburban Teen Clinic, www.wstcmn.org, 952-474-3251
- What About Us, www.amamedia.org, 612-376-7715
- Women's Foundation of Minnesota, www.wfmn.org
- Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, www.womenofwise.org, 651-646-3268
- YWCA of Minneapolis, www.ywcampls.org, 612-332-0501
- YWCA of St. Paul, www.ywcaofstpaul.org, 651-222-3741

WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Beijing Platform notes that “as consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators... women have taken the lead in promoting an environmental ethic, reducing resource use, and reusing/recycling resources... Women, especially indigenous women, have knowledge of ecological linkages and fragile ecosystem management.” Beijing delegates also recognized that “economic development, social development, and environmental protection are interdependent.” Women continue to suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation and are underrepresented in environmental decision-making.

KEY FACTS

- A recent study found that one in three women have harmful inorganic mercury levels in their blood.²⁰⁹ In women, mercury can contaminate breast milk and damage the brain, spinal cord, kidney, liver and heart. It may also contribute to multiple sclerosis, infertility, breast cancer, and fibromyalgia.²¹⁰
- For 85% of women who get breast cancer, there is no known risk category, genetic or lifestyle. Meanwhile, the incidence of breast cancer continues to climb so that now 1 in 8 American women is expected to be diagnosed with the disease. More and more, researchers are linking common household products and industrial emissions to the disease.²¹¹
- Over the last several years, scientific studies have shown a correlation between health problems in nail salon workers—generally women—and daily exposure to chemicals in nail products. Three chemicals of particular concern are toluene, formaldehyde and dibutyl phthalate, nicknamed the “toxic trio.” One study found that manicurists had levels of DBP in their bodies two-times higher than that of the general population.²¹²
- Women, as the majority of the world’s poor, are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.²¹³
- In the U.S., Hurricane Katrina pushed poor African-American women, who were already the most impoverished group in the nation, into deeper levels of poverty.²¹⁴
- In Senegal, the 35 percent decline in rainfall has made it more difficult for women to collect water.²¹⁵

POSSIBLE ACTION

- Increase women’s access to education and participation in environmental decision-making, as managers, scientists, implementers and evaluators of environmental projects, as well as producers, and consumers.
- Encourage using women’s knowledge such as traditional medicine, biodiversity, and indigenous technologies.
- Reduce risks to women from environmental hazards in their homes, communities, and workplaces.
- Support women’s equal access to safe water, sustainable, and affordable energy technologies such as wind and solar, and women’s consumer initiatives by promoting organic food, recycling, and product labeling.
- Increase screening and intervention/reduction of lead in homes, especially low-income families.

RELATED MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- DES Action Minnesota, www.desaction.org, 763-757-0693

²⁰⁹ Environment News Service. “Mercury Found in Blood of One-Third of American Women.” 2009. 14 September 2009. <<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/sep2009/2009-09-01-092.asp>>

²¹⁰ United Steel Workers: Women of Steel. “Mercury Harms Women, Children.” 14 September 2009. <<http://legacy.usw.org/usw/program/content/2189.php>>

²¹¹ Women’s Voices for the Earth. “Breast Cancer.” 14 September 2009. <<http://www.womenandenvironment.org/toxicshealth/womenhealth/breastcancer/view?searchterm=breast%20cancer>>

²¹² National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance. “Phasing Out the Toxic Trio.” 2009. 14 September 2009. <<http://www.womenandenvironment.org/newsreports/issuereports/>>

²¹³ Women’s Environmental and Development Organization. “Building Alliances, Making Milestones: Annual Report 2008.” 2008. <<http://www.wedo.org/category/learn/library>>

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

- Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates Justice Commission, www.csjstpaul.org, 651-690-7054
- Smitten Kitten, www.smittenkittenonline.com , 612-721-6088
- Women's Environmental Institute of Amador Hill, www.w-e-i.org, 651-583-0705
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, www.wilpfn.org, 651-458-7090

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