IWPR Identifies Best and Worst States for Women’s Economic Status

Ten Year Anniversary of The Status of Women in the States

Tori Finkle

In December, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research released a new briefing paper, The Best and Worst State Economies for Women, which ranks and grades all 50 states and the District of Columbia on indicators of women’s economic progress. The release marked the tenth anniversary of the Status of Women in the States project, and was the sixth biennial update of the report card series.

In this report card, IWPR grades women’s economic success in the states using two composite indices comprised of four indicators each. The Employment and Earnings Composite Index is based on women’s median annual earnings, the earnings ratio between women and men, the percent of women in the labor force, and the percent of women in managerial or professional occupations.

The Economic Policy Environment Composite Index is based on the percent of women with health insurance, the percent of women with a four year college degree or more, the percent of businesses that are women-owned, and the percent of women living above poverty. The best eight jurisdictions for women economically are the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, ... (cont’d on p. 3)

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SPRING/SUMMER 2007

IWPR Gathers Women Leaders to Discuss Policy Priorities

Ashley English

Following the Congressional shift in power in the 2006 mid-term elections, leaders of women’s organizations met to discuss the political openings the new leadership might provide to moving women’s opportunities forward. As many women celebrated Nancy Pelosi’s swearing in as the first woman Speaker of the House in the history of the nation and as women ascended to the chairs of Congressional committees, IWPR, with the support of the General Motors Foundation, gathered women leaders from around the country to develop a strategic list of women’s priorities.

On December 9-10, 2006, working with a steering committee of several women leaders, IWPR gathered approximately 30 women leaders at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD, to brainstorm and generate substantive ideas for how the women’s movement could inform Congressional priorities in the short- and long-terms. As the women leaders began their retreat, many focused on women’s crucial roles as voters to suggest that women have the ability to change the course of public policy debates in the United States. Ellie Smeal, President of the Feminist Majority Foun... (cont’d on p. 4)
The momentum to increase the availability of paid time off from work to take care of one’s own health and the health of family members is growing. My last column in the fall of 2006 noted that San Francisco voters were expected to approve the first policy in the nation to require employers to provide a modest number of paid sick days each year. The ballot referendum did indeed pass last November and the City has already begun to implement the new requirement. Many other cities and states are exploring similar policies and the Healthy Families Act, a federal bill to establish a national labor standard of seven paid sick days per year, days which could also be used to take care of family members’ health care needs, is being considered in the US Congress this year (see p. 5).

Avid readers of the IWPR newsletter surely know all about the paid sick days campaign and the key role IWPR research is playing in educating policy makers and the public alike. Throughout the nation as a whole, nearly half of non-federal workers lack the right to even a single day off with pay in the event of their own illness. IWPR’s analysis of data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that in industries like food service, fully 82 percent of workers lack access to pay when sick—with predictable and sickening public health consequences.

A serious illness of some length or ordinary life events, like the birth of another child, can often spell financial disaster for families. Those of us who do receive pay when ill or have paid maternity and parenting leaves probably do not spend much time thinking about how hard it would be if we didn’t have them. Many families must exhaust their savings and are sometimes driven into bankruptcy not only by the loss of income due to illness but also by high medical bills. Prior to the 1996 welfare reform, low-income women often moved between work and welfare, using welfare as a safety net between jobs, when family care needs called them away from work. I fear this safety net is much less available than it used to be. What are families living near the margins doing now when their jobs don’t provide these basic benefits?

Social insurance to the rescue! As it turns out very few US employers provide extended paid leaves for illness or family care, so many higher paid workers also need such benefits. Social insurance is a way to spread the costs of these ordinary, yet relatively rare events, across all workers and employers. No single worker or employer is stuck with the high cost of such an event, because all contribute to the cost equally. Five states already require social insurance plans lasting up to a year for illnesses (California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island); childbirth is covered by these plans and the typical mother receives benefits for about eight weeks. One state (California) has added social insurance for family care leaves of up to six weeks. In these states, workers and/or employers pay modest premiums and the plan provides partial wage replacement when a worker must be absent from work for any of the covered reasons.

Senators Christopher Dodd (D-Connecticut) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) are seeking to create a national plan that would provide similar wage replacement to workers for up to eight weeks per year for their own illness or to take care of an ill family member or a newly born or adopted child. Called the Family Leave Insurance Act of 2007, it was introduced on June 21, and few Americans are likely aware of its existence. Despite the lack of fanfare, their bill is truly path breaking. As a first, but important step, this bill would cover about half the workforce (workers who have worked at least one year for an employer with 50 or more workers) and would provide income replacement for all the reasons protected in the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. The proposed premium is modest, 0.2 percent of wages paid by both the worker and the employer. Employers and workers at smaller firms and the self-employed could participate at half the premium cost. The proposed benefit structure is progressive, with a higher proportion of incomes being replaced at lower earnings levels. A plan such as this would bring paid family care leaves to the millions of workers who currently lack such benefits at places like the “big box” stores as well as at the myriad of mid- and large-sized employers who also don’t currently provide such benefits.

It’s time for the United States to join the rest of the world in ensuring a reasonable income stream in the face of life’s risks.
Minnesota, Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Colorado. In contrast, Arkansas, Louisiana, West Virginia, Mississippi, Kentucky, Montana, Tennessee, and New Mexico are the worst states for women.

In addition to providing grades and rankings by state, the report shows that on a national basis, while women have made progress in some areas, their progress has declined or is stalled in others. For example, while a growing proportion of women have earned four-year college degrees (26.5 percent of women over the age of 25 had a Bachelors degree in 2005 compared with 22.8 percent in 2000), the share of women without health insurance has increased in 43 states since 2002 and the share of women in poverty increased in 15 states between 1995 and 2005.

Earnings data continue to tell a conflicting story as well. Although the earnings gap continued to close slowly in the 50 states (but not the District of Columbia) between 1989 and 2005, the shorter term picture is more distressing, with 15 states actually observing a widening gap between 1999 and 2005. Ultimately, the report finds that it will take another 50 years for women to achieve pay parity with men at the current rate of progress.

The report concludes by offering a number of policy recommendations for legislators and employers for expanding the opportunities available to women throughout the country. Some of these recommendations include ensuring comparable pay for men and women in comparable positions, expanding affordable early education and child care options, and improving family friendliness in the workplace through enhanced paid sick days and longer family care leave policies. The authors also note that existing equal employment opportunity laws and other labor laws must be enforced in schools and places of employment in order to ensure women an equal chance at economic success.

IWPR released the Best and Worst State Economies for Women at a press conference on Wednesday, December 20, 2006, at the National Press Club. Panelists for the event included President of IWPR, Dr. Heidi Hartmann; IWPR Director of Poverty, Education, and Social Justice Programs, Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever; and Washington Area Women’s Foundation President Ann Mosle, while IWPR Director of Democracy and Society Programs Dr. Amy Caiazzo moderated. Dr. Hartmann elaborated on the findings of the report and its implications for women around the country, while Dr. Jones-DeWeever and Ms. Mosle shared policy options for improving women’s economic status and moving state and local economies forward. Ms. Mosle specifically focused on successes and challenges to women’s economic well-being in the District of Columbia. News of the report release was covered in the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Business Journal, the Pacific Business News, the public radio program Marketplace, as well as a number of local papers around the country. IWPR is currently partnering with state and local organizations to provide state-level briefing papers on women’s economic status.

The study was authored by IWPR President Dr. Heidi Hartmann and researchers Olga Sorokina and Erica Williams.
In addition, the women leaders identified some disturbing trends from the recent election cycle. For example, while women clearly played an important role in the elections, minority women did not make any gains in office holding at the Congressional level this cycle.

Over the course of the weekend, four key themes also emerged. First, the women leaders agreed to work to put a woman’s face on many of the issues discussed by providing real examples of the ways issues affect women. Second, the group was enthusiastic about the minimum wage, returning to it many times over the weekend. Third, the group felt strongly about the issue of the Iraq budget drain. Finally, the group expressed a great deal of concern about affirmative action following the defeat of the Michigan affirmative action ballot initiative. In the future, the group plans to strategize about ways to overcome misleading initiative language (in Michigan, voters in favor of affirmative action had to vote against the affirmative action initiative) and to mobilize women leaders and voters.

Since meeting in December, the groups have already seen some early successes. First ever hearings were held on the Healthy Families Act in February. The minimum wage passed the House in the first 100 days of the session and passed the Senate in May as well. Women’s groups were also invited to testify at hearings on equal pay in April. The Joint Economic Committee expects to hold several hearings on women’s economic issues over the next few months. While there is much work left to be done, the group members are excited about their early successes and look forward to continuing to work together to turn women’s desires for change into action.
Hartmann Testifies in Senate on Need for Paid Sick Days

Elisabeth Crum

On Tuesday February 13th, panelists and US Senators braved the wintry District weather to participate in a hearing on the Healthy Families Act, which would require employers to provide a minimum of seven paid sick days. The hearing was sponsored by the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and included testimony by Dr. Heidi Hartmann, IWPR president. Hartmann’s testimony centered on an IWPR study that found employers would save an estimated nine billion dollars through reduced employee turnover if they implemented paid sick days.

During the hearing’s question and answer period, Dr. Hartmann pointed out that mandating paid sick days would reduce wage inequality between men and women. With greater availability of sick leave, women, who are often primary caregivers for children and the elderly, would be able to take time to care for themselves or a family member without the fear of losing their jobs. This would help retain their jobs, increase their job tenure, and become eligible for seniority-based wage increases and promotions, which would help to narrow the wage gap.

Dr. Jody Heymann presented statistics that showed that although the United States is among the top 20 most competitive economies in the world, it is the only country on that list without paid family leave. She said that 145 countries provide such leave and that 100 of them provide a month or more paid sick leave for employees. Senator Bernie Sanders (VT) seemed most impressed with the international comparison data, while Senator Sherrod Brown (OH) asked about the data on cost savings.

The hearing was well attended by ACORN members and representatives of various women’s groups. All the Senators and witnesses spoke in favor of paid sick days, but one witness and several Senators expressed concern that the policy would cost too much and drive away business. The record was left open so that further questions could be addressed by the witnesses.

IWPR Co-Hosts Opting Out? Book Launch

Krystal Lechner

In May, at the invitation of Representative Carolyn Maloney of New York and Representative Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, IWPR joined with Workplace Flexibility 2010 and Hunter College of the City University of New York to launch long-time IWPR member Pamela Stone’s new book Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home. The event brought together experts to discuss the roots and impact of the ‘opting out’ phenomenon. Dr. Pamela Stone voiced the need for ‘stay’ policies to replace the current ‘leave’ policies that provide little choice for women in the workplace.

Based on numerous personal interviews, Dr. Stone found that many professional women are not opting out; instead the lack of flexible workplace policies are, in fact, forcing women out of the workplace. Dr. Heidi Hartmann, President of the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, presented research illustrating the long-term earnings gap that results from such inequities in the labor market. In a rallying cry for policy change, Maloney thanked professors Stone and Reimers, IWPR, and Workplace Flexibility 2010 for their hard work, and promised to use their findings to fight for stronger legislation. The event concluded with a reception and book signing, which provided attendees with the opportunity to engage with one another and to informally discuss strategies for change.

In addition to Dr. Hartmann and Representative Maloney, speakers included: Dr. Pamela Stone, Associate Professor of Sociology, Hunter College and Graduate Center, CUNY; Dr. Cordelia Reimers, Professor Emerita of Economics, Hunter College and Graduate Center, CUNY; Katie Corrigan, Co-Director Workplace Flexibility 2010, Georgetown University Law Center.
IWPR Releases New Findings Identifying Challenges of Gulf Coast Women

By Jill Hindenach

On June 22, the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) held a Congressional Briefing in conjunction with the National Council of Women's Organizations to release IWPR's most recent research on women in the Gulf Coast and their struggles and resilience following Hurricane Katrina. Entitled Women in the Wake of the Storm: Examining the Post-Katrina Realities of the Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, the research details the results of a series of semi-structured one-on-one and small group interviews held with a diverse cross-section of women who returned to the Gulf Region after the hurricanes. The findings show that women are still facing special challenges to their health, safety, and economic well-being in the lingering aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The study, funded by Soroptimist International of the Americas, uncovers many parallels between the experiences of the women of the Gulf Coast and women around the world who are also impacted by disasters. Just like their counterparts internationally, women impacted by Hurricane Katrina face special challenges in rebuilding their lives. Many have found it particularly difficult to reenter the workforce due to the dearth of child care facilities. Others have found themselves largely shut out of more lucrative employment in non-traditional fields due to blatant hiring discrimination. Still others face threats to their safety and well-being after making the difficult choice to return to known abusers in order to meet severe housing needs. Some have met unforeseen dangers related to their need to offset steep housing costs by sharing living quarters with extended family, friends, and acquaintances. The resulting overcrowding has caused some to unwittingly put themselves or their children within easy reach of a heretofore unknown physical or sexual abuser. At the briefing, Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever, author of the IWPR report asked that we not forget these women and the tragedy that was Katrina. She pointed out that while it's easy for most of us to move on with our lives nearly two years following the tragedy, many of those who call the Gulf home, just don't have that luxury.

Other speakers included Leigh Wintz, Executive Director of Soroptimist International of the Americas, Melanie Campbell, Executive Director of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, and Joan Kuriansky, Executive Director of Wider Opportunities for Women. Each woman discussed how their organizations had reached out to the women of the Gulf Coast and what they're doing now to help make lives better. The moderator of the briefing, Susan Scanlan, chair of the National Council of Women's Organizations, brought some of her own family's experiences with post-Katrina conditions to the podium. She called the post-disaster conditions in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast “third world” and called on our leaders to take more aggressive action in responding to the multitude of needs that remain unfulfilled. The research released follows suit by suggesting that policymakers need to take proactive steps in paying special attention to the needs of women in the current process of rebuilding and restoration and in planning for how best to respond to future disasters.

The executive summary of Women in the Wake of the Storm is available now at iwpr.org.

IWPR Paper Addresses Family-Friendly Workplace Policies for Economic Policy Institute Project

By Elisabeth Crum

On May 24, Dr. Heidi Hartmann spoke at a forum sponsored by The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) focusing on family-friendly national work policy recommendations. EPI organized the forum as part of an ongoing project to develop an agenda for shared prosperity. Drs. Heidi Hartmann, Ariane Hegewisch, and Vicky Lovell wrote An Economy that Puts Families First to outline policies for a family friendly workplace and society based on IWPR's ongoing research. In her remarks, Dr. Hartmann noted that the current system has several problems including little or no paid sick or family care leave, expensive child care, pay inequity, and heavy burdens on primary caregivers.

Dr. Hartmann pointed to the need for subsidized child care, more flexibility in jobs, and paid sick leave. Previous IWPR research shows that offering paid sick leave actually saves employers money through improved retention and reduced spread of illness within the workforce. Policy recommendations also focused on the burdens felt by younger workers who become primary care givers to either children or older parents. The recommendations are based on analysis of current data on US policies as well as comparisons with European countries where suggested system elements are already in place. The paper is available at iwpr.org.
Throughout history, women's movements have been most successful when united by common goals and a collective vision. Second-wave feminism relied most heavily on a rights-based approach to women's equality. But in recent years, some advocates for women have argued that we need to expand our language and vision for women's organizing, moving beyond the language of rights to incorporate ideas about mutuality, connectedness, and community.

IWPR’s recent work on women’s values is designed to facilitate this thinking and to encourage dialogue among women from diverse racial, ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds about the focus of women’s organizing. In addition to a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups, a central part of this work is our Working Group on Women’s Public Vision, which is developing innovative ways of talking about women’s lives and concerns.

On December 13, 2006, IWPR brought together the Working Group, which is composed of women from women’s movements, secular social justice movements, and religious community organizing groups, for its third full meeting. In collaboration with the Working Group, IWPR is developing a statement on women’s values, which will be used to influence the language and priorities of public debate around policies and practices to empower women. The goal of the statement is to provide a language for speaking to both religious and non-religious progressive women from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.

Participants at the December meeting also had the opportunity to hear about exciting work going on internationally through an organization called Religions for Peace. Jacqueline Ogega, Director of the organization’s Women’s Program, spoke of her experiences working within the patriarchal structures of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam for the inclusion and participation of women as leaders around social justice, first in her native country of Kenya and now from the New York offices of Religions for Peace.

As part of IWPR’s ongoing work on women’s values, the Working Group will be developing workshops designed to convene women from different organizing backgrounds to develop collaborative agendas and strategies for advocacy in their communities. These workshops will take place over the next two years.

Jamillah Karim, Jacqueline Ogega, Shireen Mitchell, Dr. Marha Burk, Dr. Amy Caiazza and Afeefa Syeed discuss how the Women’s Public Vision Statement should guide practice.
Dr. Marianne Ferber

In honor of our twentieth anniversary, IWPR would like to spotlight a woman who embodies the theme “we’ve come a long way.” Born in Czechoslovakia then immigrating to Canada and finally to the United States, Dr. Marianne Ferber has indeed come a long way in her life.

Dr. Ferber earned her doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1954. Dr. Ferber was first hired one semester at a time to teach economics classes. She was fortunate to teach at a time when the G.I. bill brought many new students to college. She was eventually hired on as an assistant professor and taught at the University of Illinois for 38 years, of which she also spent as the director of the Women’s Studies Program.

Dr. Ferber is also a founding member and former president of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE). Renowned as one of the leading feminist economists, Dr. Ferber has pioneered many studies relating to women and work. In the 1970’s, Dr. Ferber was a member of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession as well as an active member of the League of Women Voters.

Even in retirement Dr. Ferber continues to remain active, editing economics textbooks and publishing articles in journals as well as serving on several editorial boards and actively participating in numerous economics associations including the American Economics Association. She is also still active with the Women and Gender in Global Perspective department at the University of Illinois.

Dr. Ferber would like to see more women economics majors and she is also concerned about the persistence of occupational segregation. She hopes that IWPR will continue to make policy recommendations that help women achieve equality.

Elisabeth Crum

IWPR’s Status of Women in the States Project Informs Pay Equity Legislation Across the Country

Jill Hindenach

Over the past ten years, IWPR’s The Status of Women in the States project has become a leading source of analysis of women’s status across the country. IWPR has produced individual reports on women’s status in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as biennially updated reports on national trends. These reports have inspired both state and national legislatures to take action in a variety of ways to better the status of women in the states.

Since the year 2000, a number of state-level pay equity bills citing IWPR’s research have been proposed. In 2001, The Vermont Commission on Women proposed an Equal Pay Protection Bill and Employment Practices Bill as ways to close the wage gap in Vermont. Four years later, on April 19, 2005, the Unlawful Employment Practices Bill was passed, protecting women and people of color from termination when trying to discover differences in salaries and compensation rates for equal work with male, white co-workers. The Vermont Livable Wage Campaign worked in coalition with the Vermont Commission on Women, Business & Professional Women, and others to push this bill forward.

In 2002, The Tennessee Council on the Economic Status of Women used IWPR’s report data to argue for living wage legislation and funds for non-traditional jobs for women. Two years later, on June 17, 2004, Governor Phil Bredesen signed the Equal Pay Remedy and Enforcement Act into law. The new legislation increased the penalty for violations of equal employment laws and called for the Economic Council on Women to conduct an Equal Pay Study to help combat wage disparities. According to the Economic Council, these measures placed Tennessee among the top states in the nation in promoting fair employment practices.

In 2005, the Status of Women in Iowa report informed bill SF88, which provided that a person or employer shall not discriminate in providing compensation for work of comparable worth between jobs predominately held by women and men. The bill defined “comparable worth” as being the value of work as measured by the skill, responsibility, and working conditions involved in performing the work. Though the bill has not passed, the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women has continued to propose pay equity legislation along with other bills addressing women’s needs to their General Assembly each year.

This year, IWPR’s Status of Women in the States research and other resources on the Gender Wage Ratio have informed three bills focused on pay equity and women’s economic status. In March, IWPR was cited in a Montana House Joint Resolution requesting an interim study of and recommendations for strategies to address the economic conditions for women in Montana, including Native American women. In April in Delaware, IWPR was cited in House Concurrent Resolution No. 21 (Encouraging Delaware Employers to Give Equal Pay for Equal Work) and Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever was quoted on Delaware’s wage gap within the resolution. Finally, IWPR’s wage gap statistics are cited in the Fair Pay Act of 2007: a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to prohibit discrimination in the payment of wages on account of sex, race, or national origin, and for other purposes. The bill is sponsored by Tom Harkin (D-IA) and cosponsored by senators from 11 other states.

IWPR’s research has been bringing attention to women’s needs for 20 years. Along with that attention, change has come in many forms. Part of the Status of Women in the States’ mission is to highlight remaining obstacles facing women in the United States and to encourage policy changes designed to improve women’s status. It is heartening to see that encouraging citizens and keeping them informed has led to positive changes in communities, families, and individual lives.
Over past year, IWPR has continued to serve as a leading source of information on older women’s economic security through two projects funded by the Ford Foundation. In the fall, IWPR worked in partnership with the National Council of Women’s Organizations (NCWO) to produce and disseminate materials on older women’s economic security to ensure that women’s concerns are addressed in on-going debates about shifts in retirement systems and public discussions about Social Security reform. As part of this effort, IWPR produced state fact sheets on the economic situation of older women and men in California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia, as well as a national fact sheet. The fact sheets use data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey to provide state and national level estimates of sources of income for men and women in the retirement years. They also include data on poverty rates and family income by race, ethnicity, and gender.

Findings from IWPR’s fact sheets reveal that Social Security remains crucial for ensuring economic security among seniors, and especially senior women. While nearly nine out of ten men and women aged 65 and older currently receive Social Security benefits, older women remain disproportionately vulnerable to financial hardship, as the majority of older women in America (57 percent) live alone and less than one-third (29 percent) receive income from pensions. In addition, older women of color have the highest poverty rates among men and women of all racial/ethnic groups, and are much more likely to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) government assistance.

IWPR’s future work in this area will examine how Social Security can be improved to better account for women’s contributions to both the workforce and family life. IWPR recently secured funding from the Ford Foundation to study Social Security reforms. Attempts to privatize Social Security have encouraged greater examination of the program through a gendered lens. Over the next two years, IWPR will produce several policy briefs and gather experts in the field to educate women leaders about alternative proposals for Social Security reform that can address the need to make benefits more useful for today’s families. IWPR will convene women leaders from various sectors to work with expert advisors in an effort to develop a consensus about needed reforms. The group will examine reform proposals such as earnings sharing, caregiving credits, higher minimum benefits, and improved spousal and survivor benefits. It is anticipated that the resulting policy briefs will inform policymakers’ future efforts to modernize and strengthen Social Security for women.

Venture Grantees Meet to Discuss Strategies for Linking Economic Development and Child Care

In May, the Linking Economic Development and Child Care Project (a collaboration of IWPR, Cornell University, the Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center, and the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance) convened recipients of the 2006 Venture Grants. Grantees shared innovative state and local strategies for utilizing economic development approaches toward expanding quality child care.

For more information on this project go to IWPR’s website at www.iwpr.org/Work/Research_work.htm.
Making News on the Wage Gap

- *The Nation* and *Marketplace Radio* quoted Dr. Heidi Hartmann on the wage gap
- *The Christian Science Monitor* quoted Dr. Vicky Lovell
- Dr. Heidi Hartmann and Dr. Amy Caiazza appeared on *Ohio Tonight*

Status of Women in the States

- *Marketplace Radio* interviewed Dr. Heidi Hartmann on the best and worst state economies in the United States
- *The Detroit Free Press* quoted Erica Williams on the status of women in Michigan
- *The Shreveport Times* (LA) and *Arizona Daily Star* cited *The Best and Worst State Economies for Women*

Poverty, Welfare and Income Security

- *The Los Angeles Times* quoted Dr. Heidi Hartmann on women’s economic security
- *Ms. Magazine* quoted Dr. Heidi Hartmann on women and tax laws
- *The Chattanooga Times Free Press* (TN) and *The Sun-Sentinel* (FL) quoted Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever on women’s poverty and welfare

Research on the Need for Paid Sick Days

- *The New York Times* and *Dow Jones Newswire* quoted Dr. Vicky Lovell on paid sick days

**Experts Meet to Discuss Wage Discrimination Remedies**

*Ashley English*

In November, staff from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research including Dr. Heidi Hartmann, Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever, Mary Kuntz (law student intern), Ashley English, Abeer Amin (intern) and Dr. Evelyn Murphy, former Lt. Governor of Massachusetts and Director of the Boston-based Wage Project met with legal practitioners, researchers, and business people with experience in discrimination issues in the workplace to discuss a new project on the effectiveness of consent decrees in changing employers’ behavior. Yvonne Jackson, IWPR Board Member and retired HR executive, also attended.

Consent decrees are commonly used to change discriminatory employment practices, but little is known about the lasting effects these agreements have on American workplaces. The new study, funded by the Ford Foundation, will examine whether or not consent decrees are effective over time. If they are found to be effective, the study will also explain what makes a consent decree successful.

During lively discussion in Boston, participants provided the project teams from IWPR and the Wage Project with information to help direct the study. Over the course of the day, the group discussed ways to make consent decrees successful, ways to measure the effectiveness of consent decrees, ways to gain access to the major players in consent decree negotiations, and ways to ask questions during interviews about consent decrees.

The meeting was ably moderated by Susan Maze-Rothstein, a law professor at Northeastern University and former Administrative Law Judge. With the participants eager to discuss their experiences and Ms. Maze-Rothstein’s excellent facilitation skills, all of the day’s participants walked away feeling as though they had learned a great deal from each other. Staff from IWPR and the Wage Project have implemented many of the day’s suggestions as they have selected cases to research.
IWPR’s research, education, and outreach activities are funded and supported primarily by foundations, organizations, and individuals. The Institute is grateful for the support of the following organizations: Soroptimist International of the Americas and the Ms. Foundation for continued work on the status of women in the Gulf Coast who were affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; The Ford Foundation for IWPR’s work on sex and race discrimination in the workplace, paid family leave and job equality, interfaith activism, and older women’s economic security; The Annie E. Casey Foundation for IWPR’s work on job quality, welfare, and poverty; The American Rights at Work for a study on women in the workplace; The Economic Policy Institute and The National Partnership for Women and Families for support of our work/family research; The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Annie E. Casey Foundation for IWPR’s work on child care; The National Institute for Early Education for our work on preschool expansion cost estimates; The Russell Sage Foundation and AARP for IWPR’s collected volume on women in retirement; The Berger-Marks Foundation and The Sister Fund for IWPR’s work on women’s activism and faith and feminism; The Women’s Foundation of Minnesota and The Black Women for Black Girls Giving Circle for work on the status of girls; The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Ohio State University, The Summit County Department of Community & Economic Development, Women’s Endowment Fund of Akron, The Women’s Fund of Central Ohio, The Nokomis Foundation, New York Women’s Foundation, Indiana Commission for Women, and The Alliance for Women (South Carolina) for IWPR’s work on the Status of Women in the States; The Sunrise Foundation for increasing IWPR’s visibility; The Ford Foundation, Ms. Foundation, General Motors Foundation and New Directions Foundation for general support.

This report examines women’s employment and earnings and the economic policy environments in which they live. It lays out the overall best and worst states for women economically in 2006 and highlights that, despite women’s quick-paced progress in some areas, fair compensation continues to elude them.

**December 2006, IWPR No. R334, 28 pages, $10**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Women in the Wake of the Storm: Examining the Post-Katrina Realities of the Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast

By Avis Jones-Deweever

This new research by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) finds that women face special challenges to their health, safety, and economic well-being in the lingering aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The study, funded by Soroptimist International of the Americas, uncovers several parallels between the experiences of women here and women around the world in the wake of natural disasters.

**June 2007, IWPR No. D479, 8 pages, available at iwpr.org**
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