In a very exciting development on the Social Security front, the Vice President, as part of his presidential campaign, has proposed adding a caregiving credit to Social Security. Any parent of a child under five would get a caregiving credit of up to $16,500 per year, provided they earned less than that amount. Those who earned that amount or more would not be eligible; those earning less would have their earnings "topped up" to $16,500 for the purpose of calculating their retirement and other benefits. Such a credit would be the first explicit acknowledgment of caregiving in the Social Security system not tied to the earnings of a spouse.

"Any parent of a child under five would get a caregiving credit of up to $16,500 per year. . ."
As I write, Women’s History Month is ending. It seems an appropriate time to reflect on the women’s movement’s agenda and how we can best carry on the legacy of our feminist foremothers. Several years ago, Martha Burk (Center for Advancement of Public Policy and Washington Feminist Faxnet), and I reviewed the Declaration of Sentiments from the 1848 Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, and found that American women had achieved substantial, if not complete, redress for nearly every grievance listed in the Declaration.

Women’s right to vote, the most radical of the demands at the time, was achieved in 1920. Legal rights for married women, the right to own property and earn wages, child custody at divorce, access to higher education, and the recognition of wife battering as criminal have all been achieved. Yet several rights identified in 1848 remain outstanding—to pursue work in all occupations and industries on an equal basis with men, to participate equally in organized religions, to have full representation in law-making bodies, and to be treated equally under the law.

What goals do we set for ourselves in this era? As our foremothers hoped, many more women work outside the home, and new issues of workplace accommodations for parents have come to the fore. Also on the agenda is pay equity, a policy that would raise wages in jobs that are undervalued because they are disproportionately held by women (or minority males). Equal Pay Day, May 11, 2000, established by the National Committee on Pay Equity, is chosen to reflect the number of days into the new year that women have to work to earn as much as men earned in the prior year. (To learn how to get involved, see the National Events Calendar).

Another issue that has emerged since 1848 is the provision of support for poor women with children—welfare. As the United States industrialized, private and local charity became increasingly inadequate. Public support became national policy with the Social Security Act of 1935. Through the Aid to Dependent Children program, children whose families met the eligibility requirements were guaranteed federal funds. In 1996, that guarantee was removed, the states were given more flexibility, and now poor women and children face life-time limits of five years or less. Several organizations are strategizing to raise public awareness of the need for real welfare assistance and the dangers of a limited, state-based approach to welfare. (To find out how you can show your support for this important program, see Around the Network).

Finally, let’s honor the achievements of women leaders from the first wave of feminism by contributing to the Millenium Matching Fund Campaign for the Sewall-Belmont House, a National Historic Landmark on Capitol Hill. An important resource for women’s history, it was Alice Paul’s residence and the headquarters of the National Women’s Party for more than 40 years. The House has an unparalleled collection of original suffrage banners, documents, and photographs and is the only women’s rights historical site chosen by Congress to be part of the Save America’s Treasures Millenium Project to protect our most important historical resources (including the Declaration of Independence). Matching funds totaling $500,000 must be received by September 15, 2000. Contributions are tax deductible; contact (202) 546-1210 or see the website: www.natwomanparty.org.

Heidi Hartmann

Raising the Bar: Union, State and Local Initiatives to Increase Child Care Workers’ Wages

Child care workers are critical to the quality of childhood care and education provided to our children. Yet many child care providers earn less than parking and gas station attendants and do not receive employer-sponsored benefits such as health care. Inadequate compensation contributes to high rates of employee turnover within the field, estimated as high as 40 percent. This is a critical barrier to long-term stable relationships between caregivers and children, which is an important factor for children’s cognitive and emotional development.

Since the 1996 passage of welfare reform, hundreds of thousands of women have entered the work force, creating a substantially increased need for child care and child care providers. This shift has brought attention to the lack of access, affordability and quality standards within the child care industry. Since then, unions and state and local organizations have reinvigorated advocacy efforts to address workers’ compensation as a quality initiative.

In North Carolina, programs including T.E.A.C.H., Smart Start, and W.A.G.E.S. have helped child care workers get additional training and compensation, thus reducing staff turnover and increasing job satisfaction. Since its implementation in 1990, T.E.A.C.H. has been implemented in sixteen states. In Seattle, the Career Ladders program uses public and private funds to raise teachers’ salaries according to seniority and education. In Pennsylvania, Child Care Matters is a coalition of advocacy groups that has implemented a media campaign, a quality child care demonstration project, and an advocacy campaign to lobby for changes in that state’s subsidy and regulatory system.

See Child Care on page 4
The age of information has brought about possibilities and opportunities for communication that could have never before been imagined. Every day, new communities are formed and others are expanded, each one shaped by a particular interest, industry, field or issue. Never before has the women’s movement had such an incredible opportunity to connect, to reach out across race, gender, and class and talk about the issues affecting us.

Since the Institute for Women’s Policy Research launched its website in 1996 (www.iwpr.org) to disseminate research findings and build networks, IWPR has made significant advances in its use of Internet technology. The Internet has become an essential tool, hosting IWPR’s Welfare Monitoring Listserv and enabling researchers and IWPR’s network of educators, policymakers and advocates to share data, strategies and research.

IWPR’s Policy Listserv and Strategy Exchange (PuLSE)

So what is the next step? IWPR invites you to join PuLSE, a new conversation and on-line community that will connect people all over the country around issues affecting women such as child care, Social Security reform, equal pay, family violence and health care. PuLSE will provide up-to-the-minute information on issues, policies, legislation and strategies affecting women and their families.

Building on the network of advocates and scholars involved in IWPR’s report series, Status of the Women in the States, IWPR has just launched the Policy Listserv and Strategy Exchange (PuLSE). The Status of Women in the States reports illustrate that gains in women’s economic, political, and reproductive and health status are far from complete. And in an era of increasing devolution of public policies, new information networks will be essential to strengthen strategies for change.

IWPR aims to make the PuLSE a forum where researchers, advocates and policymakers can find the support, data and strategies they need to work toward pro-woman agendas across the country. We hope that the forum will reach beyond organizations that have traditionally worked on women’s issues and include other activists and researchers whose work affects the everyday lives of women and families throughout the country.

L-R - April Shaw, Research Assistant and Welfare Listserv Co-coordinator, Suzanne McFadden, State Issues Coordinator and PuLSE Coordinator, Anniah Umbrani, Research Fellow and Welfare Listserv Co-coordinator.

Welfare Monitoring Listserv

PuLSE was inspired by the success of IWPR’s Welfare Monitoring Listserv, formed in 1996. This listserv is dedicated to energizing the debate around welfare reform and improving the policy relevance of research by cultivating relationships among individuals interested in welfare reform. By fostering the exchange of data, strategies, and opinions related to the social safety net, income supports, and innovative ideas and programs, IWPR seeks to promote economic well-being for women and families.

Since its implementation, the listserv has grown to include a diverse mix of more than 1,000 individuals, including welfare recipients, researchers, advocates, policymakers, government officials, public and private program administrators, service providers and other interested individuals. The listserv has led to measurable policy outcomes. For example, one participant helped in crafting a local level domestic violence clause:

“I posted a request for information about efforts to monitor implementation of the family violence option and received 10-12 wonderful responses (from) around the country. We used some of the information to draft a proposal to our local Social Services Department for a domestic violence advocate to assist welfare applicants/recipients on site in the (TANF) office in our county.”

IWPR Website

IWPR’s website now receives an average of 25,000 hits per month. Visitors can purchase publications online, make donations and establish or renew memberships. You can also find out about IWPR’s latest press conferences and events, report releases and current projects.

By using the Internet to exchange women-centered policy relevant information, effective strategies will be developed sooner, become more visible and be more widely applied. Please join us as a member of PuLSE and participate in this new and exciting exchange! See enclosed flyer.*
Social Security Reform: Training For The Future

On March 10, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research joined the National Council of Women’s Organizations’ Women and Social Security Project and the Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement to hold a training for leaders and activists from women’s organizations on protecting and strengthening Social Security. Over eighty activists and staff from women’s organizations focused on strategies to raise debate during the current presidential campaign and beyond. As IWPR President Heidi Hartmann said to the crowd,

“The candidates elected this year are going to make the decisions on Social Security reform that will determine the economic security of older Americans for many generations to come.”

As well as providing easy-to-understand information on how Social Security works (and how it should work), the training gave activists ideas on how to get their messages across to the media, their organizations, and the general public. Training manuals prepared for the event are available to IWPR members at the discounted price of $8.00 — just call (202) 785-5100.

Legislative Update:
Unemployment Insurance Reform in Wisconsin

The state of Wisconsin recently adopted legislation to expand unemployment insurance (UI) eligibility in ways that will increase women’s access to UI benefits. The changes allow individuals to receive UI if they leave the workforce because of domestic violence, sexual harassment or difficulty finding child care after a change in work schedule. This shows great leadership on the part of the state of Wisconsin; policymakers from around the country are now looking to the Wisconsin example as a model for their own reforms. IWPR is proud to have worked in consultation with the state of Wisconsin and dozens of state and local advocates on these and other UI reform issues. For information on the UI system in Wisconsin, call Vicky Selkowe at the Institute for Wisconsin’s Future, (414) 384-9094.

Unions, which are key advocates for working families, have also become more involved in child care advocacy. The United Auto Workers, Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, and the Communication Workers of America have all secured some “family funds” to help their members access high quality child care as part of work contracts. In California, the Labor Project for Working Families has formed a coalition of unions and community groups focusing on support for working families with a strong emphasis on child care.

Unionization also significantly increases child care worker wages. In 1999, child care workers in Philadelphia voted to unionize as the United Child Care Providers Association (for family day care providers) and the United Child Care Professionals Association (for center-based providers) within the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees/AFSCME. In Massachusetts, child care workers formed the Child Care Employees Union under the United Auto Workers.

In the coming months, IWPR will be tracking policy initiatives and proposals to increase child care worker wages and training as part of its child care research and technical assistance project. For more information, contact Dr. Stacie Golin, Study Director, at (202) 785-5100.


IWPR researchers Barbara Gault and Stacie Golin spoke as part of a workshop on welfare reform at the Working Women’s Conference and discussed preliminary results from IWPR’s seven-state job training study.

New Releases

Strengthening Social Security for Women: A Report from the Working Conference on Women and Social Security. This 22-page report by IWPR and the NCWO Task Force on Social Security was prepared by Heidi Hartmann (IWPR) and Catherine Hill (IWPR), with Lisa Witter (NCWO). See enclosed flyer for ordering instructions.

On the Hill

On January 11, Heidi Hartmann presented at a briefing for Senate staff on pay equity for women. The briefing was hosted by the National Committee on Pay Equity and Business and Professional Women/USA. On March 2, Dr. Hartmann discussed women and Social Security at a Capitol Hill briefing organized by the National Association of Commissions for Women. Panelists included Susan Molinari and Senator Barbara Boxer. Dr. Hartmann also spoke on women and the minimum wage at a National Council of Women’s Organizations (NCWO) Capitol Hill briefing on January 28. The panel was moderated by Christine Owens, Assistant Director of Public Policy for the AFL-CIO.

In the News

On January 17, Dr. Hartmann was interviewed on the Steve Gorman Radio Show in New Hampshire. Topics included Social Security reform and the New Hampshire event, “Who Wants to Be Our President,” produced by Lifetime Television with the National Council of Women’s Organizations. On March 6, Dr. Hartmann discussed job training for low-income women on NPR’s Marketplace.


Appearances


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the Committee at fairpay@aol.com or at (202) 331-7343.

19 Congressional Staff Briefing. “Pathways to Economic Self-Sufficiency,” sponsored by NCWO’s Economic Security Task Force and Wider Opportunities for Women (NOW), the Ms. Foundation, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. For information, contact Sandi Smith (NOW) at (202) 638-3143 or Anna Wadia (Ms. Foundation) at (212) 742-2300.

June

4 The Ms. Foundation will hold its 10th Institute on Women and Economic Development in Santa Cruz, California. The theme: “Looking Back to Where We’re Going.” Not just another conference or training event! Through a combination of classes, celebrations, and informal discussions, experienced economic development and economic justice practitioners and those new to the field will share their strategies, aspirations, values, and knowledge. For more information, call (212) 742-2300 or visit www.msfoundation.org.

5-9 The 5-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women (“Beijing +5”) will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Beijing +5 is a Special Session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century.” Participants will review progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in Beijing. Email womenwatch@un.org or call (212) 692-0725.

11 Equal Pay Day. Join the National Committee on Pay Equity in organizing or participating in an event in your community or on your campus. Please contact

July

21 Congressional Staff Briefing. The NCWO Economic Security Task Force is holding a briefing titled “Elections: Women’s Vote.” For more information, contact Amy Young at the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, (202) 785-5100.


August

15-17 International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) Istanbul 2000 Conference. IAFFE brings together innovative insights from various disciplines to contribute to the development of feminist approaches to economics. The conference will promote the breakdown of traditional disciplinary barriers in order to understand the economic interrelations and structures that affect the lives of men and women. For information and application, contact Prue Hyman, Women’s Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand. Tel. +64 4 4955285 or +64 4 4721000 ext. 5285, Fax +64 4 4955046, or email Prue.Hyman@vuw.ac.nz

September

26-28 Working Women Network, publisher of Working Mother and Working Women magazines, will host the 4th Annual Work/Family Congress 2000 and CEO Summit at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City. IWPR is pleased to be a Supporting Organization of this event. In its fourth year, this event provides a leading-edge forum for senior management and human resource professionals from around the country. For more information, call (212) 445-6238.
New Releases

Stepping Up to Power: The Political Journey of American Women is a new book by Harriett Woods, published by Westview Press. The author uses her life story to illustrate how women, generally excluded from public life, have been fueled by their passion for social issues and determination to solve local problems. Covering nearly fifty years, Woods candidly discusses the positives and negatives of pivotal events leading to the triumphant moment when women believed they finally had broken through to real political power... See enclosed flyer.

Chicago Women in the Trades has published a new manual for tradeswomen, Tools for Success. The only comprehensive how-to-manual of its kind, Tools for Success provides tips and practical suggestions to help tradeswomen survive and thrive as they go about their daily work. Also, a new study on the conditions that tradeswomen face, Breaking New Ground: WORKSITE 2000, focuses on getting girls and young women interested in non-traditional careers. Tradeswomen of Tomorrow, a youth guide, and a study on affirmative action, Building Equal Opportunity, are also available. See enclosed flyer.

Equal Rights Advocates has released a new report, The Broken Promise: Welfare Reform Two Year Later. Based on focus groups with California welfare recipients, the report reveals that women are not getting the individual treatment they need to move into jobs that will enable them to be self-sufficient. Includes recommendations to the California state legislature, state and county administrators, advocates and the media on making welfare-to-work work. See enclosed flyer.

Announcements

The National Campaign on Jobs and Income, a coalition organized by the Center for Community Change, in which IWPR is a partner, is launching its nationwide campaign on May 6, 2000, in Chicago. Call (202) 342-0567 or visit www.communitychange.org... The "Welfare Made A Difference" National Campaign is collecting personal stories to show the critical importance of income support and is organizing a National Action Day on September 14, 2000. Email www.wmadecampaign@yahoo.com or call (212) 894-8082. These efforts are geared toward making substantial improvements in our national welfare law when it comes up for reauthorization in 2001 and 2002. Get involved!

IWPR General and Project Support

IWPR’s work on women and Social Security reform is supported by the Retirement Research Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the National Council of Women’s Organizations and AARP. IWPR’s project on child care workers’ wages is funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Grants from the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and an anonymous donor support the Institute’s study of job training for low-income women. The Ford Foundation funds the Working Group on Social Indicators, research on work and welfare, and The Status of Women in the States report series. The Annie E. Casey Foundation funds work on unemployment insurance reform. The Commonwealth Fund for Women’s Health, the Ladder Project, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees support smaller projects.

The Open Society Institute, the Ms. Foundation for Women, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Brico Fund, the Avon Products Foundation, an anonymous donor and IWPR’s friends and network members provide general support.
Join the Institute for Women’s Policy Research and help make a difference in the lives of women and families!

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