The Status of Women in Missouri

Highlights

This Research-in-Brief is based on selected findings from The Status of Women in Missouri report, a definitive state-wide analysis on women's socio-economic and political circumstances.

Missouri reflects both the advances and limited progress achieved by women in the United States. While women in Missouri and the United States as a whole are seeing important changes in their lives and their access to political, economic, and social rights, they by no means enjoy equality with men, and they lack many of the legal guarantees that would allow them to achieve it. Women in Missouri, and the nation, would benefit from stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, better political representation, adequate and affordable child care, stronger poverty reduction programs, and other policies that would help improve their status.

Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Missouri is above average, at fifth, for indicators of women’s political participation. It is slightly above average, at 18th, for women’s employment and earnings, and it is near average for women’s health and well-being (at 27th), women’s social and economic autonomy (at 28th), and for women’s reproductive rights, at 28th (see Chart 1).

With average rankings on most indicators of women’s status, women in Missouri still face significant problems that demand attention from policymakers, women’s advocates, and researchers concerned with women’s status. Even the state’s better rankings speak only to the status of its women relative to women in other states: in no state do women do as well as men. Thus, Missouri earns grades of B- in political participation, C+ in employment and earnings, C in health and well-being and reproductive rights, and C- in social and economic autonomy.

Missouri joins Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota as part of the West North Central region. Among these seven states, Missouri is second for women’s political participation and employment and earnings, third for women’s reproductive rights, fifth for social and economic autonomy, and seventh for health and well-being.

Missouri is an average-sized state, with just under 2.9 million women of all ages. In some ways, Missouri’s women are less diverse than the national population, with fewer Asian

Women in Missouri: What’s Promising
- Missouri is one of fifteen states that have both a commission for women and a women’s caucus in both houses of the state legislature.
- As of fall 2002, Missouri was one of the few states with a woman representing it in the U.S. Senate.
- Missouri ranks among the top third of all states for women’s labor force participation.
- While the proportion of women over 25 with a college education increased by 4.2 percentage points in the United States between 1990 and 2000, in Missouri, it increased much more quickly: by 10.5 percentage points.
- Among women who need it, women in Missouri are much more likely than women in the United States to be served by publicly supported family planning clinics.
- Missouri women are much less likely than women in the nation to experience activities limitations due to their health: the state is third among all the states for this indicator.

Women in Missouri: What’s Disappointing
- Less than a quarter of Missouri’s legislature is made up of women.
- Women in Missouri earn just 73 cents for every dollar earned by men.
- Although women’s poverty rates in Missouri are lower than in the United States as a whole, the poverty rate for single women with children in the state is over 42 percent, compared with less than 36 percent in the United States.
- Missouri requires mandatory parental consent for minors seeking abortions and does not extend public funding for abortions for low-income women.
- Missouri ranks among the worst ten states for women’s mortality rates from heart disease and lung cancer.
American, Hispanic, Native American, and foreign-born women than the national average. At the same time, the state is becoming more diverse. In particular, the proportion of the population that is Hispanic has grown over the past decade. A much larger proportion of Missouri’s women live in rural areas than in most states. Women in rural areas face special challenges accessing services (such as domestic violence shelters, health providers, or family planning resources) and in finding employment.

Women in Missouri exemplify both the achievements and shortfalls of women’s progress over the past century. Many Missouri women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status. Still, serious obstacles to their equality remain.

Political Participation
Missouri has a relatively high proportion of women in elected office, ranking tenth in the country. Missouri women also register and vote at rates above average for the country, and they have very high levels of political representation through institutional resources such as a commission for women and a women’s legislative caucus. Consequently, the state ranks fifth in the nation and second in its region on the political participation composite index.

Like most states, Missouri’s performance on indicators of political participation does not approach anything near equality for women. Despite its relatively high ranking for women in elected office, as of fall 2002, women made up only about a quarter of the state legislature and of the state’s Congressional delegation. As a result, Missouri receives a grade of B- for measures of political participation.

Employment and Earnings
Missouri’s ranking on the employment and earnings composite index (18th) reflects scores in the middle third on most of the component indicators of this index. Women in Missouri are more likely to participate in the labor force than women in most states. They earn about the same as women in much of the country, and the level of their earnings disparity compared with men is about average. They are also about as likely as women in the nation as a whole to work in managerial and professional positions. The state’s average performance earns it a C+ for women’s employment and earnings.

Social and Economic Autonomy
Missouri ranks slightly below the middle of all states, at 28th, for women’s social and economic autonomy. Women in the state are somewhat more likely to live above poverty and to have health insurance than women in other states. At the same time, the proportion of businesses owned by women in Missouri is only about average for the country as a whole, and women in Missouri are less likely than women in most states to have a four-year college education, ranking 35th. Missouri has much room for improvement, reflected in its grade of C- for this composite index.

Reproductive Rights
Missouri women lack many of the reproductive rights and resources identified as important, and as a result the state ranks 28 of 51 on the reproductive rights composite index. Poor women in Missouri can receive public funding for abortion only under federally mandated, limited circumstances, and the state lacks mandates for infertility treatments. In addition, only 47 percent of women live in counties with abortion providers. For many women in rural areas, abortion is virtually inaccessible. Because, like most states, Missouri does not guarantee many important reproductive rights, the state receives a grade of C on this composite index.

Health and Well-Being
Overall, women in Missouri experience average health status compared with women in other states. They report relatively few days per month when their activities are limited by their health. They have average mortality rates from breast cancer and incidence rates of diabetes, chlamydia, and AIDS. Missouri’s women, however, also have mortality rates from heart disease, lung cancer, and suicide that fall among the worst third of all states.

Missouri’s national rank of 27th on indicators of health and well-being suggests that while the state ranks higher than many others, it also has room for improvement. As a result, the state receives a C on this composite index.

Women’s Resources and Rights Checklist
The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, heightened awareness of women’s status around the world and pointed to the importance of government action and public policy for the well-being of women. At the conference, representatives of 189 countries, including the United States, unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which pledged their governments to action on behalf of women. The Platform for Action outlines critical issues of concern to women and remaining obstacles to women’s advancement.

Many of the laws, policies, and programs that already exist in the United States meet the goals of the Platform for Action and support the rights of women identified in the Platform. In some ways, women in the United States enjoy access to relatively high levels of gender equality compared with women around the world. In other areas, the United States and many individual states have an opportunity to better support women’s rights.

The Women’s Resources and Rights Checklist, Chart 2, provides an overview of the policies supporting women’s rights.
The publication of the 2002 Status of Women in Wisconsin report stimulated a great deal of media attention and ignited new conversations across the state. Wisconsin women and men clearly believe that Wisconsin women deserve better than a grade of C.

The report opened our eyes and motivated us to begin to plan a better future. Many organizations, businesses, and individuals have been inspired by the report and taken on the challenge to make improvements. Most notable is Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton’s Wisconsin Women Equals Prosperity economic development initiative, a statewide nonpartisan effort to “raise the grade” for all Wisconsin women. This growing movement is creating an understanding of the cost of exclusion and the benefits of inclusion to Wisconsin’s economy; discovering prosperity sources and building solutions, connecting already-powerful groups working to remove barriers, encouraging local and regional solutions and strategies, and awakening and guiding Wisconsin women in fulfilling their economic potential.

Wisconsin is moving from conversation to action. Governor Jim Doyle’s first reaction to Wisconsin Women Equals Prosperity was to lead the way to bolster women-owned businesses. Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager recently ruled that employers that provide access for prescription drugs through health care must include coverage for contraception.

We are making progress, but we also urgently need to have a deeper understanding of the glaring disparities facing women of color. This update uses newly available Census data to deliver a deeper, richer picture of the status of women of color. Summaries of the issues facing women of color appear throughout the report; two of these focus boxes, those on African American and Hmong women in Wisconsin, were contributed by Wisconsin’s advisory committee for the report. The need to effectively address these disparities within the cultural context of each group is critical. Equity does not exist without equality for all women.

Members of the Wisconsin advisory committee also took the opportunity to add a focus on lesbian women in this report. Lesbian women come from every race and social economic background and face unique challenges. Yet they remain largely invisible as a group, because Census data does not adequately track them, nor is it perceived to be safe for lesbian women to document their identity. The result is that lesbian women are largely left out of discussions about the status of women. Yet important public policies affect them in distinct ways.

An incredible group of bright and insightful women from throughout the state acted as the advisory committee for the report and contributed to the focus boxes. I am grateful for their insights, criticism, and dedication to ensure a quality research project. I also appreciate the generous support of the many funders of this update and applaud them for their belief that knowledge equals power.

I hope readers will consider the data and analysis presented here with an open mind, an open heart, and a spirit of determination to improve the status of women for all of us. Fully participating and thriving women will mean a better Wisconsin.

Elaine Maly
Director
Women’s Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Chair, Advisory Committee for The Status of Women in Wisconsin
Member, National Advisory Committee for The Status of Women in the States Project
and the resources available to women in Missouri. This list was derived from ideas presented in the Platform for Action, including the need for policies that help prevent violence against women, promote women's economic equality, alleviate poverty among women, improve their physical, mental, and reproductive health and well-being, and enhance their political power. The rights and resources outlined in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist fall under several categories: protection from violence, access to income support (e.g., through welfare and child support collection), women-friendly employment protections, family leave benefits, legislation protecting sexual minorities, reproductive rights, and institutional representation of women's concerns.

Many of the indicators in Chart 2 can be affected by state policy decisions. As a result, the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist provides a measure of Missouri's commitment to policies designed to help women achieve economic, political, and social well-being. In Missouri, women lack many of the rights on this checklist. The state has adopted ten out of 31 possible policies presented in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist.

* The national rankings are of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states and the District of Columbia, except for the Political Participation indicators, which do not include the District of Columbia. The regional rankings are of a maximum of seven and refer to the states in the West North Central region (IA, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, and SD).

See Appendix II in The Status of Women in Missouri for a detailed description of the methodology and sources used for the indices presented here.

* Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The success of The Status of Women in the States project can be attributed to the many staff members, allied groups, and devoted volunteers involved in producing, publicizing, and applying IWPR’s research.

IWPR’s state partners are a crucial part of The Status of Women in the States project. In 2004, as in previous years, these dedicated women reviewed drafts of their own state’s Status of Women in the States report and took the lead on disseminating its findings. They also served on IWPR’s National Advisory Committee for the project. IWPR’s partners for this report are listed on the inside front cover and on the facing page.

IWPR would also like to thank members of the National Advisory Committee (listed on the facing page) for their support and advice on the design, content, and outreach strategies of The Status of Women in the States project. Thanks also go to members of the project’s Data Advisory Group, including Jared Bernstein, Economic Policy Institute; Jorge del Pinal, U.S. Census Bureau; Roderick Harrison, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; Marlene Kim, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Sonia Perez, National Council of La Raza; Elena Silva, AAUW Educational Foundation; Matthew Snipp, Stanford University; Greg Squires, The George Washington University; and Peter Tatton, Urban Institute. These experts guided us on key decisions about the data and indicators used in this report. Mr. Tatton and the Urban Institute were also commissioned to analyze the original Current Population Survey and Census data used in this report.

We are particularly indebted to those committee members and other experts who reviewed all or parts of draft reports. Kiran Ahuja of the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum, Chorun Asietoyer of the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center, Nicole Mason of the National Women’s Alliance, and Montoya Whiteman of the Native American Rights Fund provided feedback on the section of the reports addressing the reproductive rights of women of color, a new addition to the 2004 reports. Many state and national experts also reviewed IWPR’s state-level analyses of the status of Native American women included in the 2004 series. Nicole Bowman, Bowman Performance Consulting, LLC; Gwen Carr, Minority Business Development Agency, State of Wisconsin; Jacqueline Johnson, National Congress of American Indians; Julie Kane, Office of Legal Counsel, Nez Perce Tribe; Camille Nosland, Native American Liaison/Special Populations Coordinator, North Dakota Coalition on Abused Women’s Services; Carol Sample, Spotted Eagle, Inc.; Diane Sands, Montana Community Foundation; Donna Skenadore, Milwaukee 9 to 5; Matthew Snipp, Stanford University; and Montoya Whiteman, Native American Rights Fund.

We would like to thank the program officers who participated on behalf of our foundation supporters. Michael Larecy of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Joel Stillman and Alan Jenkins of the Ford Foundation, Theresa Fay-Bustillos of the Levi Strauss Foundation, John Kostishack and Elsa Vega-Perez of the Otto Bremer Foundation, and Lisa Guide of the Rockefeller Family Fund. We are also grateful to the AFL-CIO and Merck & Co., Inc. for their support of the national Status of Women in the States report. We would especially like to thank our supporters in the states: the Nokomis Foundation for The Status of Women in Michigan; the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota for The Status of Women of Color in Minnesota; the Women’s Foundation of Montana for The Status of Women in Montana; the Women’s Foundation of Oklahoma for The Status of Women in Oklahoma; and the Women’s Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation for The Status of Women in Wisconsin.

The editors of The Status of Women in the States would also like to thank other staff members involved in the report. Jean Sinzdak, Associate Director of Outreach and Communications, coordinated the work of the National Advisory Committee, IWPR’s state contacts, and content reviewers for the project. A number of IWPR staff members contributed to or wrote draft reports: Ms. Sinzdak, Office Manager Justine Auger, IWPR-George Washington University (GWU) Research Fellow Sarah Benator, Special Assistant to the President Violette Davis, Conference Fellow Liz Mondeville, Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellow and IWPR-GWU Research Fellow Misha Werschul, and Research Program Coordinator Erica Williams. Interns and work-study students Heidi Hatcher, Laura Cederberg, Erin Bunge, Jody Herman, Michele Stillwell-Porvensky, and Sonia Punwani contributed to producing the reports as well. Publications and Communications Assistant Whitney Potter coordinated the production process for the reports. Study Director Dr. Vicky Lovell provided input into the content and drafts of the reports. Dr. Barbara Gault, Director of Research, and Dr. Heidi Hartmann, President and CEO, played many important roles: in addition to providing vision for the project and IWPR as a whole, they contributed to the content and research design, reviewed reports, and wrote draft state reports themselves. We are indebted to all these people for their dedication to the project and to improving the status of women.

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Study Director and Editor, The Status of Women in the States

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Senior Policy Analyst and Editor, The Status of Women in the States

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### Chart 2
Women’s Resources and Rights Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
<th>Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence Against Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri adopted a domestic battery statute complementing assault laws?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri law require domestic violence training of new police recruits and health care professionals?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Police only</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri law prohibit domestic violence discrimination in insurance?¹</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Felony or misdemeanor</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a first stalking offense a felony in Missouri?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri law require sexual assault training for police, prosecutors, and health care professionals?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of single-mother households receiving child support or alimony:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of child support cases with orders for collection in which support was collected:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welfare and Poverty Policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri extend TANF benefits to children born or conceived while a mother is receiving welfare?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri allow receipt of TANF benefits up to or beyond the 60-month federal time limit?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>60-month limit</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri allow welfare recipients at least 24 months before requiring participation in work activities?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri provide transitional child care under TANF for more than 12 months?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri’s TANF plan been certified or submitted for certification under the Family Violence Option or made other provisions for victims of domestic violence?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In determining welfare eligibility, does Missouri disregard the equivalent of at least 50 percent of earnings from a full-time, minimum wage job?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri have a state Earned Income Tax Credit?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum TANF benefit for a family of three (two children) in Missouri, 2001:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$292.00</td>
<td>$379.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment/Unemployment Benefits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Missouri’s minimum wage higher than the federal level as of January 2002?²</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5.15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri have mandatory temporary disability insurance?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri provide Unemployment Insurance benefits to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-wage earners?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers seeking part-time jobs?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers who leave their jobs for certain circumstances (&quot;good cause quits&quot;)?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Other Information of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri implemented adjustments to achieve pay equity in its state civil service?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Leave Benefits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri proposed legislation extending Unemployment Insurance benefits to workers on temporary leave to care for infants and newly adopted children?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 Enacted; 20 Proposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri proposed legislation allowing use of temporary disability insurance to cover periods of work absence due to family care needs?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Enacted; 3 Proposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri have civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri adopted legislation creating enhanced penalties or a separate offense for crimes based on sexual orientation?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Missouri avoided adopting a ban on same-sex marriage?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reproductive Rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri allow access to abortion services:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without mandatory parental consent or notification?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without a waiting period?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri provide public funding for abortions under any or most circumstances if a woman is eligible?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri require health insurers to provide coverage of infertility treatments?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri allow the non-legal parent in a gay/lesbian couple to adopt his/her partner's child?</td>
<td>No case</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 has been tried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri require schools to provide sex education?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Missouri have a commission for women?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Policies</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31 possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Appendix III in *The Status of Women in Missouri* for a detailed description and sources for the items on this checklist.

1 Missouri prevents insurance discrimination based solely on domestic violence. However, this law allows discrimination based on domestic violence in combination with other factors. Therefore it does not prohibit discrimination for all victims of domestic violence.

2 Missouri's minimum wage automatically follows the federal minimum wage level.

3 Missouri's hate crimes law covers sexual orientation and gender identity.

4 Missouri banned same-sex marriage in 1996, but in 1998, the Missouri Supreme Court overturned the 1996 law.

5 Most states that allow such adoptions do so as a result of court decisions. In Missouri, no case has yet been tried.

6 Policies in the "yes" and "no" columns do not add up to 31 because some of Missouri's policies have mixed evaluations and thus fall in the "other" column.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.
ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN’S POLICY RESEARCH

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) is a scientific research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, the economic and social aspects of health care and safety, and women’s civic and political participation.

The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR, an independent, nonprofit organization, also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women’s studies at The George Washington University.

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