



## President Obama Should Take Immediate Administrative Action to Improve the Lives of Women and Families

In his very first days in office, President Obama can take immediate, concrete steps to improve the lives of women and their families and signal our country's renewed commitment to equality and opportunity for all women.

### ➤ **Establish an Office of Early Care and Learning**

President Obama should take immediate steps to establish an Office of Early Care and Learning in the Administration for Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to house the Child Care Bureau and Head Start Bureau.

Currently, the two major federal early childhood programs—the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start—are housed in different sections of HHS. The Child Care Bureau is currently located within the Office of Family Assistance where it is primarily focused on providing child care for families receiving or moving off of Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF), although CCDBG funds are also intended to serve low-income families not receiving TANF and to improve the quality of child care.

The new Office would allow for greater coordination and support to maximize the reach and effectiveness of early childhood programs, and would be the first step in establishing early childhood as a top priority for the new Administration and implementing the strong early childhood agenda set out by the President-elect.

### ➤ **Restore Title IX Protections**

In March 2005, the Bush Administration issued guidance that allows schools to rely on a single e-mail survey to gauge girls' interest in



athletics and to count non-responses as evidence of lack of interest. This guidance opens huge loopholes in schools' Title IX obligations to provide young women with equal opportunities to participate in sports.

In accord with his long-standing commitment to protect and strengthen Title IX, President Obama should immediately rescind this March 2005 "Additional Clarification."

➤ **Reverse the Global Gag Rule**

On his second day in office, President Bush issued an executive order, known as the "Global Gag Rule," that prohibits foreign, non-governmental organizations that receive U.S. family planning aid to from using their own funds for legal abortion-related care or to advocate for safe abortion laws and policies.

The Global Gag Rule has stifled the public debate in developing countries where illegal abortion takes an enormous toll on women's health and lives. It has also led to dramatic cutbacks in services, closures of clinics, and serious shortfalls in contraceptive supplies. The President should immediately rescind this dangerous policy.

➤ **Restore the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services**

For over 50 years, the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) served as a force for the successful integration of women into the military and steady expansion of women's roles in our armed forces. Soon after taking office, the Bush Administration cancelled all meetings, conferences and installation visits of DACOWITS, terminated the appointments of all current members, and downgraded the Committee's mission, responsibilities, staff support and access to military advisers.

Given the global challenges facing our nation's armed forces, the need for men and women in the military to work together for our national defense in the most effective way has never been more important.

President Obama should take immediate steps to restore the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services to the status it held before the Bush Administration, as a civilian board of individuals appointed by the Secretary of Defense to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on matters and



policies affecting military women. DACOWITS should be re-established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act with the mission to advise the Secretary of Defense on a full range of matters and policies relating to women in the armed forces, as it did before the Bush Administration.

➤ **Support Women-Owned Small Businesses**

In October 2008, the Small Business Administration issued regulations implementing the Women's Procurement Program that effectively gut the ability of federal agencies to ensure that women-owned small businesses receive their fair share of federal contracts.

By limiting the industries to which it applies and requiring each federal agency to determine whether it has itself engaged in discrimination before using the flexibility granted by the program, the regulations virtually ensure that the Women's Procurement Program will never be used.

President Obama should immediately direct the Small Business Administration to propose to revoke the October 2008 SBA regulations and replace them with regulations that reflect Congress's intent to ensure effective implementation of the Women's Procurement Program.

➤ **Preserve an Incentive for States to Maintain Funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) Program**

The Bush Administration proposed a regulation in August 2008 that would eliminate the enhanced caseload reduction credit for state spending for the TANF program in excess of maintenance of effort requirements. The credit provides an incentive for states to maintain their investment in programs for needy families; the proposal would eliminate this incentive, at a time when the needs of poor families are growing and many states are facing budget shortfalls.

President Obama should immediately direct the Department of Health and Human Services to withdraw the proposed rule; or, if the rule has been finalized, to suspend or propose to repeal the rule.

➤ **Rescind the Federal Health Care Refusal Rule**



In August 2008, the Bush Administration proposed a rule that would that allow doctors, nurses, receptionists, janitors and others at hundreds of thousands of hospitals, doctors' offices, research centers, and other entities that receive HHS funds to refuse to participate in *any health care service*—without regard for the health care needs of patients.

The American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, 13 state attorneys general, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have all urged the Administration not to finalize this unnecessary and ill-advised rule.

President Obama should immediately direct the Department of Health and Human Services to withdraw the proposed rule; or, if the rule has been finalized, to suspend or propose to repeal the rule.

➤ **Restore Affordable Birth Control**

A provision in the Deficit Reduction Act unintentionally precluded certain family planning providers and university health centers from continuing to purchase low-cost birth control and passing the cost savings on to their patients, resulting in substantial increases in the cost of birth control for nearly 4 million women. The Bush Administration issued a rule in July 2007 implementing the provision, but declined to alleviate the problem with the cost of birth control.

President Obama should direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to propose a regulation that designates non-Title X family planning clinics and university health centers as providers eligible to receive drugs at “nominal price.”

➤ **Restore Access to Vital Health Care Services for Low-Income Women**

In November 2008, the Bush administration published a final rule that would severely limit the outpatient services eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. This rule will ultimately reduce the number of essential community based services available to the Medicaid population, at a time when states are seeing increased Medicaid enrollment due to the economic crisis.



Access to essential services provided in clinic settings such as renal care, mental health, family planning services, and preventive medical care may be reduced under this rule. President Obama should direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to propose to repeal this rule.