OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT

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Women, Work and Families
Meeting with Transition Team of President-elect Barack Obama
Policy Priorities

Many women's organizations have issued white papers and policy platforms for the Presidential Transition Team that set out a comprehensive agenda for women, work and families. The women's organizations with expertise in employment, training and related issues have identified the following immediate priorities that can be adopted in the early months of the Obama-Biden administration. It is more urgent than ever in these trying economic times to prepare women for 21st jobs and to address the particular needs of women workers across the age span and of women who have lost their jobs in the current economic crisis.

Well-Paying, Quality Jobs

Administration Action

- **Strengthen the Public Policy Mission of the Women's Bureau** by filling the position of Chief, Programs and Policy and bringing in economists and other experts in 21st century employment issues.
- **Make gender parity in employment and earnings outcomes a goal of national investments** in federally funded job programs (including sector-based initiatives) and in workforce policies that generate employment in high-paying, high-demand occupations.
- **Direct the Labor Department to make a pay equity analysis of all federal jobs** department by department, to identify areas where women or people of color are paid less for jobs that require similar education, training, skill and experience.
- **Direct the Department of Labor to vigorously enforce our nation's workplace standards** through existing powers to investigate high-violation industries, consult with community and worker groups, hold subcontracting employers responsible for workplace violations, seek remedies and keep detailed data on complaints documented this year by two Government Accountability Office reports. Returning the DOL to its mission of safeguarding workplace standards.
- **Require that the Department of Labor statistics be reported by age and sex** so that the beginning of the gender gap can be identified and trends can be tracked.
- **Rescind the SBA rules which severely limit the scope of the Women's Procurement Program** and promulgate new rules which broaden opportunities for women-owned companies to compete for federal contracts – contracts which grow businesses and create jobs.
- **Ensure that small women-owned businesses are included in all Federal Procurement Policy.** Prioritize increasing the set asides for small, minority- and women-owned businesses, and ensure that women's small businesses have equal priority in the OMB Office of Federal Procurement Policy and the Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) in each federal agency and at OMB. Appoint a Women's Business Council and/or Interagency Task Force on Women's Business Development to ensure that all agencies work effectively to strengthen women's businesses.

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Urge Congress to:

- **Enact Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act** to reverse the Supreme Court ruling that makes it practically impossible for women to file pay discrimination suits by requiring complaints to be filed within 180 days of an employer's first discriminatory decision.
- **Enact Paycheck Fairness Act** to deter wage discrimination by strengthening penalties for equal pay violations, prohibiting retaliation against workers who inquire about wages, requiring employers to show that wage gaps result from factors other than gender, and reinstating and enhancing DOL policies that benefit working women.
- **Increase the Minimum Wage** by pegging to 50 percent of the average, hourly non-supervisory wage and indexing to inflation.
- **Establish new career ladders in traditionally "women's" occupations that lead to self-sufficiency** wages along the lines set out in the Workplace Balancing Act.

Benefits and Employer Practices

Administration Action

- **Direct the EEOC to address systemic patterns of pay discrimination** in occupational categories occupied primarily by women or people of color.

Urge Congress to

- **Enact Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act** to gives states incentives to cover employees available only for part-time work, workers whose histories are concentrated in the most recent quarter, and those who lost employment due to compelling family reasons.
- **Enact Healthy Families Act** to require employers to provide at least seven days of paid sick leave to nearly one-half of workers do not have one single day of leave for their own illness or to care for a sick family member.
- **Expand Family Medical Leave** to cover workers in companies with fewer than 50 employees, part-time workers, additional family members such as siblings and grandparents, women recovering from domestic violence and assault, and 24 hours of parental participation in school activities. Guarantee paid leave for federal employees through the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act and set in motion a process to establish a national family and medical leave insurance program through a federal and/or state-based system.
- **Enact Health Care and Training for Older Workers Act** which extends COBRA coverage for up to 36 months for workers between the age 62 and 65 who typically would lose employer-based health coverage when phasing down their work to part-time status.
- **Expand access to affordable, high-quality child care and early child development and education** through legislation to increase funds and access to child care assistance, Head Start, and early child development and education programs. Provide funding for quality rating systems and improve child care health and safety requirements.
- **Increase the supply and affordability of high quality child and dependent care** through increases in provider reimbursement rates, a fully refundable Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and funding for Head Start and Early Start.

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- **Encourage employers to establish flexible work programs.** For example, there could be a 25 percent tax credit equal to wages for employers who provide full, qualified pension and health insurance plans for full- and part-time workers age 62 and over in a "flexible work program."
- **Enact Social Security Caregiver Credit Act** to give Social Security credit to an individual who provides more than 80 hours per month of care to a relative without compensation for five years. Wages credited are determined by a formula for each month.
- **Assist low-income individuals reach their jobs** by doubling funding for the federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program that helps low-income individuals access their jobs and child care services.

Strengthening and Enforcing Affirmative Action and Anti-Discrimination Laws

Administration Action

- **Restore staffing of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCCP)** to the levels that existed prior to 2001 and reinstate the Equal Opportunity Survey to the regulations of the (41 CFR 60-2) that were rescinded during the previous administration.
- **Update OFCCP's regulations for construction contractors** as they relate to affirmative action goals for women and minorities – as these goals are based on the 1970 census.
- **Restore the Equal Pay Matters Initiative**, an effort launched in 1999 that provided additional funds to several agencies to improve enforcement of laws against pay discrimination and educate employers on the importance of equal pay for equal work and restore information on DOL website regarding activities on narrowing the pay gap.
- **Ensure enforcement of all anti-discrimination laws** through adequate funding of the EEOC and the Civil Rights Division at the Justice department.
- **Reverse the SBA (Small Business Administration) ruling** which requires federal agencies to acknowledge past discrimination in order to participate in the Women's Procurement Program.

Job Training and Education

Administration Action

- **Provide national leadership to reinvent career and technical education** and aggressively addressing the issue of sex segregation through accountability, technical assistance, program and policy implementation, and research
- **Mandate the Office of Civil Rights to fully investigate and monitor Title IX** as it applies to federally funded education programs and proactively support gender equity in all aspects of education..
- **Foster interagency collaboration on issues concerning equity in education** and workforce development through sharing data and leveraging federal resources.
- **Rebuild federal support programs** and provide a clearinghouse of the national knowledge on research-based strategies for building the capacity of local education and workforce development agencies and community based organizations to create programs that increase the participation of women and girls in high skill/high wage careers, especially in STEM fields.

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Urge Congress to

- **Reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act** emphasizing pathways to self-sufficiency and sector partnerships in high-growth, high-demand industries and occupations with career paths within and across industries. Ensure that WIA addresses the specific needs of older workers and those who have been out of the workforce due to family responsibilities.
- **Ensure that all federal programs and policy that impact workforce development promote gender equity** through funds for training, support services, and employer hiring incentives and include these goals in the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.
- **Fully fund and implement innovative programs in the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act** that support gender equity and increase support services, including financial aid, to women participating in higher education full or part-time.

Underpinnings of Economic Security

Administration Action

- **Make household "economic self-sufficiency" a goal of federal adult education and skill development programs** and collect gender specific data on participation and outcomes.
- **Charge the National Economic Council with developing policies that promote the economic self-sufficiency** of all Americans throughout their lives, and create an interagency task force to develop geographically specific benchmarks for families of different sizes and ages.

Urge Congress to

- **Freeze time limits on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families** (TANF) benefit receipt during the current economic crisis.