

VOTE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT — BECAUSE IT DOES!

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the abc's of women's issues

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VOTE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT — BECAUSE IT DOES!

Where are women today?

How does policy on women affect your life?

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This voter guide provides updates on women's issues and questions you need to ask candidates and political parties ... and they need to answer.

**ELECTIONS ARE OFTEN WON BY VERY FEW VOTES.
YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

THE ABCs OF YOUR ISSUES

While women in every group have an interest in all women's issues, you may have a higher interest in some areas than others. We urge you to read the entire guide, and concentrate on those issues that you especially care about.

WHY NCWO WROTE THIS GUIDE

We believe **women's lives matter**. Only self-sufficient and secure women can meet their roles as providers, workers, mothers, daughters, partners, and community members. We know **voting matters**. Critical elections in recent years have been decided by very few votes. **Women voters can make a difference**.

Women's concerns only get attention when women speak out and vote!

We urge you to use this guide to ask political candidates and political parties at every level where they stand. Then, use that information in making up your mind about how to vote.

Not all women have the same priorities. We urge you to choose the areas of particular concern to you, and to share this information with family, friends, and neighbors.

Women's issues have become **invisible** as our leaders focus on national security and the economy. But women and families also need to be secure and, for a healthy economy, women's economic potential and contributions must be recognized.

Please use this guide to learn the latest on matters of concern to women. How can you help bring equal opportunity, fairness, and women's rights back onto the political agenda? How can you contribute to progress for women and their families? Don't miss the **Political Information Section** at the end of this guide for ways to make women's voices heard throughout 2004.

a⇒ **PROTECTING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION****SUMMARY**

For the past 30 years, government, educational institutions, labor unions and private employers have sought to promote equal opportunity through affirmative action programs. These programs involve outreach, recruitment and training for women and people of color, and opportunities for women- and minority-owned businesses to participate in government contracting. They do not involve quotas for hiring and promotion, college admissions, or business contracts.

While affirmative action programs have partially succeeded in combating discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender, disparities remain in education, employment and earnings. Women have difficulty gaining access to training and employment in nontraditional fields. Promotions for women in business and the professions often come up against a “glass ceiling.” For example, in 2002, women made up only 1.2 percent of the CEOs in the Fortune 500 and held only 7.9 percent of the highest corporate officer positions. Finally, full-time women workers earn only 77 percent of what full-time male workers earn overall, with women of color experiencing an even larger gap — 67 percent for African American women and 55 percent for Hispanic women.

Even though all women and minority men still lag behind, opponents argue that affirmative action is unnecessary, and have challenged affirmative action programs in the courts and in state-wide ballot initiatives. State officials have eliminated some state-level affirmative action programs by executive order.

NCWO POSITION

Affirmative action is not about the past. As long as barriers to equal opportunity persist, affirmative action is needed. The Supreme Court has recently addressed affirmative action in university admissions and found that admissions policies that seek to promote diversity are constitutional. Affirmative action is critical to continue progress toward full equal opportunity. NCWO opposes any efforts to weaken or eliminate affirmative action programs.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Would you maintain affirmative action programs at all levels of government? If not, how would you change them?
2. What would you do to eliminate the “glass ceiling” and earnings gap between women and men?

b⇒ **BUSINESS AND WOMEN****SUMMARY**

According to the Small Business Administration, there are over 9 million women-owned businesses in America, a major increase in the last decade. Yet, women’s businesses receive less venture capital, have lower levels of bank credit, and receive far fewer federal contracts than businesses owned by men.

Congress has specified a 5 percent government-wide procurement goal for women-owned businesses, but many government agencies such as the Department of Defense have failed to meet that goal or have circumvented it.

Women lag behind in gaining access to capital and credit. Most women-owned businesses are still initially financed with personal credit cards. Women consumers also experience high rates of bankruptcy due to job loss, medical emergency and/or divorce.

NCWO POSITION

Women business owners are entitled to a fair share of government contracts, which are paid for by taxes from everyone. NCWO supports federal goals and safeguards for women-owned businesses in the government contracting process.

Bankruptcy laws should make allowances for family circumstances. In addition, when husbands or ex-spouses declare bankruptcy, women should receive unpaid child support ahead of any other creditors.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support set-asides in federal contracts for women-owned businesses? If so, is the current 5 percent goal high enough?
2. How would you improve access to credit for women-owned businesses?

c⇒ **FUNDING CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION****SUMMARY**

Access to quality child care is a problem regardless of a woman’s income level. Current child care funding in the U.S., totaling around \$20 billion annually, is completely inadequate for today’s working families. While child care and early childhood education are provided to low-income and middle income families through several different programs (and to some needy families receiving temporary assistance), the needs are far from met. Those who work non-traditional hours, often low-income workers, may have no access to child care at all.

Head Start, a federal program with a record of success in early childhood education, serves 900,000 children, only 60 percent of those who qualify for the program. Tax credits for child care were claimed by over 6 million taxpayers in 2000, but fewer families will be able to get the credit in future years since it is not fully adjusted for inflation. Only 1 out of 7 eligible children receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) receives child care benefits.

A universal child care program that meets the full need is estimated to cost \$50 billion annually, a very small proportion of the 2.2 trillion dollar U.S. government outlays for 2003.

NCWO POSITION

Affordable, quality child care for all who need it should be a national priority. The U.S. government should fund universal pre-kindergarten and early childhood

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education programs in all fifty states, and should make child care available at all hours, as it did during World War II. The Dependent Care Tax Credit should be available to all low and middle income families, and child care funding in the TANF program must be increased to meet the needs of families trying to get off public assistance and enter the workforce.

Recently it has been proposed that Head Start be moved to the states, a proposal NCWO strongly opposes, as it could reduce quality and put some programs in jeopardy of decreased funding.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support making child care a top priority and funding child care to 100 percent of need? How would you define 100 percent of need and how would you pay for such a child care program?
2. Do you support public funding for pre-kindergarten and early childhood education?

⇒ RATIFYING THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

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SUMMARY

Women are not explicitly guaranteed equal rights by the U.S. Constitution. Without having equal rights with men constitutionally protected, women must rely on a patchwork of laws that can be repealed or weakened at any time, and women's rights often depend on the state in which they reside.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has been ratified by 35 states with only 3 more states needed for final ratification by a three-fourths majority of the states.

ERA opponents argue that because only 35 states had ratified the Amendment by June 30, 1982, the deadline in the Amendment's resolving clause, the ratification period has expired. However, a different precedent was set in 1992, when the 27th Amendment to the Constitution — concerning congressional pay raises — was ratified and became part of the Constitution 203 years after that amendment was originally introduced. Opponents have also argued that since a number of states rescinded their ratification votes, the total number of ratifying states is less than 35. However, the U.S. Constitution makes no provision for rescission.

NCWO POSITION

NCWO supports the reintroduction of the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress, and those working to gain 3 more states for ratification. In light of the fact that the 27th Amendment became part of the Constitution in 1992 after 203 years, the ERA's ratification period of less than three decades would surely meet the "reasonable" and "sufficiently contemporaneous" standards set by several Supreme Court decisions.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support ratification of the ERA? If so, do you endorse the position that only three more states are needed for final ratification?
2. Would you support a congressional resolution verifying ratification of the ERA upon ratification by three additional states?

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⇒ FAMILY LEAVE SHOULD BE PAID LEAVE

SUMMARY

The U.S. is only one of two industrialized countries that fails to provide paid family leave for its workforce. In 1993, the U.S. Congress enacted the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows covered employees 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the birth and care of a newborn child, a newly adopted or foster child, or treatment of a serious family health condition.

The FMLA covers only workers at work sites with 50 or more employees. Many women employed in small businesses are excluded. Because family and medical leave is unpaid, many lower income women — often single mothers — cannot afford to take leave and lose their paychecks. The government's attempt to help parents balance the demands of work and family through FMLA has little impact on the lives of single mothers or poor women who most need assistance.

The State of California has provided a model for paid family leave by initiating a six-week paid family leave program, supported by increased worker contributions to the state disability insurance system. Starting in 2004, all workers covered by the state disability insurance program are eligible for paid leave. Furthermore, employers with at least five employees are required by state law to permit workers to take up to four months of job-protected pregnancy-related leave.

NCWO POSITION

Congress should enact paid family leave, a benefit which is available to families in almost the entire industrialized world and some of the developing world. Family leave is the right of all workers, including those at businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you support family leave for all workers, no matter the place of employment?
2. Do you support enacting paid leave at the federal level?

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⇒ GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

1) CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

SUMMARY

CEDAW, a United Nations international treaty to ban discrimination against women, was first signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1980, but it has never been ratified by the U.S. Senate. To date, 173 countries have ratified the Convention; the U.S. is the only industrialized country that has failed to ratify. Called an international "Bill of Rights" for women, CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women, sets up an agenda for national action, and requires regular progress reports from ratifying countries. It does not impose any changes in national laws or require any new laws in countries ratifying the Convention. CEDAW was last approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2002, but was not taken up on the Senate floor, where it must pass with a two-thirds vote.

Members of Congress have attached Reservations, Declarations and Understandings to the treaty language to modify or qualify its content.

NCWO POSITION

The U.S. has ratified many U.N. treaties dealing with human rights. Failure to ratify CEDAW is a statement that affirming women's rights at home is not important, and makes it much harder for the U.S. to lead the way on international women's rights. Opponents have charged CEDAW would require countries to send women into military ground combat and sanction same-sex marriage. In fact, there is no reference in the treaty to women in the military or same sex marriage. The provisions of the treaty concern only sex-based discrimination against women. CEDAW has made a difference, inspiring many countries to pass new laws against trafficking in women, rape, sexual harassment, and violence against women. The U.S. Senate should ratify CEDAW immediately without Reservations, Declarations and Understandings, and Senators should be held accountable for their support or opposition.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support immediate ratification of CEDAW by the U.S.?

2) INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING

SUMMARY

In recent years, U.S. contributions to the United Nations Fund for Family Planning (UNFPA) have been cut off, based on the undocumented rationale that U.N. agencies are promoting abortion. In 2001, the U.S. Government also imposed a global "gag rule" that restricts foreign non-governmental organizations that receive U.S. family planning assistance from advocating or providing abortion-related services, even with their own non-U.S. funds. By 2002, this resulted in ending all shipments of USAID-donated contraceptives to 16 countries and to major family planning agencies in 13 other countries.

NCWO POSITION

Full funding must be restored to the UNFPA and to foreign family planning programs to aid women globally in their struggle to control the timing and number of children they have. The "gag rule" must be eliminated.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Where do you stand on U.S. support for family planning services internationally?

3) WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

SUMMARY

The U.S. has recently been promoting women's right to participate as full citizens abroad, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the U.S. is actively engaged in building democracies. Given ongoing violence and threats to personal security, and strong opposition to women's rights from some sectors, there is a need for concrete actions and resources to support women's emerging leadership. Experience demonstrates that without explicit protection of women's rights in national

constitutions and guarantees of women's representation in public office, including setting aside a proportion of offices for women, women will be marginalized in the political process.

NCWO POSITION

Women's rights to participate as full citizens in society must be guaranteed in reconstruction plans and post-conflict planning, paving the way for equal rights guarantees in national constitutions in newly-emerging democracies. Set asides, guaranteeing women at least 40 percent representation in parliament, should be adopted, and training and adequate resources provided to women seeking public office.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. How would you guarantee equal rights for women in emerging democracies overseas?
2. Do you support increased funding for women's security and development needs in post-conflict areas and in newly emerging democracies around the world?



⇒ HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

SUMMARY

Women's health issues include: women's need for health insurance for themselves and their families; adequate Medicare coverage for older women; research on women's diseases; and gender differences in medical conditions and treatment.

More than one-fifth of women with children under 18 lack health insurance. Lack of health insurance leads to unaddressed medical needs. In surveys, over half of uninsured low-income women — some of whom have lost Medicaid coverage by entering the workforce — delay or postpone health care because they can't afford it.

Birth control is the single highest out-of-pocket medical expense for women of child-bearing age. Yet many health plans do not cover contraceptive drugs, even though they cover drugs like Viagra to enhance male sexual performance.

On average, women live longer than men do, have lower incomes, and less access to private health plans. As a result, older women are more dependent on Medicare than older men, and have higher out-of-pocket medical expenses, including prescription drugs. Older women with limited incomes are often obliged to join Medicare HMOs rather than having choice in medical services.

While research funding for some women's diseases such as gynecological cancers has increased dramatically, funding for research on women's health issues is still only a small proportion of total funding.

NCWO POSITION

All women and their families must have access to affordable and comprehensive health care. Specifically, NCWO supports increased coverage for family planning, and a meaningful prescription drug benefit through Medicare without weakening

or privatizing the Medicare program. Gender bias in treatment and access to health care must be eliminated. Finally, funding for research on women's health must be further increased.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. How would you deal with the problem of women and families who have no health insurance?
2. Do you support coverage for birth control in health plans?
3. Do you support privatizing Medicare?
4. What legislation on women's health have you sponsored or supported?

⇒ HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY

Discrimination continues to exist in the workplace, in U.S. public policies and programs, and in the way federal, state and local governments refuse to acknowledge the family formation rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered individuals. Our nation's hard-won civil rights laws do not cover sexual orientation and over 1,000 legal protections and benefits in state and federal law are inaccessible to committed same-sex couples. Legal recognition for same-sex couples would provide: access to health care and medical decision-making for partners and their children; parenting rights; Social Security survivors' benefits; taxation, inheritance, and other government benefits; and the ability to pool resources to buy or transfer property without adverse tax treatment.

NCWO POSITION

NCWO members support the protection and full defense of all civil and human rights. Laws prohibiting employment discrimination must be enforced and new legislation must be passed that prohibits job discrimination based on sexual orientation. Legal and economic parity is essential for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered relationships.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you oppose a constitutional amendment to outlaw same-sex marriages?
2. Do you support legal recognition for same-sex couples with federal benefits and full-faith and credit in every state and territory?
3. Do you support legislation to include sexual orientation in all of our nation's civil rights laws, especially ones which prohibit workplace discrimination?

⇒ JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SUMMARY

Today, more than ever, securing the future for working families depends on access to job training and education that will lead to good jobs and benefits. At the same time, economic recovery depends on businesses having access to a pool of workers who are qualified to meet the demands of today's jobs. Women are particularly affected by the growing gap between the skills they have and those demanded by employers. Sixty percent of all low-wage workers are women.

While employers increasingly demand high-skilled and better-educated workers, too many women do not qualify absent greater education and job training. For example, information and communications technologies are critical for developing women's workforce skills. Yet, changes in federal programs have significantly reduced access to training opportunities for low-income women.

NCWO POSITION

Women, including those who are low-wage workers or are leaving welfare, need access to a broad range of job training and educational opportunities. Congress will soon re-authorize several major pieces of legislation — the Workforce Investment Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, the Higher Education Act, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Each program must set a goal of leading women and girls to jobs that will enable them to be self-sufficient, as defined by the real costs of daily living for families of different sizes in different areas of the U.S.

NCWO supports access for all women and families to affordable information and communications technologies, the elimination of gender bias in technology education, and full funding for the Technology Opportunities Program and Community Technology Program

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. What is your plan for moving low-wage women into high-wage, high-skilled jobs?
2. What steps will you take to support greater access to job training and education programs for women and girls?
3. How would you deal with the lack of access of low income women and their families to computer technology and technological education?

⇒ WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

SUMMARY

Although women have served in the U.S. military since 1901, they are the only American women whose professional advancement is artificially curtailed by government laws and policies. In the last decade, laws banning women from serving on military aircraft with combat missions and aboard combat ships were repealed, but women cannot serve aboard submarines, in infantry, armor, and most artillery units, or in special forces units. Lesbians and gays cannot serve openly, military women suffer sexual harassment and violence from male soldiers, and women seeking abortions cannot obtain them through military or veterans' health care providers, even when willing to pay the cost themselves.

NCWO POSITION

Women in the military must be allowed to serve and be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified. The unworkable "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy should be repealed to allow lesbian women and gay men to serve openly. Military women deserve access to full health care at military facilities, including abortions and sexual trauma counseling. Sexual harassment and misconduct at U.S. military academies and in the military must be fully investigated and eliminated.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support opening all military assignments to women?
2. Do you support or oppose provisions banning gay men and lesbian women from serving openly in the U.S. military?
3. Do you support providing the full range of reproductive health services for women in the military?

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⇒ ACHIEVING **PAY** EQUITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

SUMMARY

Inequality of pay between men and women — full-time, year-round female workers currently earn, on average, 77 percent of what full-time male workers earn — can be explained by occupational segregation and traditional patterns of discrimination. Gender discrimination is compounded by race discrimination. African American women earn 67 percent of male weekly earnings, and Hispanic women, 55 percent. While Asian/Pacific Islander women do better than other women, they still earn only 84 percent as much as men.

Although male and female workers have roughly equal educational attainments, women tend to be segregated into lower-paying clerical and service jobs, while men dominate higher-paying blue-collar and management jobs. Women are the majority of professional employees, but are concentrated in nursing and teaching, while men dominate engineering, scientific and technical fields.

Among low-income workers, women would be the major beneficiaries of an increase in the minimum wage. A higher minimum wage would bring many families out of poverty, and would be of particular assistance to single mothers and their children.

NCWO POSITION

Women and men performing work of equal skill, effort and responsibility should be paid equally, even if job titles are different. This is generally referred to as *pay equity* as opposed to *equal pay* for jobs that are essentially the same. The U.S. Congress should extend prohibitions on pay discrimination to include pay equity, and should strengthen the capacity of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce equal pay.

All workers should be paid wages that enable them to pay for their costs of daily living, secure education for their children, and support retirement needs. A living wage can only be achieved by establishing a self-sufficiency standard (modest income level adjusted to the cost of living for families of different sizes in a given geographical area) and raising the minimum wage to meet it.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support new laws to ban discrimination in pay for jobs of equal skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, even if job titles are different?
2. Do you support raising the minimum wage and, if so, to what level?
3. How would you assure women access to nontraditional jobs?
4. What is your plan for moving women and families into self-sufficiency?

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⇒ PROTECTING **REPRODUCTIVE** RIGHTS

SUMMARY

Ever since the Supreme Court established women's right to reproductive freedom in the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, abortion opponents have attempted to limit or eliminate a woman's right to choose. Opponents' legislative strategies have included: bans on certain abortion procedures; biased pregnancy counseling; funding restrictions, including funds for victims of rape and incest, and poor women; and mandatory waiting periods, parental consent and notice requirements.

Abortion opponents have worked to reverse Roe v. Wade and the right to privacy by pushing for anti-abortion judges to the Supreme Court and lower courts. Opponents have also pressed for and won appointments of foes of reproductive freedom to federal agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration, the Justice Department, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Finally, extremists have terrorized abortion clinics and providers through criminal violence and incitement on the internet.

NCWO POSITION

NCWO seeks to defend and promote the reproductive rights of women of every age by fighting for the privacy right guaranteed by Roe v. Wade. We strongly support comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education, together with discussions of disease prevention, family planning, and birth control. We oppose all initiatives to restrict access to reproductive health care and abortion as guaranteed by Roe v. Wade.

NCWO supports public and private funding and insurance coverage for pregnancy prevention and termination, as well as for women who choose to have children. Current laws to counter terrorism at women's health clinics and on the internet must be vigorously enforced.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support a woman's right to choose as embodied in Roe v. Wade?
2. Do you oppose appointments to the judiciary or executive agencies of people who would reverse Roe v. Wade?
3. Do you support any restrictions on the right to choose?
4. Did you support — or would you have supported — the abortion restriction legislation recently signed into law?

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⇒ SAFEGUARDING **SOCIAL** SECURITY FOR WOMEN

SUMMARY

Sixty percent of Social Security beneficiaries are women and, for a majority of these women, Social Security is their major source of retirement income. Most women do not receive private pensions — only 38 percent of women receive employer-provided pensions benefits compared to 57 percent of men — and women of color are the least likely of any group to receive private pensions.

Any proposed changes in the system must be examined for their impact on women's economic security. In particular, women shoulder more family caring responsibilities for children, the elderly, and ill family members than men, forcing women to spend more time at home and less time in the workforce, thereby lowering retirement income.

Recent reform proposals for Social Security have suggested that individuals be allowed to divert a portion of their Social Security payments into individual accounts to take advantage of private sector investment opportunities. But so-called opportunities can quickly become costs in a bad economic climate. Whereas Social Security benefits are guaranteed for life (women on average live 7 years longer than men) and are adjusted to keep up with inflation, private investments do not protect against inflation and are not guaranteed.

By some predictions, the Social Security System is expected to be able to pay only 75 percent of current-law benefits after 2040 as older workers claiming benefits increase in number faster than younger workers contributing to the system. Proposals to meet this problem have included raising the retirement age to 70, or encouraging workers to take early retirement at reduced benefits. Other approaches to keeping Social Security solvent would be to increase payroll and employer taxes and/or remove the income cap for contributions from high earning individuals.

NCWO POSITION

NCWO opposes diverting Social Security benefits into individual accounts; such a practice would impose great costs on society as two different systems of retirement benefits would have to be funded simultaneously. Diversion of benefits also subjects women to a greater risk of poverty if expected returns on investments are not realized. Moreover, there is no guarantee that widows would inherit private accounts or that divorced women would share in them.

NCWO also opposes raising the retirement age as this hurts women who are unable to work while they care for aging or ill family members. NCWO supports increasing revenues going into Social Security to provide full current law benefits and even to increase benefits to further reduce poverty.

NCWO's Task Force on Social Security recommends that benefits payable to widows or widowers be raised from 50 percent of the higher-earning spouse's benefit to 75 percent of the couple's combined benefits. Likewise, individuals should be given caregiving credits to compensate for reduced earnings due to time spent providing necessary family care. Finally, the benefits of the lowest earners should be raised to help elderly single and divorced women whose numbers are increasing and who have a higher poverty rate than widows.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support diverting some Social Security money into private accounts?
2. Do you support raising benefit levels for survivors and the lowest paid workers?
3. Would you support giving some Social Security credit for time spent in caring responsibilities?



⇒ TITLE IX: PROHIBITING SEX DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

SUMMARY

Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments prohibits discrimination in educational programs based on sex, marital status or parental status in all educational institutions that receive federal funding. The legislation covers admissions, housing, educational courses, career guidance and counseling services, student financial aid and health benefits, and scholastic, intercollegiate, club, and intramural activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment by students and school employees. Title IX has generated the most controversy with regard to equitable athletic opportunities for students regardless of sex.

In the 30 years since the passage of Title IX, there have been significant increases in female high school graduates attending college, women earning undergraduate and graduate degrees, female participation in intercollegiate sports, and girls remaining in school when pregnant. Studies indicate that girls continue to be short-changed by deficits in career education, math and science, standardized testing, education of teen parents and at-risk students, vocational education, athletic opportunities, and by sexual harassment. Women's sports receive vastly lower funding than men's sports, and compliance with Title IX is not being aggressively investigated or enforced by the Department of Education.

NCWO POSITION

Title IX has been a major tool for ensuring equal educational opportunity for all students. NCWO opposes any efforts to weaken Title IX, such as giving educators more flexibility to establish single-sex education, or decreasing funding for women's sports. NCWO believes it is critical to continue strict monitoring of compliance with Title IX regulations at the local level.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support full compliance with Title IX? If not, why not?
2. Would you increase funding for compliance-related activity by the Department of Education?
3. Would you establish funding for Title IX Compliance Officers as required by the law but rarely implemented?



⇒ STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

SUMMARY

The U.S. Congress first addressed domestic violence in 1994 with the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA provided grants for shelters for battered women, training of law enforcement officers, judges, and prosecutors, and assistance to sexual assault victims. The Act was re-authorized in 2000, but the President has requested and the Congress has appropriated only a portion of the funds it authorized for domestic violence programs. Similarly, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act has not received its full appropriation.

Since the passage of VAWA, intimate partner violence, including homicide, has declined. Nevertheless, a domestic violence incident occurs on average every 9 seconds in the U.S., and 85 percent of the victims are women.

NCWO POSITION

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) must be fully funded, as well as improved with new, innovative programs providing assistance to victims of violence. NCWO supports anti-violence initiatives, and proposes that hate crimes legislation include coverage for gender, sexual orientation, transgender and disability.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Do you support full funding for the Violence Against Women Act?
2. Would you extend coverage under the hate crimes law to include gender, sexual orientation, transgender, and disability?

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⇒ WELFARE REFORM THAT WORKS

SUMMARY

In 1996, the U.S. Congress reformed welfare with the passage of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a federal block grant to the states to provide help to eligible poor families. Benefits are limited to 60 months over the recipient's lifetime, and are linked to mandatory participation in education and training programs and work. TANF benefits vary greatly from state to state, but, even at their highest, leave families far below the poverty line. TANF funds are also provided to eliminate barriers to work such as lack of child care or transportation, and to promote marriage and sexual abstinence as answers to poverty.

In 2003, the U.S. Congress took up the re-authorization of the TANF legislation and considered proposals to increase mandatory work hours requirements and decrease the number of hours recipients are entitled to participate in education and training programs. Debate over proposed changes in TANF led Congress to re-authorize the existing program for six months and postpone consideration of TANF until 2004. Objections to the 2003 proposals centered on inadequate funding for child care, increased mandatory work hours, and increased funding for marriage promotion.

NCWO POSITION

The best anti-poverty program is a good job with benefits and decent levels of support for parents taking care at home of pre-school children. TANF re-authorization should include increased funding for education and training, including vocational training, without the current arbitrary 12-month limit. In addition, work supports such as child care, transportation and housing need to be expanded. TANF should not increase mandatory work hours, or support unproven programs promoting marriage and sexual abstinence.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Should TANF benefits be increased to reflect inflation and unemployment and poverty levels in different states?
2. Do you support or oppose increasing mandatory work hours? Do you support lifting the 12-month restriction on educational activities for TANF recipients?
3. Do you support increased funding for child care in the TANF re-authorization bill? If so, to meet 100 percent of need?
4. Should the 5-year lifetime limit on assistance be eased in times of high general unemployment (6 percent or above)?
5. What is your position on promotion of marriage and sexual abstinence as solutions for needy families?

⇒ USEFUL POLITICAL INFORMATION

REGISTERING TO VOTE

You must register before you can vote. You must be an American citizen, 18 years old by Election Day, not in prison or on parole for a felony conviction, not judicially declared incompetent to vote. You can obtain a voter registration form in many locations — public libraries, schools, state agencies, Department of Motor Vehicles, city hall, and online (see www.congress.org). The deadline to register ranges from 13 - 30 days before the election, depending on where you live. Plan ahead.

When you register, you will be asked to declare a party or state that you are an Independent. You may “decline to state” your party preference. In most states — but not all — you are entitled to vote only in your own party's primary. Anyone who is registered can vote for any candidate in the general election, regardless of party affiliation. If you have moved and changed state or locality, **you must re-register**. For more information about registration, you can call your local County Elections Official or the League of Women Voters in your area.

VOTING

Once you are registered, you may vote in a political party primary to nominate the candidate of your party, and in the general election. You do not have to vote the same way in the general election as you voted in the primary. See the POLITICAL CALENDAR in this guide for important election dates.

The 2004 General Election is on Tuesday, November 2. If you have difficulty getting to the place where you vote or cannot get there on November 2, you can request an Absentee Ballot beforehand and vote by mail. This is often a helpful tool for busy people, people who don't have transportation, or the elderly.

WEB SITES FOR VOTER INFORMATION

www.lww.org/voter/getout.html; www.bigvote.org
www.vote-smart.org, www.mypollingsite.com

THE ABCs of RAISING WOMEN'S ISSUES

Here are some tips for making your voice heard!

INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

1. Determine in advance how much time you will have and ask your most important questions first!
2. Interview with a partner or team, so you're sure to catch the candidate's exact words.
3. Make your questions specific. If the candidate answers too generally, follow up with a comment such as "Please be specific."

EXPRESSING YOUR OPINIONS

Letters to candidates, newspapers and magazines, material for political party platforms, and radio call-in shows:

1. State your position firmly and clearly. Use facts to make your case.
2. Be brief — try to keep your piece to two short paragraphs.
3. Use personal examples whenever possible.
4. Conclude with a one-sentence re-statement of your position.
5. Identify yourself, your organization, and give an address.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

NCWO..... www.womensorganizations.org

The National Council of Women's Organizations is a coalition of nearly 200 groups and organizations that collectively represent close to ten million women across the United States. NCWO members collaborate on substantive policy work and grass roots activism to address issues of concern to women. For group and individual membership information, please see www.womensorganizations.org.

CHAIR	Martha Burk	<i>Ph.D. President, Center for Advancement of Public Policy</i>
STEERING COMMITTEE	Heidi Hartmann	<i>President, Institute for Women's Policy Research</i>
	Mal Johnson	<i>Co-Chair, National Women's Conference</i>
	Alma M. Riojas	<i>President/CEO, MANA, A National Latina Organization</i>
	Karen O'Connor	<i>Director, Women & Politics Institute</i>
	Kathy Rodgers	<i>Executive Director, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund</i>
	Vicki Saporta	<i>Executive Director, National Abortion Federation</i>
	Joy Simonson	<i>President, Clearinghouse on Women's Issues</i>
	Eleanor Smeal	<i>President, Feminist Majority Foundation</i>
	Jane Smith	<i>CEO, Business and Professional Women/USA</i>
	Jackie Woods	<i>Executive Director, American Association of University Women</i>
	Laurie Young	<i>Executive Director, OWL: The Voice of Midlife and Older Women</i>



the
abc's
of women's issues

PRESIDENTIAL (AND STATE) PRIMARIES

January 13: D.C.
January 27: New Hampshire
February 3: Arizona
Delaware
Missouri
Oklahoma
South Carolina
February 10: Tennessee
Virginia
February 17: Wisconsin
March 2: California
Connecticut
Georgia
Maryland
Massachusetts
New York
Ohio
Rhode Island
Vermont
March 16: Illinois
April 27: Pennsylvania
May 4 - Indiana
North Carolina
May 11: Nebraska
West Virginia
May 18: Arkansas
Oregon
May 25: Idaho
Kentucky
June 1: Alabama
South Dakota
June 8: Montana
New Jersey

PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUSES

January 19: Iowa
February 3: New Mexico (Dem.)
North Dakota
Virginia (Repub.)
February 7: Washington (Dem.)
February 8: Maine
February 14: D.C. (Dem.)
Nevada (Dem.)
February 24: Hawaii (Dem.)
Idaho (Dem.)
March 13: Kansas
March 20: Alaska
Wyoming
April 13: Colorado

STATE ONLY PRIMARIES

June 1: New Mexico
June 8: Iowa, Maine
North Dakota
South Carolina
Virginia
June 22: Utah
July 20: Georgia
July 27: Oklahoma
August 3: Kansas
Michigan
Missouri
August 5: Tennessee
August 10: Colorado
August 17: Wyoming
August 24: Alaska
August 31: Florida
September 7: Nevada
September 11: Delaware
September 14: Connecticut
D.C.
Massachusetts
Minnesota
New Hampshire
New York
Rhode Island
Washington
September 18: Hawaii

NATIONAL NOMINATING CONVENTIONS

June 22-27 Constitution Party,
Presid. Nominating
Convention
(Valley Forge, PA)
June 24-27 Green Party, Presid.
Nominating
Convention
(Milwaukee, WI)
July 26 - 29 Democratic National
Convention (Boston)
August 30 - Sept. 2 Republican
National Convention
(New York City)

ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 2

→ 2004 political calendar

VOTE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT — BECAUSE IT DOES!