



# Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

P.O. Box 70603, Friendship Heights, MD 20813 Tel: 202 338-4820

Website: [womensclearinghouse.org](http://womensclearinghouse.org)

OCTOBER 2005

---

## UNCLE SAM AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

We are all affected by and dependent on government policies, programs and agencies to protect our health. A key agency is the Food and Drug Administration, which has been much in the news lately. We are fortunate to have as a speaker Dr. Susan Wood who recently resigned from a top position at FDA because of policy differences, particularly emergency contraceptives and breast implants. How much should health policies be determined by scientific research and how much by political views?

Dr. Beth Jordan will bring us a report on controversial women's health issues she is battling for in two significant positions: Director of Health Policy at the Feminist Majority Foundation and Medical Director of the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. She is a specialist in women's health, is involved with students groups and is an advisor to Ms. Magazine.

**SPEAKERS:**        **Susan Wood, Ph.D.**, former Assistant Commissioner,  
Food and Drug Administration

**Beth Jordan, MD**, Medical Director, Feminist Majority  
Foundation and Association of Reproductive Health  
Professionals

**TOPIC:**            **WOMEN'S HEALTH AND THE FDA**

**DATE/TIME:**    **Tuesday, October 25, 2005 / 12 noon – 1:30 p.m.**

**PLACE:**            **American Council on Education**  
**One Dupont Circle, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Kellogg Room**  
Bring brown bag lunch; soft drinks available from a machine

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

A photo ID must be shown at the security desk of One Dupont Circle

**Next Meeting: November 29, 2005**

## **SUPREME COURT NOMINATIONS -- POTENTIAL IMPACT ON WOMEN**

As the U.S Senate debated President Bush's nomination of John G. Roberts Jr. to be Chief Justice of the United States, and awaited the administration's choice of a successor to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Nan Aron, president of the Alliance for Justice, and Professor Laurence Nolan of Howard Law School discussed the impact of these nominations.

Both Nan Aron and Professor Nolan emphasized the broad spectrum of women's issues influenced by lower courts and the Supreme Court. Aron reported that the Alliance had 12 attorneys researching Roberts' record. What jumped out of the texts for the researchers, she said, was Roberts' record on women.

Aron stated that Roberts took positions against women's rights on issues such as sexual harassment and the gender gap. As an example, he had no objection to providing training to male prison guards while denying it to women guards. Aron emphasized that Roberts has declined to make revisions to his previous positions, and there is no evidence that any of his beliefs have changed. She also noted that Roberts' legal credentials probably could have guaranteed entry into one of the nation's best law firms, but he chose instead the more political atmosphere of the Reagan Department of Justice. Roberts' positions on the Voting Rights Act and the effects test were also addressed during the discussion. Roberts was in the Justice Department when the Voting Rights Act came up for renewal, and he wrote memoranda recommending that the Act be weakened by requiring an intent test. Under this recommendation, which was not adopted, a

prosecution under the Voting Rights Act would have to prove that a governmental unit intended to discriminate when it took action affecting citizens' voting rights. That is a very difficult burden of proof, Aron said. Under the Voting Rights Act as it exists, as well as in some other civil rights legislation, it is sufficient to demonstrate that actions have a discriminatory effect.

One member of the audience asked Aron why the right wing of the Republican Party has continuing objections to Attorney General Albert Gonzalez, who has sometimes been mentioned as a Supreme Court nominee. Aron replied it is primarily because when Gonzalez sat on the same court as Judge Priscilla Owen, and they both wrote opinions about requiring parental notification prior to abortion, he described her dissent as "an unconscionable act of judicial activism."

Aron expressed the hope that the Senate would be willing to set a higher standard for Justice O'Connor's replacement, since O'Connor had a more moderate record than the late Chief Justice. The Alliance staff is already researching a short list of potential administration nominees to replace O'Connor

Professor Laurence Nolan, who specializes in family law, presented an overview of the impact on women and families of lifetime appointments to the Federal judiciary at all levels. She explained that since some state judges are elected, the Federal judiciary is meant to be completely nonpolitical. President Bush has appointed 213 Federal judges in his five years in office, compared to 367 appointments by President Clinton during his eight-year tenure. So far, Bush has appointed a smaller

proportion of women and minorities than Clinton. Nolan noted that Circuit Court decisions could have significant impact if they are not appealed. Sometimes litigants do not appeal an issue until they find an ideal case that will maximize their chances of success. Meanwhile, the lower court decision is binding in its region. For example, Texas had to drop its affirmative action admissions policies after the Fifth Circuit ruled them unconstitutional, and no one appealed.

The concept of federalism and limited federal power continues to play a significant role in Federal court decisions, Nolan explained. She cited a 5-4 Supreme Court decision in 2000, written by Rehnquist, that overturned civil remedies provided to women in the Violence Against Women Act. Rehnquist wrote that Congress had gone beyond its power, because this new protection for women could not be justified as part of the regulation of interstate commerce. Since the mid-1990s, some federal courts have placed restrictions on the congressional use of the commerce

clause in the constitution for the first time since the 1930s.

During the discussion period, Nan Aron said that now the Alliance is more interested in nominees' records and positions than in their gender. The audience indicated it would recommend opposing any nominee who had a record of opposition to reproductive choice because such opinions exist in the context of many other attitudes about women's issues.

To have an effect on judicial nominations, Aron urged Clearinghouse members and their friends to send individual letters and emails to express the gratitude or disappointment with which they viewed their senators' vote on Supreme Court nominees. She suggested that those who live in the District of Columbia compensate for their lack of a senator by developing and alerting a list serve of friends who live in other areas. Aron noted that Democratic senators, in particular, consider a "no" vote to be politically risky, but that is not always the case.

### **N.O.W. REPORT SHATTERS MYTHS ABOUT U.S. WOMEN'S EQUALITY**

The National Organization for Women recently published a report that says, "When it comes to narrowing the gender gap, the United States ... ranks a low 17 out of the 58 countries surveyed in measuring the global gender gap." NOW's report is based on a study conducted by the World Economic Forum, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization based in Switzerland ([Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap](#)).

"Each country was judged on five criteria, which included measures of health and well-being, economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment and educational attainment." Sweden came in first and Egypt was last. "The U.S. was ranked 19th in economic participation for women and in political empowerment, but earned the low rank of 46th for economic opportunity and 42nd for health and well-being. Other countries that outrank the U.S. on the overall score include: Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Latvia, France, Netherlands and Ireland ... Both developed and developing countries were included in the survey, showing that the state of gender equity in the world is meager at best. " To read more about it, go to <http://www.now.org/issues/global/100105gendergap.html>

## **INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH PRODUCES TWO FACT SHEETS ON THE GENDER WAGE GAP**

*The Gender Wage Ratio: Women's and Men's Earnings (IWPR #C362 August 2005)* reports that women who worked full time earned 76.5 percent of men's earnings in 2004. It further states that in 2004, the median annual earnings for women working full-time year-round were \$31,223 while men with similar work earned \$40,798. The full report can be viewed on-line at <http://www.iwpr.org>.

*Memo to John Roberts: The Gender Wage Gap is Real (IWPR #C350 September 2005)* includes two graphs. The first graph depicts an estimate of the cumulative loss over time, due to the gender wage gap, for the average college-educated woman since Judge John Roberts dismissed the way gap in 1984. The second graph shows the average earnings for women and men at five time points. The report shows the sum total loss to women is a staggering \$1.7 trillion. The full report can be viewed on line at <http://www.iwpr.org>.

## **HELPING WOMEN GET TO THE TOP**

The July 23, 2005 issue of *The Economist* writes on the subject of getting more females in senior corporate positions. It states that although women represent almost half of the workforce in western countries and can be found in the lower ranks of many of the big companies, the top of the ladder is quite different. "For every ten men in the executive suite there is one woman, a ratio that has changed little since the term 'the glass ceiling' was coined two decades ago...even though a growing number of companies have become convinced that it makes good business sense to have more women in their executive suite." The article continues by stating that "...many hard nose bastions such as ABB, BP, and General Electric have renewed their efforts to help women reach the higher levels, not out of a sense of corporate social responsibility but because they genuinely believe it will be good for their company profits." The article cites research about America, Britain and Scandinavian support this view due to a "strong correlation between shareholder returns and the number of women in the executive suite."

Barriers seen by some firms for promoting women to the top positions on the corporate ladder are seen as the belief that the move of many women to drop out for a time being to have children or provide caregiving for a family member is because they can live happily on one salary. However, it is seen that most career minded women would be just as ambitious to do a man's job if given the chance.

"...The first place that companies should look if they want to bring more women to the top is at the point of re-entry," states the writer who suggests that a number of things the company can do is to offer special allowances as flexible working time and work location to those who are also caregivers at home. Because of advances in electronic technology, this can be arranged for both men and women caregivers.

The writer concludes: "The men who currently occupy positions at the top have to learn that female executives are not just men in skirts and trouser suits. It is now clear that women will not rise to the top of the corporate ladder by a simple process of osmosis once there is enough of them at the bottom. They have different needs in the workplace. Only when men understand this will women join them at the top."

## **REDSKINS PLAN SHOOTING EVENT WITH NRA TO BENEFIT REDSKINS' CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**

Ladd Everitt, President, Million Mom March DC has sent out the following Action Alert. The Washington Redskins and their owner, Daniel M. Snyder, have announced a planned shooting event with the National Rifle Association (NRA) on October 25, 2005, to benefit the Redskins' Charitable Foundation.

The mission statement of the Redskins' Charitable Foundation "is to utilize the assets of the Washington Redskins and its corporate and community partners to make a positive and measurable impact on youth in the greater Washington, D.C. region in the areas of literacy, youth development, education, community service and health and wellness."

The NRA is currently lobbying Congress to overturn all of Washington, D.C.'s gun laws. The bills to repeal the District's gun laws promoted by the NRA would: legalize handguns, semiautomatic assault weapons (i.e., AK-47s, Uzis, Tec-9s, etc.) and 50 caliber sniper rifles; allow any person to carry, openly or concealed, loaded handguns and other concealable firearms in houses, places of business, or other land "possessed by that person"; and, severely weaken the District's ban on armor-piercing handgun ammunition.

Literally every elected official in our city, Democrat and Republican alike, vigorously opposes the NRA's legislation. Mayor Anthony Williams, Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey, and D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton have all spoken out repeatedly against repealing D.C.'s gun laws. Chief Ramsey has stated point blank it would make it harder for his officers to do their jobs, keep our neighborhoods safe, and get guns off the streets.

The Redskins' announcement comes the same month that the cover of the NRA's "America's 1st Freedom" magazine features "Washington's Newest Monument," an imagined "monument" consisting of a giant tombstone marked "Washington, D.C., America's Murder Capital." The tombstone is covered with skulls and faces of the dead. Inside, a two-page photograph of Mayor Anthony Williams holding up his hands while making a point has the headline and caption, "D.C. to Criminals: We Surrender! The mayor of Washington, D.C., the Murder Capital of the U.S. for 14 of the last 15 years, strikes a telling pose as he defends D.C.'s absurd gun laws." The article then goes on to attack Mayor Williams and Chief Ramsey (visit <http://www.vpc.org/nradcarticle.pdf> to read the full article).

Mr. Everitt suggests all concerned citizens call the Redskins front office immediately at (703) 726-7000 and tell them to cancel the October 25 event with the NRA IMMEDIATELY. The Redskins should be speaking out firmly against the NRA's reckless attempts to push more guns into our city, not hosting shooting events with the NRA and hypocritically speaking of the "health and wellness" of District children.

Also, contact your DC Council member immediately and ask them to pass the same message onto Mr. Snyder. A phone list for council members is available at <http://dccouncil.gov>

## COMING EVENTS

---

- OCTOBER**                    **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**
- OCTOBER 17-21**        **National Business Women's Week.** See the Business and Professional Women/USA calendar at <http://www.bpusa.org> for activities.
- OCTOBER 25**            **CWI Meeting**, 12 NOON – 1:30PM. See page 1.
- NOVEMBER 1**            **Deadline to submit articles or events for the November CWI Newsletter.** Email to [CWIInsltr@aol.com](mailto:CWIInsltr@aol.com)
- NOVEMBER 19**        **An Afternoon with Alice Neel and Friends.** Art historians will discuss the work of Alice Neel. One of the 20th century's great portrait painters, Neel often used women subjects, revealing their changing roles in different eras.  
Location: National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC

### CWI NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE VIA E-MAIL

Members wishing to receive the CWI Newsletter via email instead of by U.S. mail can send their requests by e-mail to [CWIInsltr@aol.com](mailto:CWIInsltr@aol.com). The newsletter will be sent in PDF format. The first issue after the request is received, the newsletter will be sent via e-mail and U.S. mail. The following month, the newsletter will be sent via email only, unless cancelled. Requests to discontinue the email version and re- establish the regular mail version can be sent to the same email address. If you have questions concerning these procedures, please call Sheila Willet, newsletter editor at 202 588-1734.

CWI Board of Directors, July 2005 – June 2006.    OFFICERS: President, Ellen S. Overton; Vice President Program, Sue Klein; Vice President Membership, Jean Landweber; Treasurer, Linda Fihelly; Secretary, Harriett M. Stonehill.    BOARD MEMBERS: Alvin Golub, Harriett Harper, Roslyn Kaiser, Karen S. Mayers, Ruth G. Nadel, Jacqueline Scherer, Clara G. Schiffer, Joy R. Simonson, ex officio.  
Sheila A. Willet, Newsletter Editor

## CLEARINGHOUSE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

P.O. Box 70603  
Friendship Heights, MD 20813

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**