



## Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

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

**JANUARY 2007**

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### **The Feminist Face of Today's Unions Attracting Women Workers and Addressing Workplace Issues**

The two speakers have each had significant experience and success with organizing women around the concerns that most affect their lives in the workplace.

**Constance Cordovilla**, associate director of the Human Rights and Community Relations Department of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) AFL-CIO, is a leader on civil and human rights issues, particularly in the areas of women's rights, gender equity, LGBT rights, domestic violence and community coalition building.

**Carol Rosenblatt**, executive director of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), representing 6.5 million union women, advocates for equal pay, job security, child and elder care benefits, safe workplaces, affordable health care, retirement security, reproductive rights, and protection from sexual harassment and violence at work.

**SPEAKERS:** **Constance Cordovilla**, Associate Director of the Human Rights and Community Relations Department, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) AFL-CIO  
**Carol Rosenblatt**, Executive Director of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)

**TOPIC:** **The Feminist Face of Today's Unions: How do unions attract women workers and address their workplace issues?**

**DATE/TIME:** **Tuesday, January 23, 2007 / 12 noon – 1:30 p.m.**

**PLACE:** **American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, 8<sup>th</sup> Flr., Kellogg Rm.**  
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.**  
Please come a little earlier than usual to go through the new sign-in system.  
**In case of snowstorm and /or closing of government offices, the meeting will be cancelled. Please listen to radio reports.**

**Next Meeting: February 27, 2007**

## **PROGRAM SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 28, 2006 MEETING**

### **Women's Issues in the 110th Congress**

At CWI's November meeting our two speakers, Anita Sharma, senior analyst at Lake Research, and Sharon Grosfeld, executive director of the Women's Leadership Forum of the Democratic National Committee and a former senator in the Maryland House of Delegates, discussed important gains women have made in the 2006 election.

There are now two new female senators, making a total of 16 women in the Senate and more than 70 women in the House. Nancy Pelosi is the first female speaker of the House and is now third in line for the presidency. Janet Napolitano from Arizona is the first woman to head the National Governors Association and more than 50 women have been elected in statewide contests.

**Anita Sharma**, reporting on studies conducted by Lake Research partners, stated that six out of 10 women want Congress to build workable, practical solutions to our nation's problems. More women than men also believe that an increase in the number of women in Congress would reduce the amount of corruption in Washington.

In listing priorities, Democratic women rated health care, Social Security and retirement, the economy and jobs as top priorities. Independent women also ranked health care and the economy as the top priorities, with the war in Iraq third. "Interestingly," Sharma said, "Republican women placed the war in Iraq first, followed by corruption in government, and then Social Security and retirement." She added that women are much more concerned than men about child care, early education and raising the minimum wage.

Sharma also noted that there is a lower tier of issues, including stem cell research, abortion, and paid sick leave; more than a third of women rate these as high priorities for the next Congress.

Next, **Sharon Grosfeld** observed that the Lake Research survey "helped the DNC understand

what the American people are thinking and it helps to guide what our principles should be ...the priorities of women are in fact the same as the priorities of the Democratic Party."

She pointed out that in addition to the public attention paid to Nancy Pelosi, it is important to note not only the increase in the number of women governors and mayors, but also the numbers of commissioners and council members in the states. It is at the state and local level, she said, that it is possible to follow the changing dynamics of government priorities. "Other countries have made greater progress with women as leaders at the national level, but this election, unlike 10 years ago, is a significant shift in power, Grosfeld declared. It means that women have more power at every level; we have a greater voice and ability to direct the agenda.

Grosfeld said she believes that women seek practical solutions to problems because they are still juggling many tasks and have to be goal-oriented to get things done.

In the past few years there has been strong resistance to an increase in the minimum wage. The speakers said that an increase now seems probable. In every state that had initiatives on the ballot to increase the minimum wage and cost of living, both measures passed. Since more women than men traditionally earn the minimum wage, especially women of color, they voted overwhelmingly for these changes. Grosfeld commented that people are much further ahead than their representatives have been.

Women voted overwhelmingly as a group for Democrats. The so-called soccer moms (married white women) usually thought of as Republicans are now allied with the Democrats. In the 2008 election, women – both Democrats and Republicans – will drive the election, Grosfeld said, adding "it will not be labeled as the women's agenda, but the agenda that most Americans want to see."

## **PROGRAM SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 28, 2006 MEETING continued**

### **Women's Issues in the 110th Congress**

Asked why candidates didn't talk about child care and other measures during the election, Grosfeld replied that those concerns were discussed more at the state level, and women's organizations have been trying to encourage elected officials in the states to discuss these issues and to push the federal government to fund state level programs.

One questioner brought up the need to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act to help those caring for older parents. The heavily male-dominated Chambers of Commerce oppose this, because they "prefer to have companies do this voluntarily rather than have an expansion of government power." The speakers encouraged women to stay away from "hot button terms," such as universal health insurance.

In a discussion of taxes, it was said that women would like to close loopholes in tax laws and would be willing to have tax cuts if the savings accrued were associated with particular issues.

On a hopeful note, the speakers believe that the stage is set for investment in human capital to stimulate economic growth. It was suggested that it is important for women to infiltrate opposing groups and for women's organizations to band together to force change. The need now is for women to be politically astute, raise the issues with candidates, write letters to the editor and so forth, to keep their concerns alive and work to change political priorities.

### **109<sup>th</sup> CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

Women's Policy.org has two reports available on-line. *109<sup>th</sup> Congress At-A-Glance*, a summary of congressional action affecting women and their families in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, can be viewed at <http://www.womenspolicy.org/thesource/article.cfm?ArticleID=2217>. *FY2007 Appropriations Summary* congressional action on the FY2007 appropriations bills can be viewed at <http://www.womenspolicy.org/thesource/article.cfm?ArticleID=2216>.

### **SOJOURNER TRUTH TO BE ADDED TO SUFFRAGIST STATUE IN CONGRESS**

The Feminist Daily News Wire (December 7, 2006) reported that a bill passed in the Senate yesterday that authorizes the addition of Sojourner Truth's image to a statue honoring suffragists in the basement of the US Capitol building. The bill, HR 4510, was initially promoted by the late Dr. C. DeLores Tucker, a life-long champion of civil rights and women's rights and the chair of the National Congress of Black Women for nine years. Introduced by Representative Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), the bill passed the House in December 2005. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) introduced the legislation in the Senate and canvassed for bipartisan support. Yesterday, the Senate unanimously agreed to pass the bill without amendment. "This is a great honor for Black women everywhere, and we are grateful to all who worked to make it happen. While we have struggled for a very long time to keep Sojourner Truth's legacy alive, we recognize that it is through our struggles that we gain our victories," said Dr. E. Faye Williams, Esq., the current national chair of the National Congress of Black Women, of the bill's congressional approval as quoted in the article.

### **NWLC SEEKING PERSONAL STORIES**

The National Women's Law Center is collecting stories about the impact of Title IX on the lives of women and girls, in connection with the landmark Title IX law, passed in June 35 years ago. Please visit <http://www.titleix.info> to share your story.

#### **CWI NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE VIA E-MAIL**

Members wishing to receive the CWI Newsletter via email instead of U.S. mail can send their e-mail requests to **[cwinwsltr@aol.com](mailto:cwinwsltr@aol.com)**

## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

We close the year with renewed enthusiasm, large attendance at our meetings (42 in November) and we welcome our new members. There are 8 since September and you'll find them listed below:

Deborah M. Chalfie  
Sharon Grosfeld

Jane N. Howe  
Lori Milstein

Mary O. Strauss  
Dawn Thomsen

Rhonda Trent  
Valerie A. Young

On a sad note, Joy Simonson, Ruth Nadel and I attended the funeral of longtime board member, **Jean Linehan**. She was our Corresponding Secretary for many years and her input was invaluable. A long time resident of Chevy Chase, she was involved in numerous Montgomery County civic activities; as a pioneer in improving women's work lives, both in government and the private sector. Jean was a role model for many and we shall miss her. Ellen Overton

## **BUNNY SANDLER HONORED**

Reported recently on the Women's eNews web site, Long-time CWI member Bernice (Bunny) Sandler, called by the NY Times "the godmother of Title IX," has been chosen by Women's eNews as one of 21 Leaders for the 21st Century 2007: 20 women and one man who are dedicating their lives to improving the lives of all women at home, in the workplace, in school, in the media and around the world.

Bernice Sandler (who saw the need for enormous change) "led the way for the passage of the Title IX amendment and has affected the lives and education of every girl and woman in the United States," reports the web site article.

Women's eNews reported several hundred nominations for the 21 leaders came in from all over the world last fall, inspiring and amazing the selection committee members "by the acts of significance that the 21 Leaders are doing across the country and the world to improve the lives of women ...they have helped spread the word, eased the suffering, stimulated transitions, nurtured the young and shared the wisdom of age." More stories about the honorees can be found on the Web site <http://www.womensenews.org>. A gala to honor these 21 will be held at the Tavern on the Green in New York City, May 22, 2007. E-mail [natasha@womensenews.org](mailto:natasha@womensenews.org) for information about the gala.

## **GENDER POLICY PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM**

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) will host a gender policy public outreach event on Thursday January 11, 2007 from 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. at MCC Headquarters, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 875 15th St., NW, Washington, DC 20005. The full Gender Policy Report is now available on MCC's public web site at <http://www.mcc.gov>. This event is open to the public. The invitation is transferable. For security reasons, please RSVP with your name and organization by Tuesday, January 9, 2007 to MCC Events at [mccevents@mcc.gov](mailto:mccevents@mcc.gov).

## **COMMISSION FOR WOMEN 27<sup>th</sup> WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING**

This year's briefing will be held on January 28, 2007 from 12:30 to 5 p.m. at the National 4-H Conference Center, 7100 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase. Donna Brazile, founder and managing director of Brazile and Associates, will deliver the keynote address. Her company empowers grassroots advocates and trains citizens to participate in the political process. The Briefing will include workshops. There will also be a panel discussion on the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women. The program will conclude with a reception with County and State elected officials.

The free event is co-sponsored by more than 50 women's and community organizations and coordinated by the Montgomery County Commission for Women. Registration is required. For more information or to pre-register, visit <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw> or call 240-777-8330; TDD, 301-279-1034. Onsite registration will be available from 12:30 to 1 p.m.

## **GENDER PAY GAP ONCE NARROWING IS STUCK IN PLACE**

That's the headline in a recent NY Times article that says that women of all economic levels – poor, middle class and rich – were steadily gaining ground on their male counterparts in the work force," (throughout the 1980s and early '90s). "By the mid-'90s, women earned more than 75 cents for every dollar in hourly pay that men did, up from 65 cents just 15 years earlier.

"Largely without notice, however, one big group of women has stopped making progress: those with a four-year college degree. The gap between their pay and the pay of male college graduates has actually widened slightly since the mid-'90s. For women without a college education, the pay gap with men has narrowed only slightly over the same span.

"These trends suggest that all the recent high-profile achievements (many recent firsts for women) do not reflect what is happening to most women, researchers say. ...Last year, college-educated women between 36 and 45 years old, for example, earned 74.7 cents in hourly pay for every dollar that men in the same group did, according to Labor Department data.

"The reasons for this stagnation are complicated and appear to include both discrimination and women's own choices, the number of women staying home with young children has risen recently, with the increase sharpest among highly educated mothers, who might otherwise be earning high salaries. The pace at which women are flowing into highly paid fields also appears to have slowed.

These trends can be viewed in at least two ways: women who must also take care of families may be forced to take lesser-paying jobs, or stay-at-home, with no salary. "If the government offered day-care programs similar to those in other countries or men spent more time caring family members, women have greater opportunity to pursue whatever job they wanted, according to this view." (NY Times, Dec. 24, 2006)

## **REMAINDER CWI PROGRAM YEAR 2006-7 MEETINGS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

January 23; February 27; March 27; April 24; May 22; June 26. All held at One Dupont Circle, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, 12 noon - 1:30pm.

## **OTHER FUTURE EVENTS**

- Feb. 8**      **National Capital Chapter Older Women's League Speaker Meeting.** Send email to [nccowl@aol.com](mailto:nccowl@aol.com) for more information.
- Feb. 18-25**    **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual MS. Magazine Cruise.** For information call 800 707-1634 or visit website at <http://www.msmagazinecruise.com/>
- Mar. 6**      **Women's Policy Inc. Congressional Gala** Celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues to be held at Union Station. For more info call 202 554-2323.
- Mar. 22**      **Wilson Center Features Speaker Jill Norgren biographer of Belva Lockwood** who was the first woman to mount a real campaign for the U.S. presidency and the woman who talked Congress into enacting the statute that permitted women to argue before the Supreme Court. For more information call 202-691-4129 or send email to [Philippa.Strum@wilsoncenter.org](mailto:Philippa.Strum@wilsoncenter.org)
- Mar. 26-27**    **NCOW Women's Equality Summit and Congressional Action Day.** For more info go to website at <http://www.ncwo-online.org/pages.cfm?ID=227> or call 202 293-4505.
- Apr. 22-25**    **Women Work! 2007 National Conference.** Go to <http://www.womenwork.org/> for more info.

## COMING EVENTS

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- Jan. 9**      **Meeting of DC Commission For Women.** 6:00pm at law offices of Hogan & Hartson, Main Litigation Center's Conference Room (basement level) at 555 13<sup>th</sup> St. NW. For more information contact Rebecca Robinson at 202 637-7225, email: [rmrobinson@hhlaw.com](mailto:rmrobinson@hhlaw.com).
- Jan 11**      **Gender Policy Public Symposium.** Open to the public at no charge. RSVP by Jan. 9. (See p. 4)
- Jan. 18**      **1920s Celebration Dinner** kicking off The Woman's National Democratic Club 85th Anniversary Inaugural Event. For more information, call 202 232-7363 or go to the web site at <http://democraticwoman.org>.
- Jan. 23**      **CWI Meeting,** One Dupont Circle, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, 12 noon - 1:30pm. Topic: The Feminist Face of Today's Unions: How do unions attract women workers and address their workplace issues?. (See p. 1)
- Jan. 23**      **2007 Annual Maryland State Legislative Rally.** 9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland. For further information and a registration form, phone David Waugh, USM Vice President for Rallies, at 301-493-5883, email, [dwaugh@retiredamericans.org](mailto:dwaugh@retiredamericans.org).
- Jan. 24**      **Reception Honoring all the women in the new class of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.** Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, 6-8:00pm, 144 Constitution Ave. NE. RSVP by Jan. 19: call 202 546-1210 x23 or send email to [jane24@sewallbelmont.org](mailto:jane24@sewallbelmont.org).
- Jan 28**      **Maryland Commission for Women 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Legislative Briefing.** (See p. 4)

**See page 5 for additional future events.**

CWI Board of Directors, July 2006 – June 2007: OFFICERS: President, Ellen S. Overton; Vice President Program, Sue Klein; Membership Co-chairs, Jean Landweber and D. Anne Martin; Treasurer, Linda Fihelly; Secretary, Harriett M. Stonehill. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Alvin Golub, Harriett Harper, Roslyn Kaiser, Jessica Lazar, Ruth G. Nadel, Joy R. Simonson, ex officio. CWI Newsletter Layout/Production: Sheila A. Willet.

# **CWI**

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**FIRST CLASS MAIL**