

Standing Up for **Women & Families** in 2012

JANUARY 2012

The National Partnership for Women & Families is dedicated to expanding opportunities for women and improving the well-being of our nation's families. For more than 40 years, we have worked to promote fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care, including reproductive health services, and family friendly programs and policies. Achieving progress on our key priorities has taken on greater urgency as women struggle to find and retain affordable health care, preserve their reproductive rights and find and hold on to decent jobs with good benefits. In 2012, we urge you to stand up for the rights and interests of women and their families, because when women do better, families do better and our nation prospers.

Health Care

All Americans deserve access to quality, affordable health care that is coordinated and patient-centered.

- ▶ **Oppose Efforts to Repeal the Affordable Care Act:** The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is working for women and their families. Women no longer face deductibles or copays when they need preventive services like mammograms and cervical cancer screenings. They can now stay on a parent's insurance coverage, or keep their children on their plans, until age 26. Health plans can no longer rescind coverage or impose lifetime caps or low annual limits just when women need coverage most. More improvements are right around the corner as other provisions of the ACA go into effect. The National Partnership urges members of Congress to **vote against any proposal that would repeal the ACA or undermine any of its important consumer protections, including the medical loss ratio requirements which ensure premium dollars go toward medical care instead of administration and profits.**
- ▶ **Strengthen Medicare and Medicaid:** Three out of four adult Medicaid enrollees are women. Medicaid covers essential care over the span of women's lives, from family planning and maternal health services to long-term care. Women also make up more than half of the 44 million Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare is a critical part of the foundation of retirement financial security for women – enabling many to remain independent as they age. The National Partnership urges members of Congress to **reject all arbitrary cuts to Medicaid and Medicare and instead invest in payment and delivery system reforms that can cut costs and improve the quality of care.**

Reproductive Health

Every woman deserves access to quality reproductive health care that includes contraception, abortion care and medically accurate information about her reproductive health.

- ▶ **Protect and Promote Abortion Coverage:** Women who are enrolled in Medicaid or otherwise depend on the federal government for health insurance have their abortion coverage restricted through policies such as the Hyde Amendment. The ACA further restricts access to abortion coverage by requiring that health plans in exchanges collect separate premium payments for this coverage. The National Partnership opposes these restrictions and encourages members of Congress to **repeal the Hyde Amendment and all other restrictions that limit women’s access to abortion coverage and, until then, urges the Obama administration to implement the restrictions in the ACA in the least burdensome manner possible so that abortion coverage remains available to women with private health plans.**
- ▶ **Improve Access to Contraception:** The ACA requires all new private health plans to cover a broad range of women’s preventive health services without cost-sharing, including all FDA-approved forms of contraception. This will enable millions of women to get the contraceptive coverage they need, improving health outcomes and saving money. The National Partnership believes that *all* women should have access to contraception without cost-sharing and urges members of Congress to **oppose any effort to undermine this provision.**
- ▶ **Support Title X Appropriations:** At a time when a record number of women are living in poverty, we should be investing in women’s comprehensive health care, not cutting off access to critical services. The National Partnership urges members of Congress to **provide robust funding for the Title X family planning program and other federal family planning programs and to oppose abstinence-only sex education, defunding Planned Parenthood, and all proposals that restrict women’s access to family planning services, cancer screenings and other care they need to stay healthy and plan their families.**
- ▶ **Enhance the Quality of Maternity Care:** Despite the billions of dollars spent on maternity care in the United States each year – much of it Medicaid dollars – the World Health Organization reports that the U.S. infant mortality rate, at seven deaths per 1,000 infants¹, is well above that of most European countries. Improving the quality of care for women and their babies is critical, but we need better tools to pinpoint problems and develop solutions. To address this, the National Partnership urges members of Congress to **support the *Quality Care for Moms and Babies Act* (HR3620/S1969), which would establish quality measures for maternity care and test new models for maternity medical homes.**
- ▶ **Reject Refusal Rights:** Refusal rights allow health care providers to opt out of providing essential reproductive health care services and medications. Bills such as the *Protect Life Act* (HR358/S877) and the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act* (HR1179/S1467) would create broad refusal rights for health plans, medical institutions and health care providers to refuse to cover and provide life-saving medical care to women. The National Partnership urges members of Congress to **oppose these bills and all efforts to expand refusal rights that jeopardize women’s access to reproductive health services.**

Work and Family & Workplace Fairness

It is long past time for workplaces to reflect the needs of 21st century working families.

- ▶ **Support Paid Sick Days:** Nearly 40 million private-sector workers cannot earn a single paid sick day to recover from common, short-term illnesses.² Without paid sick days, workers are forced to make impossible choices when illness strikes: stay home, lose pay and risk their jobs; or go to work sick and risk spreading disease to their co-workers and communities. The National Partnership encourages members of Congress to **support the *Healthy Families Act* (HR1876/S984), which would create a national paid sick days standard and allow workers to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year.**
- ▶ **Support Paid Family and Medical Leave Programs:** A mere 11 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers and fewer than 40 percent have access to employer-provided, short-term disability insurance.⁴ Yet at some point, nearly all workers will need time away from work to deal with a serious personal or family illness, or to care for a new child. Paid family and medical leave allows workers to meet these needs without jeopardizing their economic security. The National Partnership encourages members of Congress to **support proposals that would provide working families with access to paid family and medical leave.**
- ▶ **Expand the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA):** The FMLA is the only federal law that helps working men and women meet the dual demands of work and family and it has been used by workers more than 100 million times. Unfortunately, only about half of workers are eligible for the unpaid leave it provides.² The National Partnership urges members of Congress to **support legislation that expands access to the FMLA, including the *Family and Medical Leave Enhancement Act* (HR1440) which would amend the FMLA to cover businesses with 25 or more employees (the FMLA currently applies to employers with 50 or more employees) and the *Family and Medical Leave Inclusion Act* (HR2364/S1283) which would expand the definition of family member to allow FMLA leave to care for a domestic partner, parent-in-law, adult child, sibling, grandchild or grandparent.**
- ▶ **Guarantee Equal Pay:** Women working full time, year-round are paid only 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. The gap is even larger for women of color, with African American women paid 63 cents and Latina women 53 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Latino men.⁵ The National Partnership urges members of Congress to **support the *Paycheck Fairness Act* (S797/HR1519), which would update and strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes and improving the law's effectiveness by making it harder for employers to hide pay discrimination, rewarding employers that have good pay practices, and helping train women and girls about salary negotiation.**
- ▶ **Enable Workers to Challenge Systemic Discrimination:** In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt a blow to the ability of workers to effectively challenge unlawful employment discrimination with its decision in *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*. The *Equal Employment Opportunity Restoration Act*, which will be introduced in the 112th Congress, would **restore the ability of workers to come together to vindicate their rights to equal employment opportunity.**

- ▶ **Strengthen Retirement Security:** Social Security is the largest source of retirement income for most seniors, helping millions pay for food, housing and other necessities. Fifty-four million Americans⁶, including 26.1 million adult women who are widowed, retired or face a serious disability, depend on it.⁷ There is no other guaranteed wage replacement program, public or private, that offers the same level of economic security. The National Partnership encourages members of Congress to **strengthen – not cut – Social Security.**

¹ World Health Organization. Global Health Observatory Data Repository. *MDG: Child Mortality, Infant Mortality*. Retrieved 18 January 2012, from <http://apps.who.int/ghodata/>.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011, July). *Employee Benefits in the United States: Selected paid leave benefits: Access, National Compensation Survey (Table 6)*. Retrieved 8 November 2011, from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010, March). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2010 (Table 32)*. Retrieved 13 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2010/ebbl0046.pdf>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011, September). *Employee Benefits in the United States National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2011 (Tables 17 and 32)*. Retrieved 19 January 2012, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2011/ebbl0048.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). *United States: B20017A. Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (In 2009 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over With Earnings in the Past 12 Months (White Alone); B20017B (Black or African American Alone); and B20017I (Hispanic or Latino). (American Community Survey)*. Unpublished calculation.

⁶ The Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds. (2011). *The 2011 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds*. US Government Printing Office. Retrieved on 29 June, 2011 from <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/TR/2011/tr2011.pdf>.

⁷ English, A., & Lee, S. (2010, March). *Who Are Social Security Beneficiaries?* Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved 30 June 2011, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/who-are-social-security-beneficiaries-updated>.

² Waldfogel, J. (2001, September). Family and Medical Leave: Evidence from the 2000 Surveys. *Monthly Labor Review*, 17-23. Retrieved 14 December 2010, from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2001/09/art2full.pdf>.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at www.NationalPartnership.org.

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