



Office on the Economic Status of Women

Minutes OESW Advisory Committee February 23, 2016 Room 500N, State Office Building 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Senator Carla Nelson, Senator Melissa Wiklund, Representative Kelly Fenton, Representative Linda Slocum

The meeting began at 2:15 p.m. Representative Slocum chaired the beginning of the meeting; Senator Nelson chaired the second part of the meeting. Approximately 32 people attended the meeting.

The meeting opened with recognition of former Senator Linda Berglin in the audience. Senator Berglin was chief author of the 1982 State Government Pay Equity Act and the 1984 Local Government Pay Equity Act. Also recognized in the audience was Rep. Phyllis Kahn.

Barbara Battiste, OESW Director, welcomed the new members of the Advisory Committee—Senator Wiklund and Rep. Fenton—and thanked returning members Sen. Nelson and Rep. Slocum for agreeing to serve a second term. The Advisory Committee expires on Dec. 31, 2015, with the expectation of a new Committee being appointed after the 2015 legislative elections.

Overview of OESW 2015 Activities: Ms. Battiste presented an overview of OESW’s 2015 activities, highlighting the 2015 Women’s Economic Security Summit and the eight Greater Minnesota Listening Sessions on women’s economic issues. She noted that the 2016 Women’s Economic Security Summit will be held on March 3, in the Minnesota Senate Building, and that the public is welcome. Sen. Nelson commented that the OESW Listening Session in Rochester was valuable and appreciated. Rep. Slocum commented that she has been hearing about these same women’s economic issues—lack of child care, need for paid sick leave, low pay for women, etc.—for decades, and called for concrete action to solve these chronic problems.

OESW 2016 Work Plan: Ms. Battiste discussed proposed OESW priorities for 2016. Anticipated legislative issues of particular interest include child care, child support, racial economic disparities, paid family leave, and results of the study of a state retirement savings plan for private sector employees. She noted that Rep. Fenton has asked OESW to consider adding human trafficking as a priority, and she will research what has been done on that issue and discuss possibilities with the Advisory Committee.

Ms. Battiste also highlighted that OESW will be canvassing the state agencies who are implementing the Women’s Economic Security Act (WESA), to see if more needs to be done in educating employers and employees on WESA provisions. OESW plans to have 2016 listening sessions, and is considering having some in the metro area, as well as in Greater Minnesota, and holding the sessions in the evenings and on weekends to increase participation by individual residents.

Sen. Wiklund suggested that the OESW research on the economic status of Minnesota's women of color include an inventory of existing programs that are succeeding. Rep. Slocum further suggested that this research include Greater Minnesota, and that the Advisory Committee members could be helpful in reaching out to rural legislators with the research findings.

Sen. Wiklund also asked OESW to provide Committee members with information on WESA implementation.

Pay Equity: Faith Zwemke (former State Pay Equity Coordinator and OESW contractor for the analysis of Minnesota's pay equity programs), Nina Rothchild (former Director of Minnesota's Council on the Economic Status of Women and former Commissioner of the MN Dept. of Employee Relations) and Barbara Battiste presented the results of a new OESW analysis of Minnesota's state and local government pay equity programs. The analysis shows that these pay equity laws have eliminated the gender wage gap for male- and female-dominated job classes that are of comparable value. Overall, for *all* job classes in state government, the gender wage gap has shrunk from women making 69% of male wages pre-pay equity to 89% today.

It is more complicated to quantify the effect of local government pay equity, which involves over 1,500 jurisdictions, but several sample analyses show a significant narrowing of the gender wage gap after pay equity.

Audience comments: Sheryl Anderson, a private citizen, spoke about the disparities she, as a woman in the male-dominated field of construction labor, continues to face, especially in number of hours worked. Ms. Anderson also spoke of child support arrears that she is owed, and suggested legislators provide some type of "bad debt" tax deduction for obligees for unpaid child support.

Jamie Haefner, President of the Minnesota County Human Resources Management Association, commented on difficulties some counties experience with pay equity reporting requirements. She requested increased opportunities for county representatives to explore solutions with the State Pay Equity Coordinator.

Jill Suurmeyer, with the Association of Minnesota Counties, expressed her Association's appreciation of the chance they had to comment on the pay equity report and said that the demonstrated and continuing results of pay equity shown in the report will help counties appreciate the pay equity program. She stated that counties' "frustration" with the pay equity program is on the technical side.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m.