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Message from the Director

One of the first things OESW's predecessor, the Council for the Economic Status of Women, did when it was established by the Legislature in 1976 was send out a monthly newsletter. Volunteers, many of them retired women, would come to the CESW office once a month and address, stamp and mail the paper newsletter. We don't have the very first issue, but did find a cut-and-pasted Newsletter #2, dated December 1976. It had a notice of a public hearing on displaced homemakers and an article on the gender pay gap in state government. (In 1976, women in state government were paid 69¢ for every \$1 males were paid.)

Well, "we've come a long way, baby"! Or have we? Thanks to Minnesota's 1982 state government pay equity law, women in state government now make 89¢ for every \$1 male state employees make. Yet women are still leaving the workforce temporarily or permanently, or taking part-time jobs, because of family caregiving responsibilities, and that affects their lifetime earnings. Over half of Minnesota's older women don't have enough retirement income to meet basic needs—a result of a lifetime of making less than men.

And...we are restarting the OESW newsletters, which were discontinued in 2003. Only this time around, we'll send them by email.

The purpose of the newsletter will be to provide information to legislators, legislative staff and the community on priority and emerging women's economic issues. Each issue will have a headline article, overviews of interesting recent research and articles, and links to resources. Our hope is soon to feature articles by women throughout Greater Minnesota talking about women's economic issues in their part of the state.

Please send us your suggestions. barbara.battiste@oesw.leg.mn

Barbara Battiste, Director, Office on the Economic Status of Women

Capitol Restoration Contractor Exceeds Hiring Goals for Women & Minorities



Angela Heikkila, Electrical Foreman for Gephart Electrical, working on the Restoration Project

2015 Legislative Overview

By mid-March, 2,016 bills had been introduced in the House and 1,882 bills in the Senate. Historically, only about 4% of the bills introduced ultimately become law. Minnesota has a two-year legislative cycle, consisting of two regular sessions and possible additional "special sessions." OESW scans every bill that is introduced to see if it impacts women's economic status. We watch those bills that have a significant economic impact on women, sometimes providing legislators with background information and research, sometimes making sure appropriate organizations and individuals in the community are aware of the pending legislation.

Here is an [overview](#) of selected bills that the OESW is following this session.



"Historical," is an adjective that captures the January 29, 2015, Minnesota Women's Economic Security Summit. The **Voices of Indigenous and Immigrant Women and Women of Color** session brought us the strong and wise voices of women from Minnesota's African American, Asian American, Latina, and Liberian and Somali communities. You could hear a pin drop in the packed hall as these women spoke proudly of the accomplishments of their communities and the economic and cultural benefits they bring to the state. Legislators took note as the panelists identified what policies were needed to help their communities prosper.

In the **Caregiving** session, a small business owner spoke about the importance of respecting women's roles as both caregivers and workers and stated that she sees her employees as such a valuable asset that she makes sure her workplace fully supports their caregiving responsibilities.

The **Transportation** session reframed the legislative transportation discussion in terms of the transportation needs of women and low-income families. Minnesotans, especially in rural areas where public transit may not be an option, need a reliable and affordable car to get to work. Women's caregiving role was linked to transportation needs—women need to get to work, take their children to day care or after school activities, transport their aging parents to medical appointments, and buy the groceries. "Making cars move faster on the main streets of our communities does not meet the complex needs of women."

Check out [the OESW website](#) for videos of each Summit session and session fact sheets.

Heard at the Summit:

- *Usually, solutions are designed for women of color, and then women of color are called and asked, 'What do you think?' This idea of other people developing solutions for women of color has to stop.... Today presents an opportunity to include all Minnesota women, especially indigenous, immigrant and women of color, to fully participate in the creation of their future.*
- *The lack of paid leave forces families to make impossible choices: choosing to stay home because they, or their child...is sick, vs. losing a job or pay.*
- *There is no economic security to working full time and not even being able to raise your family income level to the federal poverty level....*
- *It used to be that having Spanish as a first language was a deficit, but now it is an asset. That changes the narrative.*
- *The Liberian community adds at least \$22M to Minnesota's economy.*
- *Although Somalis faced many challenges when they came here—cultural differences, language, religion, racial biases—I am so proud that if you go to South Minneapolis you will see many storefront businesses started by Somali women who are trying to bring in income for their families.*
- *Minnesota's Asian American community is very diverse, representing over 42 ethnic communities coming from over 50 countries.*
- *Magnify all concerns voiced by other panelists by about 10 for the African American community.*
- *Minnesota's black women have been the backbone of keeping the family together. We're resilient. We're on the curve now; the fresh air is coming in.*
- *The goals and hopes of [black women] are similar to every ethnic background: We want our children to graduate high school. We want livable wage jobs. That should be a right, not a 'hope and dream.'*
- *Paid sick leave would make a huge difference for millions of [working] Americans who are caregivers.*
- *No topic is more central to women's economic security than caregiving.*
- *Transportation isn't just a women's issue; it is a civil rights issue, because it affects the black community—the largest users of public transit— much more.*
- *Women who caregive for their loved ones are 2 ½ times more likely to live in poverty when they are old than women who do not.*
- *Many Asian cultures have a cultural value of filial piety: a sense of duty to respect, obey and care for parents and elder family members. If you do not take this responsibility, you are stigmatized; you are not looking after your parents like you should.*
- *Policies that are good for women are also good for men, and they're good for kids and for families and for our economy.*



Alzheimer's is a woman's disease; 60% of Alzheimer's caregivers are women.

(Senator Carla Nelson)

RESOURCES, RESEARCH & NEWS

Resources

New Forms for Divorcing Parents

Effective February 3, there's a new *Joint Divorce With Children* module in the state's I-CAN! online form system. This new module also includes language/questions that are compatible with same-sex marriage.

For more information about the new module, visit [the MN Judicial Branch Self Help Center](#) (OESW thanks [Call for Justice, LLC](#), for providing this information.)

Legal Services State Support Talks about "Fact Sheets"

Each month, Legal Services State Support (the electronic arm of the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition) puts out "Tech Tips." This month's "Tip" relates to the 2015 Fact Sheets found on [LawHelpMN.org](#)—fact sheets that are perfect for attorneys and the public alike. As a collaboration

between the Education for Justice Program (E4J) of MMLA (Mid Minnesota Legal Aid) and State Support, [LawHelpMN.org](#) offers fact sheets on a variety of legal issues, all of which are written in language that is easy to understand, and are available for download and distribution.

To learn more about how to access these Fact Sheets, we encourage you to visit [Legal Services State Support](#)

Research

According to the Census Bureau's latest figures on poverty, U.S. women are hit hardest in every category. [More....](#)

The gender divide in Higher Ed.

"Where are all the women in Higher Education?" Women are 1 in 4 college presidents, 29% of full professors, 40 out of 254 chief executives of public universities and public colleges. What can be done to reach a better balance? [More....](#)