
COMMISSION ON THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

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NEWSLETTER #115

JUNE 1987

IN THIS ISSUE

LEGISLATION 1987, summarizing action on Commission-endorsed legislative proposals during the 1987 legislative session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Commission is beginning to plan for its summer hearings. Each summer the Commission holds several open hearings on the economic status of women in communities in greater Minnesota. If you are interested in having the Commission hold a hearing in your community please contact the Commission Office.

Legislative Summary 1987

COMMISSION ENDORSED LEGISLATION WHICH PASSED

PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN

Commission on the Economic Status of Women: Provides funds for the Commission for the 1988-89 Biennium. (HF 1315)

Battered Women's Programs: Provides \$5.3 million for the biennium for continued support for the 17 battered women's shelters in Minnesota. (HF 243)

Displaced Homemaker Programs: Provides continued support for the state's displaced homemaker programs. Funds for this program will continue to come from the marriage license fees. Projected funds from this source are \$2 million for the biennium. (HF 243)

Sexual Assault Programs: Provides \$1.3 million for the Sexual Assault Services Program which provides training, develops materials and provides state coordination, administration and grants to local communities for sexual assault program. (HF 243)

HEALTH

Family Planning: Provides approximately \$1.1 million to the Minnesota Department of Health for family planning special projects under the Community Health Services Act. (HF 243)

Sliding Fee Health Insurance: Beginning July 1, 1988 families with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty level will be eligible for very low cost prenatal care and comprehensive outpatient coverage for children up to age 6. (HF 243)

Women, Infants and Children Food Program (WIC): Provides \$1 million in state funds to supplement the federal appropriation for the WIC supplemental food program. (HF 243)

TAXES

Taxes - Single Heads of Households: A new tax bracket for single heads of households with dependents is created which taxes single parents at a more favorable rate than single individuals with no dependents. In previous years single heads of households were taxed at the same rate as single individuals. (Chapter 268)

Taxes - Dependent Care Tax Credit: The refundable child care tax credit has been retained and will continue to be targeted to lower income taxpayers. It will appear on both the Minnesota short and long income tax forms. (Chapter 268)

EDUCATION

Part-Time Student Aid: Appropriates \$2 million per year for the continuation of the Part-Time Grant Program for students of post-secondary institutions. (SF 1515)

Child Care in Post Secondary Education: Authorizes the state to sell bonds to finance the construction of child care centers at state higher education institutions. Eight community colleges (Brainerd, Inver Hills, Hibbing, Itasca, Mesabi, Normandale, Nothland and Rochester) and 10 AVTIs (Anoka, Austin, Faribault, Hibbing, Mankato, Moorhead, Pine City, St. Paul, Thief River Falls and Wadena) will be building or expanding child care centers during the biennium. In addition, Willmar AVTI and Willmar Community College will construct a shared child care center. Two AVTIs, Hennepin Technical Center and St. Cloud, were given authority to use existing local funds for child care facilities. (HF 919)

CHILD CARE

Child Care Sliding Fee Program: Increases funding for the sliding fee program to \$26 million for the biennium. A portion of the sliding fee fund is set aside for targeted AFDC recipients as part Minnesota's welfare reform initiatives and a portion is set aside for students in post-secondary institutions. (HF 243)

Child Care Resource and Referral: \$250,000 of the sliding fee appropriation will be available for new or expanding child care resource and referral services. This is the first state appropriation for resource and referral programs and 80 percent is targeted to rural Minnesota. (HF 243)

Child Care Grants and Loans: \$250,000 of the sliding fee appropriation will be available through the Department of Human Services to provide grants to assist in the development of licensed child care providers. (HF 243)

Child Care for Public Members of State Boards: Allows public members of state boards and commissions to be reimbursed for child care expenses associated with participation on the board/commission. (Chapter 354)

Child Care Workers' Wages: Provides higher reimbursement rates through the state sliding fee program to child care centers and family day care providers that pay wages that are 110 percent or more of the county average wage for child care workers. (Chapter 290)

WORKPLACE ISSUES

Pay Equity: Requires school districts with more than 10 employees that did not submit a pay equity report to submit a pay equity report to the Commissioner of Employee Relations by October 1, 1987. The report must include an implementation plan to be completed no later than December 31, 1991. Any district that does not submit a plan by October 1, 1987 will be required to have a total administrative cost freeze. (Chapter 398)

Commercial Credit: Amends the Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination in the granting of commercial credit on the basis of sex or marital status. (Chapter 245)

Unemployment Compensation for Part-Time Workers: Changes the method of computing eligibility for unemployment compensation. Permanent part-time low income workers will have sufficient wages to become eligible for unemployment compensation. (Chapter 362)

Parental Leave: Parents employed in companies with 21 or more employees, who work at least 20 hours a week and have been on the job for at least one year, are entitled to take up to six weeks of unpaid leave when a child is born or adopted. At the end of the leave the employee is entitled to return to her/his old position or a position of comparable duties, number of hours and pay. (Chapter 359)

Pensions: Requires pension funds to give information regarding rights and benefits of pension plan members to a party to a dissolution action or to a former spouse who is entitled to pension rights or benefits as part of a marriage dissolution action. Also requires direct payment to a former spouse. Describes how a pension plan is to pay out surviving spouse benefits when there is more than one surviving spouse. Requires the court to try to offset future pension benefits or rights against liquid or readily liquidated marital property. (Chapter 157)

FAMILY LAW

Child Support: Automatic wage withholding for new or existing child support orders will be tested in a five county two year pilot program. Results of the pilot program will be reported to the legislature in 1989 and the benefit of making the program statewide will be evaluated. Income withholding will be easier to implement when child support is 30 days in arrears, it will no longer be necessary to return to court. (HF 243)

Domestic Abuse Act: Prohibits the court from vacating an Order for Protection in a temporary hearing in a marriage dissolution unless there has been a motion made in court and notice given to both parties. Admittance of the excluded party into the residence does not void an Order for Protection. A provision is added to the notice given to the party to be restrained that the Order for Protection is not voided if the residence is entered even if the person is invited into the residence. (Chapter 237)

Requires that when a judge releases from custody a person who has committed a domestic assault the conditions of release must be written and given to the agency having custody of the person and to the person being released. Failure to give the order to the arrested person does not invalidate the conditions of release. (Chapter 115)

Shelters for Battered Women will be able to receive general assistance payments on behalf of residents directly from the county. The shelter will also have the right to appeal a denial of funds directly to the Commissioner of Human Services. (Chapter 270)

Requires that the court consider the effect of domestic abuse when making a custody determination after there has been a finding that domestic abuse has occurred. (Chapter 106)

HUMAN SERVICES

Aid to Families with Dependent Children: Appropriated \$500,000 to pursue federal waivers necessary for the AFDC entrepreneurship project and to implement the project. (HF 243)

OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

Gender Bias in the Courts Study: Appropriates \$50,000 to the Supreme Court to conduct a study of gender bias in the Minnesota judicial system. (HF 1315)

Gender Revision of Minnesota Statutes: Continues to remove nonsubstantive gender specific language from the Minnesota Statutes. (Chapters 39 and 49)

COMMISSION ENDORSED LEGISLATION WHICH DID NOT PASS

Respite Care for Caregivers: Provide funding to develop a system of coordinated services at the county level to support caregivers. (HF 562; SF 400)

Osteoporosis: Appropriate funds to conduct pilot programs to reduce risk conditions related to osteoporosis. (HF 178; SF 212)

Government Initiatives to Encourage Child Care Benefits: Provides a grant program for employer child care services. (HF 825; SF 817)

Women's History Center: Provides funding in the capital budget to be used for planning the Minnesota Women's History Center. (In original bonding proposal)

OTHER LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

Insurance: Requires group contracts for health insurance and hmo contracts to include maternity benefits as standard unless the policy is only for a specific disease.

Requires that health insurance policies which cover dependents continue to cover the surviving spouse and dependents after the death of the insured until the date the coverage would have terminated or until the surviving spouse becomes covered under another group health plan. The surviving spouse can be required to pay, but the fee may not exceed 102 percent of the cost for the same period for other spouses and dependents.

Accident and health insurance policies which provide hospital or medical expense coverage and which cover the spouse and dependent children of an insured must permit the spouse and children to continue coverage when the insured becomes enrolled in Medicare.

Termination of insurance coverage to a spouse solely as a result of marriage dissolution is prohibited. Coverage must be continued until the insured's former spouse becomes covered under another group health plan. The insured is required to pay any monthly premium but the premium may not exceed 102 percent of the cost to the plan for other spouses and dependent children where there has not been a marriage dissolution. (Chapter 337)

Set-Aside: Eliminates the 5 year disqualification for minority and women businesses that have been participating in the state set-aside program. (HF 1138)

Sexual Assault: Creates a higher standard of proof and narrows the circumstances under which evidence of a victim's previous sexual conduct may be admitted as evidence in a prosecution for criminal sexual conduct. Requires 3 days notice of the intent to present such evidence. (Chapter 114)

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LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

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