

Massachusetts Legislature's

WOMEN'S CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

*** JANUARY - 1998 ***

CO-CHAIRS: SENATOR DIANNE WILKERSON AND REPRESENTATIVE MARYANNE LEWIS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SULEYKEN WALKER

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Members of Senate

Susan Fargo
Cheryl Jacques
Linda Melconian
Theresa Murray
Lois Pines
Marian Walsh
Dianne Wilkerson

Members of House

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Gale Candaras
Harriet Chandler
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Donna Cuomo
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Colleen Garry
Shirley Gomes
Cele Hahn
Lida Harkins
Barbara Hyland
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Rachael Kaprielian
Kay Khan
Maryanne Lewis
Joan Menard
Janet O'Brien
Shirley Owens-Hicks
Marie Parente
Anne Paulsen
Susan Pope
Ruth Provost
Pamela Resor
Charlotte Golar Richie
Mary Rogeness
Mary Jane Simmons
Jo Ann Sprague
Harriett Stanley
Ellen Story
Kathleen Teahan
Patricia Walrath
Alice Wolf

After a small reprieve, women legislators are back and moving forward with their agendas for 1998. This year's legislative session is especially significant given *Representative Barbara Hyland's news that this session is the 75th anniversary of the first women being elected to serve in the Massachusetts House.*

Significantly, **women legislators are at the forefront of many of the proposals which members can anticipate working on this session:** reforming the state's Special Education laws and Chapter 766; parity in insurance benefits for mental health treatment and; an omnibus managed care bill. The commission to study special education in the Commonwealth, which recently came out with its report, was chaired by Caucus member **Representative Lida Harkins** (D-Needham). **Representative Harriet Chandler** (D-Worcester), House Chair of the Health Care Committee, and **Representative Nancy Flavin** (D-Easthampton) and **Senator Dianne Wilkerson**

(D-Boston), who were co-chairs of the Committee on Insurance, worked together to craft the omnibus Managed Care proposal which is now before the House Committee on Ways and Means.



New News

Caucus members are looking forward to taking on these issues, and many more, **from their new office located on the fourth floor, Room 460.** The Co-Chairs and Executive Director, on behalf of all Caucus members, would again like to acknowledge the support of **Senate President Thomas F. Birmingham and House Speaker Thomas M. Finneran**, for a more appropriate location for the Caucus office. ***All Caucus members should take full advantage of this new meeting space - it is your office!*** Can't find a quiet place with a big enough table for your meeting? Need privacy? Simply give a call and reserve the room. Caucus Taskforce meetings will be in Room 460, and the newly established Steering Committee anticipates many monthly discussions in this beautiful new space!

Yes readers, 1998 is the year of the new **Women's Caucus Steering Committee!**

Senator Susan Fargo, Representative Kay Khan, Representative Pam Resor, Representative Ellen Story, and Representative Alice Wolf, along with the Chairs of the Caucus, **Senator Dianne Wilkerson and Representative Maryanne Lewis**, are the members of this new committee! The group will meet the second Wednesday of every month with the Executive Director. The purpose is to provide guidance and continuity to the Caucus over time. One example of the function of the Steering Committee is the development of a Caucus policy to determine Legislative and Budgetary endorsements and "priorities." As members are all too aware, there is no "formal process" through which requests for Caucus support are filtered. Development of such a policy will assist the Director in making important decisions and help the Caucus remain focused on their priorities.

Speaking of priorities....



Legislation establishing a permanent **STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN WAS FILED AND HAS ITS OWN BILL NUMBER - H.5199.** With over sixty co-sponsors, **Governor Cellucci, Senate President Birmingham, and House Speaker Finneran filed the language on December 16th**, in a room filled with women representing approximately 50 organizations in the Commonwealth. The Women's Caucus is proud to be the only Caucus in the nation with appointing authority over a Women's Commission. The Joint Committee on State Administration's hearing on the bill on Tuesday, January 20th, was a full two hours of testimony. The list of speakers was impressive and exciting, including: **Former Ambassador Swanee Hunt, director of the Women's Leadership Initiative at Harvard University; Gloria Craven from the Massachusetts Nurses Association; Yvonne Drayton from the New Bedford area YWCA; and, Boston Club Board Member Juli Ann Reynolds.**

The list of course goes on, and the thousands of women in Massachusetts who were represented by these speakers can look forward to the establishment of a State Commission on the Status of Women.



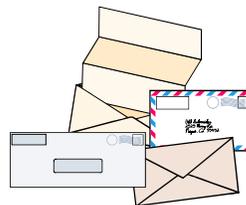
ANNUAL MEETING: Plans are underway for the 1998 Women's Caucus Annual Meeting on

February 27th, at the Parkman House in Boston. **FORMER SECRETARY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS GLORIA LARSON, HAS AGREED TO BE THE GUEST SPEAKER ON ISSUES OF WOMEN AND ECONOMIC POLICY.** During last year's annual meeting it became clear that Caucus members are especially concerned with empowering women in the economy, and the new Chairs are excited to emphasize this important issue throughout this next year. The meeting will also involve proposals concerning new committee topics, reports on the Women's Commission appointing process, a proposed Caucus policy on determining priorities, and of course, delicious lunch and good company!



The Age of Information

New in the National arena is the National On-line Women's Voting Guide - an innovative project using the Internet to educate women for the 1998 elections. It is a non-partisan voting guide designed to allow women to compare their concerns with those of candidates, and educate and empower women through increased involvement in the political process. On a state level, the McCormack Institute is conducting its quarterly public opinion poll and will be including questions of specific concern to women. **This kind of increased information will help Caucus members and their colleagues represent the needs and concerns of their constituents.**



Taskforce News of Note:

As was mentioned in last month's newsletter, the **TASKFORCE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH**, chaired by **Representative Pam Resor (D-Acton)**, is sponsoring an **Eating Disorder Awareness Day** with the Harvard Eating Disorders Center on **February 9th, in Nurses Hall from 10:00-12:00.** In addition to guest speakers and women offering their personal testimonials, there will be a unique art exhibit on display. The Taskforce is also in the

process of developing legislation relative to the diet industry and truth in advertising.

The **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASKFORCE** is moving forward with its plan to hold a **SPRING FORUM ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO IDENTIFY CONTINUED BARRIERS TO REDUCING THE LEADING CAUSE OF INJURY TO WOMEN**. While the Boston Globe reported that the cities murder rate is at a 36 year low and violent crime is down 14 percent, at least 17 women were killed last year by men in domestic violence-related incidents. *Violence against women is the one violent crime that has seen no decrease over the last few years.* A steering committee of women is coming together at the request of **Senator Linda Melconian and Representative Shirley Gomes** to plan for the coming conference. Any readers who are interested in becoming involved should contact the Caucus office.

THE CAUCUS TASKFORCE ON WOMEN IN POVERTY has decided to focus on the **education and training service delivery system in the Commonwealth during 1998**. Community Colleges and Businesses are all recognizing the necessity of effective education and training policies if women are to become economically independent. The Taskforce plans to specifically address how these programs are working with women who will lose welfare benefits at the end of the year.

Representative Kay Khan and the Coalition of Addiction, Pregnancy, and Parenting are coming together with members of the **TASKFORCE ON WOMEN, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, and Criminal Justice** to visit two **substance abuse treatment centers for women with children in Boston and Somerville**. The visit is part of a longer project researching barriers to treatment for substance abusing women.

Legislation on the Move!

Members of the Women's Caucus are coming out in support of legislation to expand the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program, filed by Governor Weld and endorsed by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA). Optimistic that the bill will be referred to Committee in the near future, the Caucus looks forward to working

with the MNA to move the bill through the legislative process.

CLOSE-THE GAP supporters of **Senate Bill #1800, filed by Senator William Keating (D- Sharon)**, which seeks to establish women workforce goals on state funded construction projects, are also working to see that the bill is released favorably from Senate Ways and Means and passed during this legislative session. This legislation is especially critical following the release of "ISTEA" funds from Washington to assist with expanding opportunities in highway construction for women.

Senator Linda Melconian and Representative Harriett Chandler, who each have legislation **OUTLAWING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON GENETIC INFORMATION**, received a welcomed endorsement from the Boston Globe editorial page in December. Their bills are consistent with a nationwide effort - at the State and the Federal Level - to prevent genetic discrimination in insurance policies and employment practices.



February Brown Bag Lunch

Beginning in 1998, the Brown Bag Lunches will take place *every other month*. February's speaker will be Joyce Kulhawik, Channel Five Arts and Entertainment Director and cancer survivor. She will speak on **Thursday, February 12th, from 11:45-1:00**. Take a break and enjoy good company and lunch for an hour!

Events:

- ◆ **Wednesday, January 28th, from 8:30-11:30, the Caucus Taskforce on Women, Substance Abuse, and the Criminal Justice System**, hosted by the Coalition on Addiction, Pregnancy, and Parenting (CAPP), will make two site-visits to treatment centers: Latinas Y Ninias in Roxbury; and New Day in Somerville.
- ◆ **Monday, February 9th, from 10:00-2:00 in Nurses Hall, the Caucus Taskforce on Women and Health** and the Harvard Eating Disorders Center will host an Eating Disorders Awareness Day. There will be many enlightening speakers and an innovative art exhibit.
- ◆ **Wednesday, February 11th, from 10:00-11:00, the Women's Caucus Steering Committee Meeting** will be held in Room 460.
- ◆ **Thursday, February 12th, from 12:00-1:00, in the Members Lounge** introduces this year's first brown bag lunch speaker, **Joyce Kulhawick, WBZ news reporter.**
- ◆ **Monday, February 23rd, from 10:30-12:00, in the Senate Reading Room**, the Legislative Children's Caucus is hosting a briefing on early childhood brain development. This briefing is sponsored by Connecting the Dots for Boston Tots.
- ◆ **Friday, February 27th, from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**, the Women's Caucus will hold their **Annual Meeting**. Please reserve this day to come together and meet with your colleagues in the Caucus and hear from an informative speaker.
- ◆ **Tuesday, March 10th, from 6:00-8:00, in the Great Hall**, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) is hosting a reception with women legislators.

Welcome to the 1998 Caucus Co-Chairs, Senator Dianne Wilkerson (D-Boston) and Representative Maryanne Lewis (D-Dedham)! Many thanks to Senator Marian Walsh and Representative Kay Khan for all their time and effort during 1997.

Notes From the New Caucus Chairs

Senator Dianne Wilkerson - *I would like to take this opportunity to thank co-chairs Senator Marian Walsh and Representative Kay Khan for their leadership and efforts during 1997. I am excited about the anticipated passage of legislation establishing a permanent State Commission on the Status of Women, which will establish an organized communication advocacy resource. I am looking forward to the year ahead and to working with all of you.*

Representative Maryanne Lewis - *It is with great pleasure that I take over the reigns as House chair of the Women's Legislative Caucus. As my most able predecessors did, I would like to focus on issues affecting women in all aspects of life, with particular emphasis on economic issues affecting women working in today's society. I believe that subjects like disparity in pay, adequate child care and pension and investment opportunities all warrant our time and attention, and I look forward to working with all of the Caucus members to make that a reality.*

