

NEWCOMERS

New Legislators

Welcome Newcomers!! As the 2001-2002 legislative session moves into full swing, the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators is excited to welcome three new women legislators to the State House: Representative Deborah Blumer of Framingham, Representative Patricia Haddad of Somerset, and Representative Karyn Polito of Shrewsbury

The Women's Caucus also congratulates Harriette Chandler to her new role as State Senator from Worcester. Chandler served 6 years in the House before moving to the Senate. In November, she won the seat left open by Senator Robert Bernstein. Her win has increased the number of women serving in the Senate to 12 out of a total of 40 senators. This is the highest number of women legislators ever to be elected to this branch of the Legislature.

In the House there are 37 women out of 160 representatives. The total number of women serving in the State House for this legislative session is 49, comprising 24.5% of the legislature.

New Chairs

The start of a new year in the Women's Caucus also means that two new women legislators begin their one-year terms as Co-Chairs of the Caucus. Senate Majority Leader Linda Melconian and Representative Ruth Provost will be the Co-Chairs of the Caucus this year. Special thanks to Representative Anne Paulsen and Senator Cheryl Jacques for all of their hard work as co-chairs last year.

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Violence against women was the number one concern voiced by women who testified at a series of hearings sponsored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. The Women's Commission held a of four hearings between July and December in Springfield, Pittsfield, Lawrence and New Bedford. These hearings offered women in those cities and surrounding areas the opportunity to speak about important issues that impact their lives. As a result of the hearings, the Women's Commission has decided to make the issues of childcare and violence against women its priorities for this next year. The following is a list of the ten issues that were most frequently raised at the hearings:

- 1.Violence Against Women
- 2.Girls' Issues
- 3.Support for Particular Legislation – gender-neutral insurance; insurance for contraception coverage
- 4.Child Care Access
- 5.Reproductive Rights
- 6.Welfare Reform
- 7.Transportation
- 8.Health Care
- 9.Economic Parity
- 10.Affordable Housing

The Women's Commission will continue to hold hearings in other regions of the Commonwealth to ascertain those issues that most concern and affect women. Their next hearing will be devoted to girls' issues and will take place **March 15 3:00 p.m.-6:00 pm., at Roxbury Community College.**

ANNUAL MEETING

The Women's Caucus annual meeting was held on February 14 and featured news anchor Brenda Garton of Channel 22 News in Springfield as the keynote speaker. In her address to the members, Ms. Garton talked about the way in which media and politics often complement each other and touched on the similar challenges faced by women in politics and women in the media. As the daughter of the Senate President of the Indiana State Legislature, she shared some personal anecdotes about her life as a child with a father in the political spotlight. She also highlighted the progress women have made in the political world and the role they play in drawing attention to important issues concerning women, families and children.

After Ms. Garton's speech, the women legislators engaged in a lively discussion regarding legislative priorities for the 2001-2002 session. A wide range of important legislative issues were raised during the meeting including bills that addressed domestic violence, paid family and medical leave, economic self sufficiency, and gender neutral insurance. The Women's Caucus will be announcing the legislative priorities by before the end of February.

CWE LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

Women-owned businesses is one of the fastest growing sectors of business in Massachusetts, and at the "Women Driving Business in the 21st Century" legislative breakfast, legislators had a chance to hear about some of the challenges and successes women entrepreneurs experience in today's society.

The event, which took place the last week in January was cosponsored by the Center for Women and Enterprise (CWE) and the Caucus of Women Legislators. Senate President Thomas Birmingham, Senate Majority Leader Linda Melconian, Representative Ruth Provost, and Senator Susan Fargo all addressed the audience and stressed the important impact that women entrepreneurs have on the Massachusetts economy.

Following the remarks of the legislators, Andrea Silbert, CEO and founder of CWE, moderated a panel of women business owners who discussed the challenges of starting their own businesses. CWE is a regional entrepreneurial training organization with offices in Boston and Worcester. It offers a variety of services including courses, workshops, and access to debt and equity capital to assist women entrepreneurs at every stage of business development. CWE is a privately funded organization that raised \$xx last year for entrepreneurial training. It received \$195,000 from Massachusetts in the budget for fiscal year 2001.

NEW LAW: ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY

As part of an effort to protect victims of domestic violence, rape, or stalking from further abuse by their assailants, Governor Cellucci recently signed a law authorizing the an "Address Confidentiality Program."

The program will be implemented by Secretary of State Galvin and will provide victims who have recently moved and whose new residential address is unknown to their assailant with a substitute mailing address. The substitute address will be accepted by all state agencies for use on all public records, and all first class mail will be sent to the substitute address and forwarded by the Secretary of State's Office to the participant's actual address.

In addition to having the support of the Women's Caucus, the "Address Confidentiality Program" bill also had the endorsement of Jane Doe Inc, the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance, and the Secretary of State's Office. This bill was passed by the legislature on December 29 and signed into law by the Governor on January 11.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The Women's Caucus is pleased to have at total of 26 women appointed to leadership positions in the legislature. The following is a list of the leadership positions held by women.:

Senate:

Senate Majority Leader- Linda Melconian
Criminal Justice – Cynthia Creem, Chair
Energy – Susan Fargo, Chair
Ethics – Pamela Resor, Chair
Fed. Financial Assist. – Harriette Chandler, Chair
Human Svces & Elderly Affairs – Susan Tucker, Chair
Insurance – Therese Murray, Chair
Post Audit and Oversight – Cheryl Jacques, Chair
Rules – Joan Menard, Chair
State Administration – Dianne Wilkerson, Chair
Chair of Taxation – Marian Walsh

House

Ass't Majority Whip – Lida Harkins
Counties – Mary Jane Simmons, Chair
Marie St. Fleur, Vice Chair
Election Laws – Cory Atkins, Vice Chair
Fed. Fin. Asst. – Shirley Owens-Hicks, Chair
Health Care – Harriett Stanley, Vice Chair
Human Svcs – Christine Canavan, Vice Chair
Local Affairs – Marie Parente, Chair
Public Service – Gale Candaras, Vice Chair
Long Term Debt – Patricia Walrath, Chair
Ethics – Colleen Gary, Chair
Personnel & Admin – Gloria Fox, Vice Chair
Floor Division – Maryanne Lewis, Chair
Ways & Means – Nancy Flavin, Asst. Vice Chair