

# Caucus of Women Legislators



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4th Quarter 2010

## CAUCUS HOSTS IRANIAN WOMEN



Fatemeh Haghighatjoo is a former member of the Iranian Parliament and visiting scholar at UMass Boston.

On Thursday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, women legislators and staff gathered for the Iranian Women's Leadership Conference Reception and Roundtable Discussion hosted by the Caucus of Women Legislators. The event was part of a six-day workshop organized by Director Dr. Carol Hardy-Fanta and visiting scholar Fatemeh Haghighatjoo of the UMass Boston Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (CWPPP).

The nine Iranian women attending the conference were primarily interested in ideas for societal improvements that they can assist in facilitating when back in Iran. In addition to meeting with Massachusetts state legislators, they also met with lobbyists and judges in an effort to understand the differences between their centralized government structure in Iran and more independent local configu-

rations here in the United States.

During their visit to the Massachusetts State House, the Iranian business women received an in-depth historical tour and were personally greeted by Senate President Therese Murray before engaging in the serious agenda of the day. The roundtable discussion, which included current and former women legislators, the Iranian business women and CWPPP staff, focused on election systems and women's roles in decision making.

Haghighatjoo, a former Iranian Member of Parliament, pointed out to her Iranian colleagues at the outset of the discussion that, in Massachusetts, women legislators make up about 25% of the state legislature. This disclosure highlighted fundamental disparities between the two nationalities; women's representation in Iran's National Parliament is only 2% and regional legislatures do not exist in Iran.

Yet even some of the disparities that were discussed reflected aspects of similarities, as well. The legislators participating in the roundtable noted that, although the Massachusetts state legislature may be comprised of significantly more women than the Iranian Parliament, they have a long way to go before women represent half of the General Court. Ultimately, women in both cultures face comparable challenges.

In Iran, women seeking parliamentary office are confronted with a selection system heavily favoring men. The Guardian Council, six clergymen and six lawyers appointed to determine suitable candidates for office, is an all-male board with broad authority. Several of the Iranian women pointed out that part of the problem lies in the long standing tenet that "a woman's role is in the home and even if she chooses to run, women won't vote for her."

In Massachusetts, women have a different set of issues when it comes to running for office. Not many are willing to do it.

"Even in the open seats, there are not enough women for an even exchange," said Representative Patricia Haddad of Somerset. "Women tend to run more if asked more."

The percentage of women representing House and Senate districts in Massachusetts has hovered around 25% or higher for at least a decade. The 187<sup>th</sup> General Court being sworn in on January 5, 2011 will see its first decline in female representation since 1999.

Many of the legislators observed that discomfort with voting for women can be an issue here, too. "There has always been the notion that women were more liberal," added Fanta. "It is proving not to be necessarily true."

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**187th  
General Court  
Swearing-in  
January 5, 2011**

**MA Caucus of  
Women Legislators  
Annual Meeting  
February 2011**

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## Caucus of Women Legislators

# A Message from the Co-Chairs



Senator Patricia D. Jehlen (D-Somerville) and Representative Alice K. Wolf (D-Cambridge)

*Dear Colleagues, Staff and Friends,*

*As we wind up our term as co-Chairs, we wish you the best for the new year.*

*The Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators has had the opportunity to continue to celebrate the progress of women in the last few months of the session.*

*In October, we hosted a segment of the Iranian Leadership Conference held by UMASS Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy. Nine Iranian women traveled to Boston through the program to gain knowledge in an effort to effect change in the political world of the Middle East. Current and former Caucus members joined the Iranian women at the State House for a roundtable discussion on effective leadership, systems that work, and challenges faced by elected women.*

*Attorney General Martha Coakley, the Caucus and other women's organizations orchestrated a superb evening to honor Ninety Years of Women's Suffrage in November. The event, which included the showing of the HBO Film "Iron Jawed Angels", fittingly featured Coline Jenkins, the great-great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as guest speaker.*

*Most importantly, we applaud the women elected to office on November 2, 2010 and also those with whom we have served who move on to change the world in different ways. Forty-seven women legislators will be sworn-in to the 187<sup>th</sup> General Court on January 5, 2011. Although the number is fewer than that of this past session, the Caucus is sure to be as determined and effective as it has proven to be in the past.*

*It has been a pleasure serving as Caucus co-Chairs these past two years. Please accept our sincere gratitude for your continued support in our endeavors, and we hope that you'll join us in our strong support of the new co-Chairs, Senator Karen Spilka and Representative Cory Atkins.*

*Sincerely,*

*Senator Patricia D. Jehlen and Representative Alice K. Wolf  
Co-Chairs, Women's Legislative Caucus*

## Meet the Caucus Interns



**Taylor Makson** first interned at the State House during the summer of 2010 in Representative Aaron Michlewitz's office. She joined the Caucus for Women Legislators in October and has interned through the beginning of December. Taylor is from Wakefield, MA, and is a sophomore at Boston College. She is a Political Science Major, participates on the BC Mock Trial team, and

hopes to attend law school after graduation.



**Andree' Omoregbee**, who joined the Caucus in October, is a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts-Boston in the Women in Politics and Public Policy Graduate Certificate program. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Georgia Southern University, with a minor in Africana Studies. She hopes to attend law school in the fall, primarily to focus on International Human Rights Law and Comparative Law. Her experience with working with the Caucus will be instrumental in helping

her to achieve her ultimate goal of one day being an advocate for women and children across the globe.

# Caucus joins AG for Suffrage Screening



Attorney General Martha Coakley (center), Women's Suffrage Celebration Committee Chair Fredie Kay (far left) and Mary Sullivan (far right) welcomed leaders of women's rights to the ICA on November 10 for a special screening of HBO's critically acclaimed *Iron Jawed Angels*

Due to the incredible efforts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Lucy Burns and many others, women today have the opportunity to vote. These trail blazers in the women's suffrage movement fought the perception that their voices were not equal to that of males and worked for several years to change the future of the American election process. And they succeeded: ninety years ago, women voted in their first elections.

Caucus members, Attorney General Martha Coakley, and women's groups around the Commonwealth commemorated that right to vote as members of the Women's Suffrage Celebration Committee with the free screening last month of HBO's acclaimed film *Iron Jawed Angels*. The film, directed by Katja von Garnier, featured an impressive female cast including Hilary Swank as Alice Paul

and Frances O'Connor as Lucy Burns.

The film, portraying the perseverance, ambition and struggle that women of the suffrage movement faced in achieving their goal of equality, was chosen for the event as a reminder that these rights were hard fought. Specifically, it depicts the difficulties in getting women to join the suffrage cause, the disagreements with National American Women's Suffrage Association and the creation of their own National Women's Party, their pickets of a war time president and their hunger strikes when arrested for "obstructing traffic."

Fredie Kay, Martha Coakley and Barbara Lee, the President of the Barbara Lee Family Foundation, an organization that supports women in politics and contemporary arts, kicked off the packed event at the ICA with rousing purpose. Kay

Chairs the Women's Suffrage Celebration Committee which is composed of over a dozen representatives from women's groups across the Commonwealth and was formed by Coakley to mark the anniversary through relatable discourse.

After the screening, featured speaker Coline Jenkins, the great-great granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Erin Bradley, a past board member of the National Organization for Women, addressed the audience. Descendant of a long line of assertive and successful women, Ms. Jenkins generously shared family lore and traditions dating back to Cady Stanton, including her family's unusual matrilineal inheritances.

Senator-elect Katherine Clark of Melrose noted that "the captivating messages of both the film and the speakers marked the evening as a true celebration of one of the most momentous eras of US history."

The unintentional nuances of the commemoration were not lost on several of the guests, either. Significantly moving to many attending the event was the unspoken understanding that among those responsible for bringing the film to Boston were similarly determined women who themselves had, just days before, been elected to lead and were joined by the women who had buoyed them.

*"a true celebration of one of the most momentous eras of US history"*

*"I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality." -Alice Paul*

## Caucus of Women Legislators

# Awards and Recognitions



**Senator Susan Tucker** (D-Andover) was honored to have received the following awards and recognitions: the MACDC Excellence in Community Development Award for exceptional leadership in supporting the Community Development Movement in Massachusetts; the Community Teamwork, Inc. Local Hero; the Andover Veteran's Honoree for continuous support of our

veterans and advocacy for our veterans; the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center Making a Difference Tribute; the Home Care Hero Award and James Campbell Award from Mass Home Care and Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley; and the Challenge Unlimited Spirit of Giving Award.



**Representative Anne Gobi** (D-Spencer) received the Mohegan Council, Boy Scouts of America Spotlight on Leadership Award on December 2nd. Spotlight Leaders were nominated throughout the region by members of the Scouting community for their outstanding contributions in the areas of civic, community, non-profit and educational leadership.



**Representative Mary Grant** (D-Beverly) was honored recently with the following awards: the North Shore Elder Services presented her with the Public Policy Maker Award. Recognition was given to those who have "made the lives of elders safer, healthier, happier, or easier"; she was recognized by the Pioneer House at their

Legislative Breakfast in October for her many years of advocacy on their behalf. Pioneer House is a clubhouse located in Peabody which provides a restorative environment for people with mental illness and helps them become engaged in meaningful work as well as social activities; The North Shore Community Development Coalition has chosen Representative Grant to receive a 2010 Pillars of the Community Award, recognizing contributions that embody and strengthen NSCDC's mission which is to provide quality affordable housing and foster economic empowerment and community development on the North Shore. She received the 2010 Housing Hero Award on December 8, 2010. Rep. Grant had served as a board member of the Beverly Affordable Housing Coalition (now NSCDC) from 2003-2010.



**Senator Jennifer Flanagan** (D-Leominster) was honored by the Association for Behavioral Health (ABH) for her efforts to increase access to mental health and addiction services throughout the Commonwealth. The Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse, under Senator Flanagan's Chairmanship has worked on several key issues related to access of mental health services and addiction prevention services. ABH also recognized Senator Flanagan for her work as an advocate for children and families.

The Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH) presented an award to **Representative Liz Malia** (D-Jamaica Plain) for her leadership and commitment to building a statewide, unified network of services to address mental health and substance abuse treatment. "Representative Malia has dedicated countless hours to preserve the programs that provide individuals with mental illness, addiction and substance-use disorders with the services they need," said Vic DiGravio, President of ABH. "Her commitment to creating a system that makes high-quality care available has made a difference in the lives of many families that deal with these issues every day."



**Representative Alice K. Wolf** (D-Cambridge) received the Peggy Munro Home Care Advocate Award on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> from the MA Council for Home Care Aide Services, Inc. The award is given to a state leader who is committed to supporting and advocating for the needs of home care aides and their clients. More than 225 home care workers from across the state gathered to be honored for their work enabling many frail elders and disabled individuals to remain safely in their own homes, as well.

**Representative Jennifer Callahan** (D-Sutton) received the "Above and Beyond" Award from Bellingham Friends of Education in October and was honored as one of Resolve New England's Legislative Champions for 2010 on December 16th.



On October 28th, **Representative Denise Provost** (D-Somerville) was presented with the "Public Leader Award" by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH) for her outstanding leadership in the fight for safe, secure jobs and healthy communities in Eastern Massachusetts.

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## Caucus of Women Legislators

# Commemorating Public Service

Twelve Caucus members will be moving on to impact their communities in different ways. It is a loss to the Caucus but a boon to those they will serve in the future. Their legacies will be felt throughout the legislature for years to come.



Sen. Marian Walsh  
(D-West Roxbury)



Sen. Susan Tucker  
(D-Andover)



Sen. Joan Menard  
(D-Fall River)



Rep. Willie Mae Allen  
(D-Mattapan)



Rep. Rosemary Sandlin  
(D-Feeding Hills)



Rep. Lida Harkins  
(D-Needham)



Rep. Mary Grant  
(D-Beverly)



Rep. Barbara L'Italien  
(D-Andover)



Rep. Danielle Gregoire  
(D-Marlborough)



Rep. Jennifer Callahan  
(D-Sutton)



Rep. Karyn Polito  
(R-Shrewsbury)



Rep. Pam Richardson  
(D-Framingham)

## Awards and Recognitions (cont'd)



The Orphan Foundation announced the election of **Representative Rosemary Sandlin** (D-Feeding Hills) to its Board of Directors. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) foundation that helps orphans and foster children find loving homes through their grant programs to low and middle income adopting families.

Representative Sandlin will replace Frank Maguire who passed away on April 12, 2010 at the age of 76. Mr. Maguire was one of the co-founders of Federal Express, served in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, and co-authored Project Head Start and the Special Olympics. Frank was a well-loved international speaker and friend of Ted Koppel and Charles Osgood whom he hired when he was with ABC.

Joe DiDonato, co-founder and president of the foundation, stated that the "orphan crisis has reached epic proportions. The number of orphans and displaced children in the world now exceeds 163 million, making this combined population the equivalent of the 7th largest nation on the planet." He went on to say that after an extensive search, "Representative Sandlin was nominated and elected for her extensive volunteer work in third world orphanages, her compassion, and her in-depth knowledge of the political process."

Mr. DiDonato said that establishing tax incentives, as well as a positive political climate for family adoptions, is key to the foundation's mission.

The foundation reports that the cost of adopting is nearly \$20,000 for a domestic adoption, and \$25,000 to \$40,000 for an international adoption. The average cost to adopt through the foster care system varies widely, and reflects local and state support for those programs. "This financial burden has created a huge barrier to solving the orphan crisis as the cost of adoption has skyrocketed out of the reach of most families," said Dr. Tatiana DiDonato, co-founder of The Orphan Foundation. "Adoption should be free to any loving family that will open their homes to these beautiful children."

# CAUCUS OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS



## MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE

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### 2010 Co-Chairs

Senator Patricia D. Jehlen  
Representative Alice K. Wolf

### Treasurer

Representative Katherine Clark

### Executive Director

Jessica Leitz

### House Members

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Cory Atkins  
Ruth B. Balse  
Jennifer Benson  
Jennifer Callahan  
Linda Dean Campbell  
Christine E. Canavan  
Katherine Clark  
Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera  
Geraldine Creedon  
Carolyn Dykema  
Lori Ehrlich  
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Colleen M. Garry  
Susan W. Gifford  
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Elizabeth A. Poirier  
Karyn E. Polito  
Denise Provost  
Kathi-Anne Reinstein  
Pam Richardson  
Rosemary Sandlin  
Joyce A. Spiliotis  
Harriett L. Stanley  
Ellen Story  
Martha M. Walz  
Alice K. Wolf

### Senate Members

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Harriette L. Chandler  
Sonia Chang-Diaz  
Cynthia Stone Creem  
Susan C. Fargo  
Jennifer L. Flanagan  
Patricia D. Jehlen  
Joan M. Menard  
Therese Murray  
Karen E. Spilka  
Susan C. Tucker  
Marian Walsh

THE CAUCUS OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS IS A BIPARTISAN, BICAMERAL GROUP OF FEMALE LEGISLATORS, THE MISSION OF WHICH IS TO ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC STATUS AND EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND TO ENCOURAGE AND FOSTER WOMEN IN ALL BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

## Brief Highlights of the Caucus Session

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Middlesex DA Gerry Leone met with legislators to identify gaps in legal services for victims of domestic violence.
- Joined Jane Doe, Inc. during their Advocacy Day.
- Joined Lt Gov. Tim Murray and other officials during the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary event celebrating the Massachusetts Victim Bill of Rights at the State House.
- The Caucus's Domestic Violence Task Force held a meeting with the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) to assess gaps between the legal process and the state's services to victims of domestic abuse.
- Caucus members Sen. Chandler and Rep. Atkins hosted an informational forum for members of House and Senate to renew awareness about the urgent need for new legislation to protect stalking survivors.
- Gov. Deval Patrick signed into law *An Act to Prevent Harassment*, sponsored by Caucus member Sen. Chandler and co-sponsored by Rep. Cory Atkins, which allows victims of harassment to file a criminally enforceable protection order regardless of perpetrators' relationships to them.

### ISSUES/WOMEN'S HEALTH

- Hosted annual Go Red for Women event with The American Heart Association.
- Met with directors of UMASS Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy to develop future research projects focused on women's issues to facilitate legislation.
- Invited Dr. Karen Antman, Dean of the BU School of Medicine, to address legislators regarding the lack of primary care physicians and women's health specialists, specifically OB/GYNs, in the US.
- Held a forum with Girls Inc., a group offering gender specific programming internationally. Over 120,000 girls in MA benefit from Girls Inc. programming, many of whom are most at-risk.

- Sponsored a presentation by Jean Kilbourne, an expert on advertising's effect on girls and society's perception of women.
- Determined annual scope of effort with Executive Board of Mass. Commission on the Status of Women.

### FAMILIES/LOW-INCOME

- Invited research analyst experts to address the release of a study regarding the persistent inequalities in the postsecondary education system for women, especially those who are low-income.
- Sponsored a forum on the scope of Paid Sick Days legislation with the Public Health Commissioner in response to anticipated swine flu contagion.
- Distributed back packs for needy children to non-profit organizations, day camps, schools, and child services providers throughout their districts.
- Homeless Families Task Force determined legislative needs with the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH).
- Sponsored a Tailored for Success, Inc. suit drive.
- Gathered for Equal Pay Day and a Pay Equity Forum, focusing on the movement towards further defining comparable work to promote equal pay for women in the workforce.

### WOMEN IN PRISON

- The Women in Prison Task Force held a series of policy meetings with state agency and law-enforcement officials to collaborate on best practice for serving the state's growing female prison population.
- Toured the MCI Framingham facility and met with administrators regarding task force focus issues: substance abuse, family connections, mental illness.
- Met with County Sheriffs to determine equity of services provided, gender-wise, to prison populations in the Commonwealth.