



Women Employed

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**SEN. JOHN EDWARDS TO GIVE KEYNOTE ADDRESS, “ENDING POVERTY IN AMERICA,” TO 1,100 CHICAGO BUSINESS AND CIVIC LEADERS AT CHICAGO HILTON**

**Former U.S. Senator to Speak at Sold-out Luncheon Benefiting Women Employed, One of the Nation’s Leading Advocates for Economic Security for Working Women**

**Senator Edwards to Join Women Employed Executive Director Anne Ladky for Media Briefing at 1:20 p.m. in Normandie Lounge**

Chicago – Former U.S. Senator John Edwards will deliver the keynote address on eliminating poverty in America on May 9 at Women Employed’s *The Working Lunch*. The annual fundraiser supports the Chicago-based group’s work to improve the economic status and working conditions of America’s low-income women.

“Too many hardworking American women are struggling to raise families on low wages. It’s time for America to fairly reward work and give all women the opportunity to live the American Dream,” said Senator Edwards, former director of the Center on Poverty, Work, and Opportunity at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “We need a new national commitment to ending poverty—and it makes sense to focus attention on the millions of women who are working hard, but struggling to raise their families because they don’t have adequate pay and benefits. Improving wages, workplace conditions, and educational opportunities are crucial steps to eliminating poverty and giving all Americans the chance to get ahead.”

Today, 15 million women—a third of all women working full-time, year-round—earn less than \$25,000 a year and struggle to meet ends meet. Millions more struggle to

*It's up to us.*

adequately care for their own health and take care of their families; in fact, 22 million working women don't have a single paid sick day.

"These women, many of whom are single heads of households, don't earn enough to provide the basics of life for themselves and their children," says Women Employed Executive Director Anne Ladky. "And they go to work sick—and their children go to school sick—because they have no paid sick days and can't afford health care."

In Illinois, nearly 1.5 million people live in poverty—more than 500,000 of them are children. Eighty-seven of Illinois' 102 counties saw an increase in poverty last year. "We should begin this campaign right here because poverty among working people is a major problem in our state," says Ladky. "Women Employed is advocating for changes in workplace policies and conditions and expanded opportunities for education and training here in Illinois."

Among the Chicago-area companies sponsoring *The Working Lunch* are Northern Trust, Exelon, LaSalle Bank, JPMorganChase, S.USA Life Insurance Company, Inc., and Career Education Corporation.

The Chair of Women Employed's Board of Directors, Debbie Thorne, a partner at Barnes & Thornburg, noted, "Women Employed has a 34-year history of opening economic opportunities to women. We know that in order for people to be successful at work, we need the right structures to promote opportunity: fair policies like sick time, accessible and affordable higher education, and pay levels that support basic economic security. These policies are good for business, employees, our economy and our communities. Solving this problem will benefit all of us."

*The Working Lunch* will be held from noon - 1:30p.m. at the Chicago Hilton Grand Ballroom, 720 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois. Press registration begins at noon and RSVP and credentials are required. Senator Edwards will speak at approximately 12:50 p.m.

Founded in 1973, Women Employed's mission is to improve women's economic status and remove barriers to economic equity. Today, Women Employed focuses its advocacy on policies to increase women's wages and benefits, so that all women workers can achieve their aspirations and care for their families. Women Employed's recent accomplishments include winning \$38 million in new state funds to increase aid to 150,000 low-income Illinois college students, the majority of whom are women; launching a statewide campaign for paid family leave so that working women can balance work and family obligations; and providing online career development assistance to more than 75,000 individuals seeking better opportunities.

For more information about Women Employed, call (312) 782- 3902 ext. 222, or visit <http://www.womenemployed.org>.

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