

the **W**e news

Women Employed

SUMMER 2010

WE Works with Administration to Advance Worker Protections



ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
JENNY WITTMER AT THE
WHITE HOUSE WORKPLACE
FLEXIBILITY FORUM

WITH TOP OFFICIALS LAUNCHING NEW initiatives to restore the Department of Labor's effectiveness and address workplace flexibility issues, WE is expanding its efforts to shape policy and spur major improvements in enforcement of workplace rights.

At the White House, the emphasis is on finding solutions to the problems facing workers with family responsibilities. Earlier this year, Associate Director Jenny Wittner participated in the invitation-only White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility, hosted by President and First Lady Michelle Obama. The forum brought together a select group of scholars, business executives, non-profit leaders, and employment experts to explore strategies for making American workplaces more flexible and family-friendly.

The forum is the first step in launching a new initiative to make the federal government a national role model in workplace flexibility. The issue is personal for the Obamas, who both spoke at the event about times that they have needed understanding and flexibility from their employers to care for their family. WE brought the concerns of low-wage workers to the table, emphasizing that they need predictable and steady hours and access to paid sick days to fulfill their family responsibilities.

Continuing a tradition begun in the Carter administration, Women Employed recently convened a meeting for major national women's groups with the Secretary of Labor and other top officials from DOL. Along with the National Women's Law Center and the National Partnership for Women and Families, WE organized the meeting to discuss strategies to address
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WE Helps Women Recover from the Recession

The last two years have been extremely hard on women workers. Layoffs and lagging demand for services have pushed many out of their careers with no hope of returning. This has forced many women to reassess their skills, reconsider their options, and look for something new.

Career Coach, Women Employed's free online career exploration program, is helping them make that transition. WE is conducting Career Coach trainings at social service organizations across Chicago to help unemployed workers and people who want to change careers explore their options and plan their next steps.



WE's CLIFTON WILLIAMS TRAINS WOMEN ON CAREER COACH

WE recently trained a group of women at the National Able Network, an organization that connects job-seekers and employers. Barbara Rykaczewski of National Able feels that Career Coach, "is an empowering tool. It shows our clients their options and that they're not stuck. It shows them how skills they already have can be put to use in a new job or career."



'What's Good for Women is Good for the World.'

ON MAY 4TH, NEARLY 800 civic leaders, education experts, advocates, and community members gathered in support of economic advancement for working women. Adult students Mary Bulaon and Elena Herrera talked to the crowd about how important the opportunity to get a degree has been for them. Author and keynote speaker Riane Eisler discussed the essential need to properly value the work of women, saying, "What's good for women is good for the world." Thanks to all who supported the luncheon, especially our hardworking table hosts. The proceeds will support our programs to improve workplaces and enable more women to advance through education and training.



Women Employed would like to thank the following for making *The Working Lunch* such a success: major sponsors Northern Trust, Exelon, and Allstate, as well as Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, Aon, Barnes & Thornburg LLP, The Boeing Company, City Colleges of Chicago, DeVry University, Fifth Third Bank, Grainger, Illinois Tool Works, Inc., JP Morgan Chase & Co., Miner, Barnhill & Galland P.C., The Private Bank,

RR Donnelley, Sidley Austin LLP, and Woodward. Thanks also to our many raffle prize donors. Congratulations to grand prize winners Mirna Garcia, who will enjoy a California vacation, and Sunny Fischer, who will be chef for a day at Charlie Trotter's.

Saluting a Valued Partner



Northern Trust

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS Northern Trust, the lead sponsor of *The Working Lunch* 2010, has generously supported Women Employed, and has made possible our efforts to expand opportunities and ensure financial stability for women. "What's important to Northern Trust is to help disadvantaged women move to a better life for themselves and their families," says Deborah Liverett, Northern Trust's Director of Community Affairs. "We trust Women Employed. We know they can make an impact for disadvantaged women, and we're proud to support that."

Student Financial Aid in Crisis— WE Responds

AT A TIME WHEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE enrollments are at an all-time high due to the recession, it is expected that more than 220,000 eligible low-wage Illinois students will lose out on need-based financial aid (MAP grants) due to lack of funding. Many of them may never be able to pursue their dreams of a college education.

Women Employed is organizing students, developing policy options, and working with legislative leaders and state officials to seek solutions to this problem, which threatens the long-term economic health of the state. This spring, WE held workshops at seven Chicago-area community colleges to help students understand the legislative process and learn how to communicate with their elected officials. Some of these students then travelled to Springfield to advocate for preserving financial aid. More community colleges are now requesting these workshops.

With the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, WE is seeking policy solutions to provide new and stable funding streams for MAP. We recently published a policy brief recommending that the state create a bonding program to fund MAP. Inside Higher Ed, a national publication, highlighted our paper, which proposes an innovative approach to a tough problem.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) recently invited Women Employed to be a part of the Illinois Higher Education Finance Study Commission, created by legislation backed by WE. Its goal is to develop recommendations for the IBHE, the Governor, and the General Assembly. WE will continue its organizing and advocacy on all these fronts to build support for greater investment in post-secondary education leading to good jobs.

Stability, Flexibility Key for Low-Wage Workers

SOME OF THE MOST under-recognized problems facing low-wage workers revolve around scheduling. Many working women cannot count on regular hours at work, they do not have input on what schedules work best for them and their families, and their hours may shift wildly from week to week. This lack of predictability means workers cannot count on a regular paycheck, planning for childcare is extremely difficult, and going to school to secure a better future can be impossible.

WE is working with a group of nineteen national experts to begin addressing ways to raise public awareness and develop policy solutions to address scheduling issues.

We're grateful to our advisors for their involvement; here are the reflections of two of them:



Jodie Levin-Epstein,
Deputy Director,
Center for Law
and Social Policy
(CLASP)

■■ For low-wage workers, a key issue is how scheduling figures into family income as well as family stability. Both the absence of predictability and the insecurity of getting enough hours create enormous problems for low-income workers. Among our projects in this important policy arena, CLASP, together with Women Employed, is exploring the issue of minimum guaranteed hours. That's a potentially rare practice in which a company assures workers that they will always be scheduled for at least a core number of hours, so that they can have the essential supports for themselves and their family's daily living. ■■



Katie Corrigan,
Director, Workplace
Flexibility 2010

■■ The demographics of the workforce have shifted dramatically in the last thirty to forty years—women are just about fifty percent of the workforce, people are living and working longer, people with disabilities are in the workforce, and there are significantly more single-parent and dual-earner families. With these changed and diverse demographics come very different demands both at home and at work, and yet the workplace and how we do work has not shifted accordingly. We need to start dealing with these issues as part of our overall discussions on economic growth and income security. Predictable scheduling and other forms of flexibility are part of that important national conversation. ■■

Why Do You Invest in WE?



WE RECENTLY SPOKE WITH Janice Rodgers, Partner at Quarles and Brady LLP, and a long-time WE supporter and Investor for Change*.

Women Employed does great work for women in low-wage jobs, and it's a good investment. They are very strategic both in the issues they choose to focus on and how they address them. As an Investor* I've attended exclusive events and participated in conference calls

where I've received behind-the-scenes information about WE's strategic thinking and initiatives. I also had a unique opportunity to host an event where an expert spoke about the scheduling issues that low-wage women face. It gave me a better sense of the nuances of the issue, allowed me to network with other Investors, and was the perfect opportunity to introduce younger colleagues to Women Employed.

Do you want exclusive insights into our work? Contact Elizabeth Finlayson at 312-782-3902, x245, and learn more about becoming an Investor for Change.

*Investors for Change, donors who give \$1000 or more each year, make it possible for Women Employed to respond quickly and creatively to issues that affect working women.

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discrimination and other violations of workplace protections, as well as retirement security, work-family issues, and other policy concerns.

Secretary Solis made it clear that the agency is committed to enforcing anti-discrimination policies, bolstering training, and addressing the needs of women workers hit hardest by the recession. After years of neglect, DOL is being reinvigorated as an advocate for the millions of people who are denied basic workplace protections.

WE is working with the administration on upcoming regional forums to promote better work-family policies and with DOL officials to reinvigorate the vital federal role in ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for workers at every level of employment.



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Women Employed is now on LinkedIn!
Join our new group to share resources,
read news on the issues, and get input
on topics that are important to you.
To join, visit [http://www.linkedin.com/
groupRegistration?gid=2965344](http://www.linkedin.com/groupRegistration?gid=2965344).

Marketing Professionals Make Big Impact



This year, the committee helped develop our first-ever holiday e-cards. “We started with a blank slate, and we came up with some great cards,” says committee member Remi Gonzalez, Senior Vice President at Public Communications Inc. “Having that kind of creativity, and then being able to send it out to the world, was really fun.”

The committee is planning to expand in 2011 to take on some big e-marketing projects! Are you a marketing professional waiting to make a difference? Want to make a big impact with a minimal time commitment? Then consider joining the committee.

For more information, contact Rebecca Wellisch at rwellich@womenemployed.org or 312-782-3902 x222.

YOU MAY NOT KNOW IT, but Women Employed’s public image has been shaped in part by an amazing group of volunteers. The Marketing Committee is a small group of Chicago-area marketing and communications professionals who utilize their expertise to help promote WE’s visibility and creatively engage potential donors and activists.

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for
WE Can Do It!

Women Employed’s annual
cocktail party with a purpose.

Tickets: \$35

WHEN
SEPTEMBER 15, 2010
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

WHERE
ENGLISH
444 N. LASALLE
CHICAGO



For more information, visit
womenemployed.org.