



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

111th CONGRESS Second Session



*F*ederally
*E*mployed
*W*omen



Mission Statement: Federally Employed Women (FEW) is a membership organization working for the elimination of sexual discrimination and the advancement of women in government. This will be accomplished by:

- Encouraging diversity and equity in the workplace
- Enhancing career opportunities for women
- Establishing and maintaining working relationships with organizations to advocate the fair application of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and personnel laws, policies, procedures, and practices
- Improving the quality of life for women by influencing Congressional and Administration actions
- Committing to achieve and maintain a unified and diverse membership and
- Providing opportunities for professional growth through leadership development, education, mentoring, and networking.

Our comprehensive legislative agenda is divided into three-tiers.

TIER I ISSUES

(Those issues that are considered of utmost importance to female federal workers. FEW gives priority attention to these areas by initiating grassroots efforts, contacting legislators, and proactively educating its members about these issues.)

■ **Equal Employment Opportunity**—FEW is deeply committed to the principle of civil rights and actively works to eliminate discrimination against any individual or groups based on gender, race, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or physical/ mental handicap.

■ **Affirmative Employment**—Effective affirmative employment programs in each federal department and agency must be established to ensure equality of opportunity for all groups. Requirements:

- A fair and impartial EEO complaints process that provides timely relief for victims of discrimination and serves as a strong deterrent to future unlawful behavior and policies.
- A work environment that is free from discrimination and sexual harassment, with strong punitive and preventive measures to eliminate this problem from the federal workplace.

■ **Full Constitutional Rights for Women**—Passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is imperative since full legal equality under the U.S. Constitution is necessary for women to be equal partners and participants in our society.

■ **Effective/Efficient Government Reform**—FEW calls for an oversight system to review proposed personnel policies and plans to ensure that they do not result in less opportunity for women, people of color and other minorities. Requirements:

- Federal workers must be given a voice and input into changes made to Civil Service Systems.

- Federal employees must never lose their right to be represented by their unions.
- Title V rights under the Fair Labor Standards Act must be protected.
- Pay banding systems must be equitable, non-discriminatory and monitored for fairness to women and minorities with sufficient funds allocated for performance awards under the Pay for Performance system.

■ **Family Member Care**—Public policy must address the needs of women workers who are balancing work and family demands, including better access to and affordability of federal agency day care facilities. No efforts to reduce or eliminate the gains made by passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will be accepted. Rather, FEW supports legislation that increases leave options for women workers at times of family and medical emergencies or upon the birth or adoption of a child, including paid parental leave.

■ **Retirement/Pension**—Women workers must receive equitable and adequate retirement benefits. Requirements:

- Cuts to retirement benefits through the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) must be repealed.
- No adverse changes to the federal retirement systems should be implemented, such as decreasing the government's contribution, raising the retirement age, changing the "High Three" annuity formula for CSRS employees, or limiting the government's matching contribution to the Thrift Savings Plan, that would reduce the pensions that female federal workers earn.
- Congress should enact premium conversion laws that enable retired federal workers to pay their health insurance premiums in pretax dollars.



■ **Privatization/Outsourcing**—Staffing cutbacks usually have a disproportionate impact on the progress made by women, people of color, and other minorities. When unavoidable, downsized federal workers must be provided training and placement services to enable them to secure continued federal or private sector employment. Further, FEW members remain opposed to contracting out of government functions unless it is the most efficient and cost-effective way to conduct business.

■ **Women in the Military**—Although more than 200,000 women are currently on active duty in the armed forces, sex discrimination, harassment and assault continue to be problematic. Not only must women and men be treated equally in the military, but also those females who encounter harassment and assault must have adequate and effective disciplinary avenues to report these crimes without fear of retaliation or negative impact on their military careers.

■ **Employment Benefits**—A vital component of every federal worker's compensation package is employment benefits. FEW supports any initiative that enhances benefits for federal workers and will fight against those that negatively impact the benefits currently given to these employees. FEW also encourages agency tuition assistance and student loan repayment programs to make employment with the federal government more attractive to potential federal employees.

■ **Glass Ceiling Issues**—More progress is necessary to eliminate institutional barriers that inhibit women from moving into higher management-level positions. Enactment of a Senior Executive Service (SES) Diversity bill and support for federal agencies' Federal Women's Programs is imperative.

TIER II ISSUES

(Those issues that impact all federal employees regardless of gender. Rather than taking on primary responsibility, FEW joins forces with other organizations to impact these issues, and, if appropriate, initiates a grassroots effort.)

■ **Safety and Health**—The federal government must be held to the strictest standards in creating and maintaining a healthy and safe workplace. Specifically,

- The federal government must recognize its responsibility for providing a healthy and safe work environment and comply with all health and safety standards and

- Survival kits and Continuation of Operations Plans (COOP) must be developed, implemented and provided to all federal workers to prepare them for any disaster or catastrophic event that might occur while they are at work.

■ **Whistleblower Protection**—Federal workers need to be protected from adverse actions that might be taken against them as a result of their whistleblower activities.

■ **Workplace Violence**—Agencies have an inherent responsibility and right to take action against employees who engage in disruptive or threatening behavior. All federal agencies should be required to adopt a formal written policy against workplace violence.

TIER III ISSUES

(Those issues that affect all women. FEW is bound in sisterhood with other women in all walks of life and, therefore, is interested in those issues that impact all women as a class. Once again, FEW joins forces with other organizations to impact legislation and keep its members informed on these issues.)

■ **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**—The U.S. must ratify this United Nations treaty that defines what constitutes discrimination against women, sets up an agenda for national action, and requires regular progress reports from ratifying countries.

■ **Economic Empowerment**—Realization of full equality for women includes increased economic empowerment of all women. Requirements:

- Development of national and state programs that provide training and education to enable lower income women to become productive, economic, independent people and family providers.
- Equal access to credit and insurance for women both as individuals and as business entrepreneurs.
- Improvements and full enforcement of child support collections.

■ **Health Care**—FEW calls on the federal government to enforce current guidelines that call for greater inclusion of women in both biomedical research and clinical drug trials and to take action to ensure research includes children subjects. FEW also advocates health plan coverage of preventive tests for women (i.e., CA125 tests for ovarian cancer) similar to coverage already granted to men for prostate cancer screening.



FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968 after Executive Order 11375 was issued that added sex-discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination in the federal government.

FEW has grown into a proactive organization with over 100 chapters in ten regions throughout the U.S. FEW serves the more than one million federally employed women (both civilian and military) and is the only organization dedicated solely to eliminating sex discrimination in the federal workplace.

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