

Spring 2010



Spring Newsletter

The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

Upcoming Events



April 15, 2010

"An Equal Pay Day " event: The Mass Commission on the Status of Women is co-sponsoring An Equal Pay Day is coming up on April 15th at the State House at 11:00 am in Room 222 of the State House. This event is free, open to the public and is co-sponsored by Senator Jehlen and Representative Wolf. lead sponsors of pay equity legislation S 689 "An Act Further Defining Comparable Work" a bill to close the wage gap.

April 27, 2010

The Rising Tide - The Rapid Aging of Boston's and America's Homeless: Policy Implications and Solutions. Hosted by Hearth, Inc. at The Boston Foundation, 75 Arlington Street, 10th Floor, Boston, Massachusetts. Tuesday, April 27, 2010. Continental Breakfast: 8:00 a.m. Forum: 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Hear from experts on housing, elderly issues, and homelessness about the growing crisis of homelessness in older adults, its policy implications, and models that represent proven,

30 Years and We're Still Hooting

2010 is OWL's 30th Anniversary! In 1979, when Tish Sommers was in the process of forming OWL with Laurie Shields, she gave a speech to the Western Gerontological Society of America in which she said the following about advocacy:

"The best starting place is with ourselves. In many ways it's great to be taken care of, to have others take responsibility for our well-being, to be protected, to be dependents. But considering today's realities, that is a dangerous course except for the affluent minority. Also, it's a good idea to start early. The middle years are in many ways the key. If those of us who recognize the need to take greater personal responsibility for our own futures help to bring our sisters along, the coming generation of senior women will be much better equipped to cope with the realities of aging. And if we take the next step of mobilizing middle aged and older women into organization in our own self interests, we may have major impact on public policy related to aging."



Tish's words still ring true today. As OWL battles benefit reductions in Social Security, fights for equal pay for equal work, fights to eliminate age and gender discrimination in health insurance reform and speaks out for support of family caregivers, we need your help more now than ever. Please do your part and support OWL!

Sincerely,
Ashley B. Carson, Executive Director

OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
1828 L Street NW, Suite 801
Washington, District of Columbia 20036
1-800-825-3695
www.owl-national.org

Paid Sick Leave Rally



"I believe that the right of all workers should be protected and that paid sick days are an important right" Lilly Ledbetter.

Affirmations for the pressing need for Paid Sick Days resonated loud and clear at

cost effective solutions. Seating is limited so please respond to Annie Garmey at agarmey@hearth-home.org For more information, please visit www.hearth-home.org/april-panel.html

the beautifully orchestrated Paid Sick Days Rally on April 1st at the State House. Governor Duval Patrick opened the event and for the first time came out fully supporting the bill and urged legislators in the room to vote for it. He was followed by Victoria Kennedy who passionately talked about how the bill makes common sense as a public health issue, worker productivity issue, women's rights issue and social justice issue. She urged we carry on the legacy of Teddy Kennedy an ardent champion of this cause. Bob Hayes, president of AFL-CIO who masterfully moderated the event introduced a panel of workers who emphasized that most front line workers, in homecare, restaurants, day care, school bus driving don't have paid sick leave and go to work sick which is a public health hazard for all of us. The two lead sponsors Sen. Jehlen and Rep. Kahn made a wonderful case for the bill. As did employers Rob Evert (Equal Exchange) and lawyer Dolph Vanderpol who described how it was good for business, worker moral and retention. ED of the Boston Public Health commission De Barbara Ferrer dramatically cited how many children sick with H1N1 came to school due to lack of parents paid sick days. And Angela Menino offered her wholehearted support. This all led up to the amazing keynote by Lilly Ledbetter, a champion of gender pay equity and women's economic retirement security. She carried her fight for workers rights all the way from the Goodyear Tire Plant in Alabama to the Supreme Court and the U.S. Congress and she won. Working women are caregivers who often have to choose between taking care of a family member or losing pay or a job placing them at an economic disadvantage. She showed how paid sick leave is a worker rights issue and a women's rights issue.

It was fabulous we had a great OWL turnout with all of us wearing our OWL Supports Paid Sick Leave stickers advocating for a cause so in line with our social justice values. Sitting in the Great Hall at the State House we were participating in an important step in moving the bill forward.

Update since the event: The bill now is in the Health and Financing committee. If voted on favorably it will probably go to the legislative floor. This committee needs get its work done and vote by April 28th. A majority of members, 12 out of 20, are supportive the bill. Effort is being made to contact the co chairs Sen. Moore of Worcester and Norfolk counties and Rep. Stanley of West Newbury. Without their support the bill won't move. If you know any of these legislators or know someone who does, please contact them and ask them to support the bill.

-Joan Ditzion- OWL liaison to the Paid Leave Coalition

Governor announces Elder Agenda at UMass Boston

On March 16, 2010, Governor Deval Patrick presented his "Aging Agenda" to elders and elder advocates in a town-hall style meeting that drew about 400 people. His Aging Agenda consists of nine principles which support the "Best Quality of Life for All". The Principles include:

1. a society that understands the positive aspects of aging and our interdependence,
2. affordable housing,
3. affordable long-term care services,
4. economic security via adequate earnings, lifetime of saving, and basic financial skills,
5. support for caregivers,
6. flexible array of transportation options,
7. access to social services including protection against abuse and neglect,
8. managing one's own life and fully participating in community life,
9. best possible physical, cognitive, and mental health.

After comments from Secretary Ann Hartstein, Ellen Bruce of UMass Boston, Len Fishman of Hebrew Senior Life, and Nancy Snyder of the Commonwealth Corporation, the Governor took questions on topics ranging from adult day health care, driving, housing, and long-term care options. He did not make any commitments and stressed the problem of a shortfall in the state budget requiring cuts in state supported services. The governor's attention to many of the issues raised is appreciated but it is not clear what progress can be made in the immediate future given the current budget. Many services which elders rely on continue to be at risk.

-Ellen Bruce

Letter to the Editor Regarding The Paid Sick Leave Bill

Dear editor:

Many women are angry with the health bills for the abortion exclusions. But the plans also single out poor people over 50--a group dominated by women--for legal and lethal bias.

A major "reform"--one affecting low-income "boomers"-- would leave gaps in coverage that could really be lethal. It will affect millions of Americans as young as 50, who happen to be poor. The bill under discussion is going to charge people 50-plus twice as much as those under 50.
<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2010/2/22/839575/-Analysis-of-the-Presidents-Health-Care-Reform-Proposal>

Massachusetts' coverage, which is considered a "model," already has a 2:1 ratio. No law makes such age discrimination illegal. It is called age rating. Insurance coverage based on age rating is dangerous, especially for midlife women, who are poorer than men and less likely to have health coverage.

Before they crawl across the finish line to Medicare at 65, people without insurance, according to a recent report from the American Journal of Public Health, are likelier to die. The group between ages 55 to 64 died at the highest rate, 10.7 percent.

Where is the outrage that millions of midlife people with chronic conditions are likely to be priced out of the market?

OWL has argued for the egalitarian alternative--called "community rating"-- where everyone pays the same, as in Medicare. The argument against equality is supposedly that premiums would go up for younger individuals. But data from New York state show younger people don't in fact opt out.

This injustice gets almost no media attention. I believe that OWL and AARP should keep this issue at the forefront of readers' minds. And so should all other advocates for the vulnerable.

Sincerely,
Margaret Morganroth Gullette

Resident Scholar, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis
617-965-2164
www.brandeis.edu/centers/wsrc/scholars/profiles/Gullette.html
Aged by Culture named a "Noteworthy Book" of the year by the Christian Science Monitor.
Declining to Decline chosen as "best feminist book on American popular culture."
Winner of the Daniel Singer Millennium Prize (essay) 2008.

Granny D, beloved American Politician, Will be Missed

(Ethel) Doris (Rollins) Haddock, born in Laconia, N.H., on Jan. 24, 1910, died from complications of emphysema



on March 9, 2010 at 100 years of age after living an amazing life. At age 88, Doris trekked 3,200 miles across the country from California to Washington to campaign finance reform. In 2000 at age 90, Granny D was arrested in Washington for illegally protesting in the Capitol rotunda. Granny D ran for Senate in 2004 when she was 94 years old and received 34 percent of the vote. This amazing woman wrote two books, gave a commencement speech at Hampshire College in 2005 and was even awarded an honorary degree from Franklin Pierce College in 2002. She will not soon be forgotten.

-Lorilei Michaud Richardson

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