



Eastern Mass Chapter Newsletter

The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

OWL Newsletter

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ACTION ALERT!

The Paid Sick Days bill is being debated in the Joint Committee on Labor & Workforce Development. Your help is needed to get a favorable vote.

Please make just 2 calls or send 2 e-mails to your legislators asking them to support the Paid Sick Days bill.

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Paid Sick Days Bill



As you know, Eastern Mass OWL is part of the Paid Sick Leave Coalition and a sponsoring organization of the Paid Sick Days Bill ([House 1803](#)/ [Senate 1073](#)). The bill had a good hearing before the Labor and Workforce Development Committee in November and will be debated in the Committee this month. The bill would ensure that all Massachusetts workers have a minimum of seven days of paid time off annually to take care of their own health needs and those of family members. Guaranteeing seven earned paid sick days annually provides the following benefits:

- Allows workers time to deal with their own health problems
- Reduces the spread of disease at work, creating public health benefits
- Allows workers time off to care for a sick child and not have to worry that they may lose their jobs
- Provides workers time to care for an infirm elderly parent

The Paid Sick Leave Coalition wants legislators to hear from OWL members in support of the bill. Each of us is asked to make two calls or send two emails to our legislators in support of the bill and also to contact the Labor and Workforce Development Committee chairs, [Sen. Thomas M. McGee](#) and [Rep. David Torrisi](#). For a suggested telephone script, e-mail jditizion@comcast.net.

Callers should make sure to identify themselves as OWL members. For legislator information go to www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php, or call the State House at 617-722-2000. If the legislators have any questions, ask them to contact

Ellen Wallace, 617-603-1672, ewallace@gbis.org; or Darrell Villaruz at Darrell.Villaruz@state.ma.us (from Kay Kahn's office); or Megan Shannon at Megan.Shannon@state.ma.us (from Pat Jehlen's office).

We need your help for a favorable vote!

Joan Ditzion

Eastern Mass OWL Representative to the Coalition

From National OWL



Dear Eastern Mass OWL Members,

On the national front, OWL has joined AARP and SEIU in their effort to put access to health care and long-term financial security on the public agenda. OWL is a partner in the "Divided We Fail" campaign, which is dedicated to bringing these issues to public discussion and getting candidates for public office to explain how they will ensure access to affordable, quality health care and preserve Social Security as a social insurance program. To learn more about the campaign visit <http://DividedWeFail.org>

. On a sad note, and as you may already know, our Executive Director, Laurie Young, fell ill and resigned during the Fall due to her health. She is expected to have a full recovery but it will take some time. Ashley B. Carson, J.D., OWL's former public policy/field service director, has assumed the role of Executive Director. Her background in public policy and familiarity with many OWL chapters have prepared her well to step into the position. We are very fortunate.

We encourage all OWL members to be active in the political process in the coming months and during this election year.

Sincerely,

Ellen A. Bruce, President, OWL National Board

Legislative Update



The Elder Caucus held an informational meeting titled "Seniors and Their Access to Mental Health Care" on September 26, 2007, at the Massachusetts State House. The purpose of the meeting was to begin a dialogue about seniors affected by mental illness and their access to mental health treatment. Highlights of the forum included an academic overview of mental health issues, real-life accounts from individuals who have had difficulty in accessing mental health care, and stories from caregivers, case managers, providers, and outreach workers who have had telling experiences with elders who have mental health issues. The meeting closed with an overview of the current mental-health care system for seniors and an outline of the next steps needed to provide appropriate mental health care for our senior population. In addition to the Elder Caucus, the

Mental Health Legislative Caucus, the chairs of the Elder Affairs and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Committees, and ten elder advocacy groups sponsored this meeting with 76 persons attending.

Also, S622 and H901, Equitable Coverage in Annuities, had a hearing on October 10th before the Financial Services Committee and is still in committee.

Chaired by Rep. Barbara A. L'Italien and Richard J. Ross, the Elder Caucus plans to hold a steering committee in February to prepare for the next full meeting. No date has been set.

Kay Maguire

From the Chair



Last Fall was a busy time for our chapter. In October members met with Judy Meredith from the Public Policy Institute, we joined together with the Greater Boston chapter of OWL to host a Northeastern Regional OWL meeting, and we kicked off a lunchtime Topics & Treats series on the UMass campus. Throughout the Fall, we have been active with the Paid Sick Leave Coalition, and this important work is continuing.

I feel tremendous gratitude to the many people who contributed their time and energy to our pursuits last Fall. Special thanks go to Judith Conahan, Joan Ditzion, Mollie Feeney, Deborah Gray, Elizabeth Johns, Kay Maguire, Rachel Puopolo, Sue Reamer, and Nina Silverstein. I'd also like to thank Ellen Bruce, Lynn Girton, Edris Kelley, and Linda Moussouris for ongoing support of this chapter, and all of our members for their phone calls and letters supporting the Paid Sick Leave bill in Massachusetts and Medicare for All.

We are now planning our activities for Spring 2008, so please join us at one of our meetings and watch your in-box for updates. I hope this year will bring continued growth to this chapter and increased participation among all our members.

Kimberly Johnson

Book Review

Grassroots feminists invisible? Who, us?



"[I]nsightful and influential feminist scholarship is growing in disciplines such as economics, sociology, philosophy, and political science. Voice is being given to erudite and blistering intellectual critiques. These critiques are often accompanied by calls for profound social change . . ." (Estes, Biggs, & Phillipson, 2003, p. 61)

Carroll Estes and her colleagues could be speaking about the books I've listed below, which address a

range of issues important to midlife and older women--indeed, to women of all ages. These relate to work-family balance, and the importance of valuing the unpaid (unrecognized, undervalued) family care work that is still largely women's domain in the U.S. and elsewhere.

The latter issue is especially relevant to OWL members because unpaid family care--raising children, assisting disabled and/or elderly family members--is probably the single most important contributor to women's economic vulnerability in later life. But it's a fair bet that many of us have had close familiarity with these issues all our lives, and our daughters and granddaughters may struggle with them now. Unpaid care often takes women out of the workforce for long periods of time, or keeps them in secondary labor markets with low pay and miserly benefits. And in families where women try to do it all--care for families and hold down demanding jobs--the result is high stress and sometimes "dropping out," at least for those who can afford it.

The books listed below propose innovative ideas to address these persistent and damaging gender inequities: changes in family policy to better support parents (such as the paid family leave legislation that Massachusetts has been considering), but also increased respect for the true value of family care and strategies for removing its long-lasting economic penalties.

But of such studies Estes and her co-authors go on to say: ". . . *yet they are presented amid the reality of little [government] old-age policy action relevant to the critiques levelled and virtually no visible grassroots feminist social movement activity in this arena.*"

Sister OWLs, I think that finger may be pointed at us. But we can change that. And with the fresh political winds blowing this year, what better time than now for us to link arms with other young, midlife, and older women to advocate for new ideas with the potential to enhance the well-being of us all.

Elizabeth Johns

Social Theory, Social Policy and Ageing: A Critical Introduction by Carroll L. Estes, Simon Biggs, & Chris Phillipson (2003). Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment by Janet C. Gornick & Marcia K. Meyers (2003). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

The Time Divide: Work, Family, and Gender Inequality by Jerry A. Jacobs & Kathleen Gerson (2004). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Market Friendly or Family Friendly? The State and Gender Inequality in Old Age by Madonna Harrington Meyer & Pamela Herd (2007). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

The Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream by Phyllis Moen & Patricia Roehling. (2005). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

*NERO Meeting**



The Fall 2007 NERO (New England Regional OWL) meeting was co-hosted by Greater Boston OWL and Eastern Mass OWL on October 20 at the Brookline Senior Center. OWL members came representing chapters in New York, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, with more than 60 people present.

After a morning business meeting, Barbara Roop, co-chair of the Healthcare for MA campaign, spoke about the new Massachusetts Commonwealth Care and what health care policy is needed for our nation as a whole.

Following a delicious lunch, we had a second speaker on older women's issues, Margaret Morganroth Gullette, a cultural critic and prize-winning nonfiction author (*Aged by Culture Declining to Decline*) and a well-known age critic, essayist, and activist.

After Gullette's well-received remarks, reports of their past year's activities were given by the attending OWL chapters. After the meeting was adjourned, refreshments and socializing were enjoyed by all.

Kay Maguire

*All photos in this newsletter are from the NERO meeting.

Calendar



February 19, 2008 - Next Eastern Mass OWL chapter meeting at UMass Boston in Room 3-125 (3rd floor) of the Wheatley Bldg from 12 Noon to 1 p.m.

February 26, 2008 - *Make Equal Choice Real!* State House Lobby Day, Nurses Hall, 11 a.m. to Noon, legislative visits from Noon on. "Come tell lawmakers what your home care priorities are for the FY 2009 budget. We won the 'equal choice' law,' but now we need the moeny to go with it!" For more information call Al Norman of Mass Home Care at 781-272-7177 or info@masshomecare.org.

March 29, 2008 - "Sage," a film about notable elders, including Julia Child, will be shown by Greater Boston OWL at the Brookline Senior Center at 1p.m.

May 1, 2008 - Save this afternoon for Eastern Mass OWL's Spring Event, featuring Doris (Granny D) Haddock, who spent 14 months walking across the United States at age 90 to promote campaign finance reform and *then* ran for the U.S. Senate from New Hampshire. At UMass Boston. Additional details to be announced at a later date.

"How can I Afford Retirement?" Lecture and Discussion Series

In April 2008, The Boston Public Library will launch a major new educational initiative called "How Can I Afford Retirement? Investor Education at the Boston Public Library." These events are appropriate for people who are nearing retirement or recently retired.

The first four events in this series of free investor education programs to be held at the Central Library will be:

April 17th, 6 - 8:30 PM, *Can I Afford Retirement?* (Repeated, April 26th, 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM)

May 13th, 6 - 8:30 PM, *Closing the Gap: Investment and Expense Strategies for Late Starters*

May 29th, 6 - 8:30 PM, *Managing Your Investments Wisely for Long Life Expectancy*

June 12th, 6 - 8:30 PM, *Protecting Your Retirement Investments*

Free and open to the public, pre-registration is requested by phone at 617-859-2241 or by email at affordretirement@bpl.org. For more information, visit the website at affordretirement.bpl.org or bpl.org

The Boston Public Library is also seeking **volunteer discussion facilitators** for this investor education series. If you are interested in the financial aspects of retirement and can facilitate a small group, the project team would welcome your involvement. The program will begin in April with training held in late March. For more information, email affordretirement@bpl.org.

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- [National OWL Web](#)

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