



Women's Division Washington Office Issue Briefing – The World & The Nation August 2007



Federal Budget Update

The federal budget process for FY 2008 is underway with the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and Subcommittees working toward approval of the 13 appropriations bills for FY 2008. The House Appropriations Committee has approved many of the allocations provided by the subcommittees. The 13 bills will include: **\$18.8 billion for Agriculture, 5.9 percent above FY 2007 levels; \$53.6 billion for Commerce, Justice and Science, 6.4 percent above FY 2007 levels; \$459.3 billion for Defense, 9.5 percent above FY 2007 levels; \$31.6 billion for Energy and Water, 4.3 percent above FY 2007 levels; \$36.3 billion for Homeland Security, 13.6 percent above FY 2007 levels; \$27.6 billion for Interior and Environment, 4.5 percent above FY 2007 levels; \$151.1 billion for Labor, Health and Human Service, and Education, 4.6 percent above FY 2007 levels; and \$50.7 billion for Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, 6.7 percent above FY 2007 levels.**¹ The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved **\$34.24 billion for the FY 2008 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, \$3 billion above FY 2007 and \$700 million below the president's request; and \$32 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Energy, \$1.8 billion more than the president's request and \$2 billion over FY 2007.** Once all of the appropriations bills are approved by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, each chamber will vote. The House and Senate will then work together in a *conference committee* which must be resented to both chambers for a final vote.

For more detailed information about the approved appropriations bills and to follow upcoming votes visit the Library of Congress website at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app08.html>

Also visit the website for the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee at <http://appropriations.house.gov/> and the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee at <http://appropriations.senate.gov/index.cfm>



Chocolate

A recent report released by Global Witness entitled *Hot Chocolate: How Cocoa Fuelled the Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire*, outlines “the role that the cocoa trade has played in the armed conflict and political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.” Global Witness states that cocoa exports from Côte d'Ivoire, The Ivory Coast, in western Africa, are funding conflict between the government-controlled southern region of the country and the rebel controlled north. The Ivory Coast is the world's largest producer of cocoa, providing 43% of the world's cocoa. “Just as diamonds played a key role in Liberia's civil war, both the government and rebels [in the Ivory Coast] have used cocoa profits to finance their war operations... In the case of the government, 30 percent of military costs during a six-month period were funded by cocoa proceeds. Meanwhile, rebels have been reaping around \$30 million per year since 2004.”² Groups like Global Witness are calling for companies like Mars, Nestle, Archer Daniels Midland, and Cargill to audit their supply chains and to ensure that the chocolate they sell are conflict-free. In addition, groups such as Global Exchange are pressuring these companies and others to sell fair trade chocolate to ensure that revenues do not fund conflicts or support child labor violations on cocoa farms. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) states that an estimated 284,000 children in the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon are working on cocoa farms in hazardous conditions, using machetes and applying pesticides and insecticides without proper protective gear. Currently fair trade chocolate and cocoa products are available in various markets. Check for the “Fair Trade Certified” logo on the packaging.

For more information read the Global Witness report by visiting their website at www.globalwitness.org
For more information on fair trade chocolate visit Global Exchange's website at www.globalexchange.org





Pay Equity: Women still earning 77-81 cents for every dollar earned by men

In 1963, the President signed the Equal Pay Act which prohibited employers paying female employees lower wages than male employees doing equal work. When the legislation was signed, full-time working women made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men according to the U.S. Census Bureau. “By 2005, women earned 77 cents to the dollar, a narrowing of the wage gap by less than half a cent a year. Over a working lifetime, this wage disparity costs the average American woman and her family an estimated \$700,000 to \$2 million, impacting Social Security benefits and pensions.”³






According to a report released by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research entitled *The Best and Worst State Economies for Women*, women’s wages have risen in all states since 1989 with the highest earnings found in the District of Columbia, Maryland and New Jersey. The Institute found that the female-male wage ratio has increased substantially since 1989 from 68.5 percent to 77.0 percent. A higher percentage of women are also running their own businesses with more than 30 percent women-owned businesses in the District of Columbia, Maryland and New Mexico. Also, women have nearly achieved equality with men in attaining a four-year college degree. In 2004 26.5 percent of women over the age of 25 had a Bachelor’s degree compared to 29.1 percent of men. Despite these positive developments the research also found negative developments. “In no state does the typical full-time woman worker earn as much as the typical man. At the present rate of progress it will take 50 years for women to achieve earnings parity with men nationwide.”⁴ The findings further indicate that since 1995, the poverty rate among women in 15 states has increased, and in another 15 states women’s poverty fell by less than 1.0 percent.⁵

To raise awareness about the gap between men’s and women’s wages, Equal Pay Day events are held across the country in April of each year. *Mark your calendars now for next year’s Equal Pay Day to help raise awareness in your communities* about the pay disparities between men and women. The next Equal Pay Day will be held on April 22, 2008. For more information about Equal Pay Day and pay equity issues and legislation contact the Institute for Women’s Policy Research at (202) 785-5100 or www.iwpr.org or the National Committee on Pay Equity at <http://www.pay-equity.org/day.html>



GROWTH Act

A groundbreaking bill that has the potential to help lift millions of women in the developing world out of poverty is now before Congress. On July 10, 2007 Congresswoman Nita Lowey (NY) and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL) introduced the Global Resources and Opportunities for Women to Thrive Act (GROWTH Act, HR-2965). The GROWTH Act reshapes U.S. assistance and trade policy to invest in women by promoting:

-  Women Businesses: It helps women living in poverty start and grow their own businesses
-  Property Rights: It helps increase women’s land and property rights
-  Wages and Working Conditions: It helps improve women’s wages and working conditions by emphasizing training and education
-  Access to Global Trade: It ensures that the benefits of trade agreements reach women and families living in poverty
-  Local Women’s Organizations: It encourages U.S. agencies to partner with local organizations that focus on women’s needs

You can sign the petition encouraging your representative to support this very important piece of legislation. Go to www.democracynaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/edge/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=321 to sign the petition or contact Women’s Edge Coalition at (202) 464-3746 or visit their website at www.womensedge.org

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, Budget and Revenue Standing Committee. *Federal Budget and Revenue Update*. Volume 13, Number 9. June 11, 2007.

² Thierry Gouegnon. *Chocolate guilty of prolonging Ivory Coast’s war*. Reuters. June 11, 2007.

³ National Committee on Pay Equity website. <http://www.pay-equity.org/about.html>

⁴ Heidi Hartman, Olga Sorokina and Erica Williams. *The Best and Worst State Economies for Women*. Institute for Women’s Policy Research. Briefing Paper. IWPR No. R334. December 2006.

⁵ Ibid.