

## NOW Action Board Report

To: NOW National Board

From: Bonnie Grabenhofer, Vice President

Date: October 21, 2015

Board Meeting: November 7-8, 2015

This board report contains updates on action alerts, actions, and coalition work.

### FYI NOW

Five FYI NOW communications were sent in the past 3 months containing links to Action Alert posted on now.org, other actions, issue advisories, etc. Some highlights are briefly described in this report.

### Action Alerts

**Prevent Domestic Abusers from Having Firearms:** H.R. 3130/S. 1520 would close a loophole in the Lautenberg Amendment. This potentially lifesaving legislation would protect the many women facing dating abuse and stalking violence by keeping guns out of the hands of violent offenders.

Get more co-sponsors: <http://now.org/take-action/action-alert-urge-your-senators-and-representatives-to-co-sponsor-and-pass-a-law-to-prevent-domestic-abusers-from-having-firearms/>

**Social Security Caregiver Credit Act:** Rep. Nita Lowey – H.R. 3377. This proposed legislation would credit caregivers of either sex for the time they take out of the paid workforce in the calculation of their Social Security retirement benefits. The proposed caregiver credit would increase women's economic security in retirement by recognizing their caregiving work in calculating their Social Security benefits.

Get more co-sponsors: <http://now.org/take-action/action-alert-urge-your-representative-to-co-sponsor-the-social-security-caregiver-credit-act-a-now-priority/>

**Equality Act:** The Equality Act (S. 1858/ H.R. 3185) prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identify in employment, housing, credit, and jury service. It also prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identify, and sex in programs that receive federal funding and places of public accommodations. It is a ground-breaking advance of civil rights protections not only for LGBTQIA persons, but also fills many loopholes in civil rights and other laws to better protect women from discriminatory treatment.

Bonnie Grabenhofer, NOW Vice President, was thrilled to join the press conference on July 23 when the Equality Act was introduced, and she called for more cosponsors for the Equality Act, federal comprehensive non-discrimination legislation.

Get more cosponsors: <http://now.org/take-action/action-alert-urge-your-senators-and-representative-to-support-the-equality-act/>

**EACH Woman Act** (H.R. 2972): The Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance, or EACH Woman Act, introduced July 8, effectively repeals the Hyde Amendment and allows for recipients of Medicaid, Medicare and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to have access to the full range of reproductive health care options. In addition, the EACH Woman Act would require the federal government as an insurer, employer or health care provider to assure affordable abortion coverage and care for every woman. It would also prohibit state and local governments from restricting or prohibiting abortion care by private insurance plans.

Get more co-sponsors. <http://now.org/take-action/action-alert-urge-your-representative-to-co-sponsor-the-each-woman-act/>

**Teach Safe Relationships Act of 2015 (H.R. 3141)** The first action alert for this bill was aimed at Senators. Thanks to activists, the Teach Safe Relationships Act was passed by the Senate on July 16<sup>th</sup> as part of the Every Child Achieves Act which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This legislation uses grants to encourage schools to educate middle and high school students about what it means to have truly safe relationships with oneself, partners, and other community members. The second action alert was aimed at representatives in the House. <http://now.org/take-action/action-alert-send-an-email-to-your-representative-and-ask-herhim-to-support-the-teach-safe-relationships-act-of-2015-h-r-3141/>

**Oppose Vicious Attacks and Stand with Planned Parenthood** - NOW and 92 other organizations signed a letter (<http://now.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/92-Organizations-in-Support-of-Planned-Parenthood.pdf>) reaffirming Planned Parenthood's reputation as a leading health care provider for 2.7 million men and women. NOW condemns the actions of the politically-motivated organization that released a heavily edited video that attempted to manipulate public opinion, vilify trusted health care providers, and advance efforts to take away women's access to legal and safe abortions and other important health services.

**Action** sent in July: A vote to defund Planned Parenthood is scheduled in the U.S. Senate. Call both of your senators and ask them to oppose defunding this vitally important program. Senate contact information. [http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

**Action:** NOW members joined counter demonstrations in support of family planning programs in July. NOW joined a press conference/rally in support of Planned Parenthood outside the Capitol while Cecile Richards was testifying before the House Oversight Committee.

**Equal Pay Days** - July 28 was Black Women's Equal Pay Day; September 8 was Native American Women's Equal Pay Day; and October 8 was Latinas' Equal Pay Day – In the FYI NOW emails, NOW members were encouraged to use the graphics and sample tweets in NOW's Equal Pay Day Social Media kit to share this information <http://now.org/leaderdoc/equal-pay-day-social-media-kit/>

**Medicaid and Medicare 50th Anniversary** - To celebrate the 50th anniversaries of Medicare and Medicaid and all great things that these vital programs do for women's health and economic security, NOW urged activists around the country to hold a birthday celebration or join held in more than 60 cities on or around July 30. Events included parties, rallies, marches, flash mobs and discussions.

**Advocate for EC Access** – NOW urged activists to make sure that their local pharmacies are stocking emergency (EC/Plan B) and making this easily available to anyone. We've learned that many pharmacies are hiding EC behind the counter and/or telling customers that it's available only to women over age 17 – not true! In August, activists were asked to visit your local pharmacy, fill out and send in a short survey.

### **Rape Kit Testing Success**

In the last Action Board Report we discussed the renewed efforts across the country to end the untested rape kit backlog estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands as well as the Senate hearing on this issue that Bonnie Grabenhofer attended. A number of chapters have been working in their communities to address this issue. There have been some significant successes to report.

Ending violence against women is a key issue for the Oakland/Macomb MI NOW. They set up a team fundraising page for the group Enough SAID (Enough Sexual Assault in Detroit), which raised money to have the backlog of over 11,000 rape kits in Detroit tested, and the cases prosecuted. In September the City of Detroit announced some very exciting news. They had processed 10,087 of the 11,000 rape or "evidence collection" kits that had been found in police storage in 2009.

(<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/09/02/rape-kit-testing/71561958/>).

Detroit reported that they identified 2,616 suspects from processing those 10,087 kits; 477 of them were repeat rapists and they have already gotten 21 convictions in cases involving evidence from these kits. Similar results were found when Los Angeles cleared their backlog in 2011

(<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/02/local/la-me-lapd-dna-tests-20110202>), and when Memphis did in March of 2015 (<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/3/10/memphis-cops-id-16-suspects->

while-clearing-rape-kit--backlog.html). So the evidence seems to suggest that clearing rape kit backlogs will help police forces get results in cases that otherwise may have gone cold.