

AAUW-NYS Public Policy Counterpart Newsletter

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Video of Gov. Cuomo's State of the State address on 1-9-2013:
<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/gov-cuomos-state-of-the-state>

Governor's State of the State executive summary
<http://www.legislativegazette.com/Articles-Top-Stories-c-2013-01-09-82380.113122-Governors-State-of-the-State-executive-summary.html>

CapWiz's MegaVote Changes

Because of redistricting, you may need to change your congressional district designation if you receive the MegaVote weekly update form CapWiz for your federal officials. Please enter the email address that you signed up with MegaVote, and click "Login" to edit or make changes to your account. <http://capwiz.com/aauw/megavote/edit/>

Women's Policy, Inc. has provided their **112th Congress At-A-Glance**, a summary of legislative action affecting women and their families during the last Congress.
http://www.womenspolicy.org/site/DocServer/112th_AAG_FINAL.pdf?docID=4901

What's at Stake for Women (and their families) in 2013:

Issue: Wages & Pay Equity

Making 2013 the Year for Pay Equity

This **AAUW Dialog** blog post was written by Deborah Swerdlow, AAUW's Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator. The Equal Pay Act was originally passed in 1963 to prohibit wage discrimination based on sex. As we enter the 50th anniversary year of this landmark legislation, it is important to acknowledge how far we've come — and how far we still have to go. <http://blog-aauw.org/2013/01/08/making-2013-the-year-for-pay-equity>

If you haven't signed up for AAUW Dialog, yet, do so now at this link:
<http://feedburner.google.com/fb/a/mailverify?uri=AauwBlog>

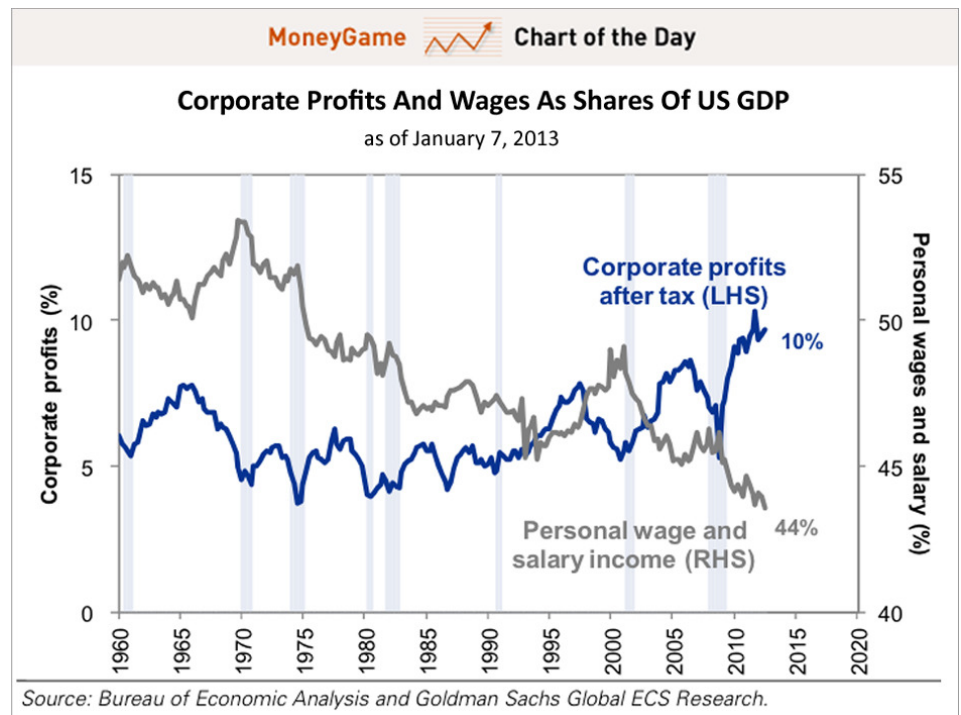
The Human Cost Of Surging Corporate Profits

Stocks continue to sit near five-year highs thanks to corporate profits

rebounding from the recession and surging to all-time highs. Meanwhile, the U.S. economic recovery continues to be anemic. And the biggest symptoms of that are the weak labor market and low wages. These two stories go hand-in-hand because part of the corporate profit rebound has been driven by lower

costs in the form of workforce and wage reduction. This chart from Goldman Sachs' David Kostin demonstrates that dynamic perfectly.

<http://e.businessinsider.com/public/1348032>



Issue: Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization

Has your branch or community planned an event for **One Billion Rising** on Feb. 14 to bring attention to violence against women and girls? There is still time to get out and dance! <http://onebillionrising.org/>

Advocacy idea: Organize a campaign to send postcards to your members of Congress demanding VAWA be passed in 2013 at your dance party! Buy prepaid post cards and address with the names of your congressperson and our two state senators. Pass them out and ask everyone at the dance to write a quick message about why they want to see VAWA passed in 2013!

CEDAW Ratification:

Why U.S. needs to ratify women's rights treaty

One of the distinguishing features of American foreign policy is its claim of moral authority in the field of human rights. Our politicians regularly cite America as a beacon of freedom and as a champion of the cause of human dignity across the globe. Yet, in at least one important instance, America lags behind. The United States remains the only industrialized democracy not to have ratified the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**, a watershed international

agreement that protects women and girls from unfair treatment and abuse. In fact, only six other states in the United Nations -- Iran, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and two Pacific Islands -- have failed to approve the treaty. A coalition of more than 100 organizations co-signed a letter urging the Senate to ratify the treaty in the 113th Congress. President Obama endorses ratification, and has identified the Convention as a multilateral treaty priority. The Senate must seize this moment, and ratify the women's rights convention. It must not play the same shameful partisan politics that it did with the disability rights convention, which it rejected just one month ago. Countries that ratify the treaty agree to take "all appropriate measures" to ensure that women receive equal and fair treatment. They commit to providing periodic reports documenting their efforts to a 23-member committee, which makes recommendations regarding best practices. The committee has no enforcement authority and its recommendations are non-binding. Its power is persuasive and rests on an unwavering belief that self-evaluation and international dialogue leads to positive change for women and girls. Public reports make states accountable to the world, and empower NGO's and citizens, both at home and abroad, to take action. <http://tinyurl.com/ag6kf6a>

Issue: The FMLA

The Family Medical Leave Act turns 20 on Feb. 5

February 5th is the 20th "birthday" of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For the last 20 years, the FMLA has been used an estimated 100 million times to provide job-protected, unpaid leave to women and men across the country to recover from a serious illness, care for a new child, or care for a seriously ill spouse, parent, or child. That's quite a feat! Unfortunately, right now only half of the American workforce is eligible to take FMLA and many people who *are* eligible can't afford to, because it is unpaid. In honor of this 20 year anniversary, please share your experience with the FMLA via Moms Rising: <http://action.momsrising.org/go/2490?t=5&akid=3790.81773.3DGsA5> Your stories will help us celebrate -- and expand and improve our nation's family leave policies. We'll deliver your stories to Members of Congress and the media on the 20th anniversary (Feb. 5) to powerfully show we need to improve and expand family leave policies so that everyone can have access to "paid" family leave when they need it.

Paid Family Leave: Can We Change The Maternity And Paternity Leave Debates To Include Everyone?

As of this week, a new father in Finland may take 54 days of paid leave to spend with his child. In Australia, a similar law gives new Dads two weeks off to bond. These are but the two newest countries to provide paternity leave, with pay. All over the world -- in places as diverse as Sweden (480 days; yes you read that right), Germany (365), Italy (90), Kenya (14), Switzerland (3) and Indonesia (2) -- legislators have realized that time with a child, without worry over a lost paycheck, is a right, not a frill. And in the US? You know the answer to that. We are essentially the last place on the planet that hasn't even embraced the narrower idea of leave for mothers. There are only three countries like this -- Papua New Guinea, Swaziland... and the one that prides itself on being the

leader of the world. Put another way, the government of Bangladesh guarantees all new mothers 16 weeks off at full pay at 100 percent salary, while the U.S. government says it's up to our employer whether we get paid or not (and only 11 percent of private sector workers and 17 percent of public sector workers do.) True, a few states -- California and New Jersey to be exact -- have their own laws, allowing five or six weeks at rates of pay that range from \$250 a week to 66 percent of the employee's salary. But most do so under the Family and Medical Leave Act which allows up to 12 weeks of leave at no pay.
<http://tinyurl.com/abnh3ro>

Issue: Elections, Voting and Campaign Finance Reform

Perpetual campaigns mean ongoing partisanship

Now that campaign 2012 is over, we can all take a deep breath (or at least a quick gasp) and plunge headlong into campaigns 2014 and 2016. You didn't actually think our politicians would take time off to govern, did you?

<http://tinyurl.com/anh7d2b>

NYS Election rules a casualty

The state board charged with making sure campaign finance reports by politicians are filed accurately and on time hasn't had a single investigator for almost a year due to budget cutbacks. But the lack of even a single investigator is the clearest sign yet that the board hasn't been able to conduct proper oversight, say observers like Barbara Bartoletti of the state League of Women Voters. "They need more staffing. They need more funding," she said. Revelations about the lack of enforcement came as NYPIRG released a survey of fundraising during the most recent election cycle for state legislative candidates. The total amount of contributions actually fell a bit — to \$85 million compared to \$87 million during the 2009-10 election cycle. Donors gave overwhelmingly to the party that was in control of each chamber: Senate Republicans and their related committees received \$42.3 million, compared to \$19 million for the minority Democrats; Assembly Democrats received almost \$29.6 million, compared to \$11 million for the chamber's minority Republicans.

<http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Election-rules-a-casualty-4173511.php>

Cuomo Will Include Campaign Disclosure Reform In SOS

Gov. Andrew Cuomo says he'll push for broader disclosure requirements from independent expenditure groups in his State of the State Wednesday, though he denied that public financing and shining a light on political non-profits are mutually exclusive. "I think you have to move on both," Cuomo said this afternoon. "I've been working on disclosure proposals for months literally, and we'll have one in the State of the State and you know my stance on campaign finance writ large." The Senate GOP is stridently opposed to taxpayer-funded campaigns, saying that adopting a system similar to that of New York City is a waste and a boondoggle that could lead to abuse. Disclosure of political spending, too, has the backing of Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, who both have made separate efforts, with the AG tackling

non-profits and DiNapoli looking into the political spending of Qualcomm via an investors' lawsuit.

<http://tinyurl.com/ba87qsp>

Early voting in New York easier said than done

Proposed state legislation — Assembly bill A689 and Senate bill S1461 — would establish an early voting system in New York. Democrats in the state Assembly are pushing to institute early voting in New York, but local elections officials say it would be costly and difficult to implement. Under the proposed legislation, each county would be required to operate at least five polling places from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, including Saturdays and Sundays, for 14 days before any general election and seven days before a primary or special election. A total of 32 other states and the District of Columbia already offer early voting, according to Silver's office. <http://tinyurl.com/a5r77xr>

Issue: Health Care & Insurance

Health Insurers Raise Some Rates by Double Digits

Health insurance companies across the country are seeking and winning double-digit increases in premiums for some customers, even though one of the biggest objectives of the Obama administration's health care law was to stem the rapid rise in insurance costs for consumers. Particularly vulnerable to the high rates are small businesses and people who do not have employer-provided insurance and must buy it on their own. Under the health care law, regulators are now required to review any request for a rate increase of 10 percent or more; the requests are posted on a federal Web site, healthcare.gov, along with regulators' evaluations. The review process not only reveals the sharp disparity in the rates themselves, it also demonstrates the striking difference between places like New York, one of the 37 states where legislatures have given regulators some authority to deny or roll back rates deemed excessive, and California, which is among the states that do not have that ability. New York, for example, recently used its sweeping powers to hold rate increases for 2013 in the individual and small group markets to under 10 percent. California can review rate requests for technical errors but cannot deny rate increases. In New York, for example, state regulators recently approved increases that were much lower than insurers initially requested for 2013, taking into account the insurers' medical costs, how much money went to administrative expenses and profit and how exactly the companies were allocating costs among offerings. "This is critical to holding down health care costs and holding insurance companies accountable," Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said. While insurers in New York, on average, requested a 9.5 percent increase for individual policies, they were granted an increase of just 4.5 percent, according to the latest state averages, which have not yet been made public. In the small group market, insurers asked for an increase of 15.8 percent but received approvals averaging only 9.6 percent. <http://tinyurl.com/b8m68ee>

Issue: Immigration Reform

Canada's guest worker program could become model for U.S. immigration changes

With President Obama's reelection in November, and the overwhelming support he received from Hispanic voters, expectations are high that he will take up the nettlesome cause of U.S. immigration reform in his second term. If so, the most contentious issue is likely to be the fate of the 11 million or so illegal immigrants living in the United States. But the debate is also expected to include proposals for a massive expansion of temporary worker programs to meet future U.S. demand for legal, low-skilled labor. The United States gives out about 50,000 seasonal agricultural visas per year, nearly all of them to Mexican workers. But U.S. farmers, immigrant advocate groups, labor unions and Mexican officials say that the current U.S. program is a mess: inefficient, bureaucratic and vulnerable to abuses by swindlers and shady recruiters who charge potential workers thousands of dollars to find jobs for them and prepare their visa applications. The frustrations have left many looking north, to Canada, where government officials partner with their Mexican counterparts to recruit workers, expedite visas, guarantee health and safety standards, and coordinate travel arrangements and pay. They also go to extraordinary lengths to make sure the workers go back to Mexico at the end of the season, raising criticisms that the arrangement treats them as little more than human machines. <http://tinyurl.com/b4bkz8b>

Issue: Taxes

More savers can convert to Roth 401(k)s under fiscal cliff deal

An unexpected provision in the fiscal cliff deal will give workers the option of paying taxes now on their retirement savings instead of later on when they withdraw money from their accounts. The change -- intended to drum up billions of dollars in government revenue -- allows more employees to convert a traditional 401(k) into a Roth 401(k), a relatively new retirement savings option that front loads the tax liability. Those choosing the conversion would pay taxes on the funds transferred, but any future gains or withdrawals would be tax free. Experts say the change will allow more flexibility for a larger number of retirement savers. A conversion to a Roth 401(k) is best for people in lower tax brackets who have extra cash on hand, such as young professionals, or those who are making less income than typical years or anticipate making a significantly higher income in the future. Roth 401(k)s can also be a helpful tool for estate planning, especially for those who want to prepay the tax liability on retirement accounts they are leaving to heirs.

<http://money.cnn.com/2013/01/04/retirement/roth-401k-fiscal-cliff/index.html>

Issue: Homelessness

Homeless in Suburbia

Throughout the 2000s, the suburbs were home to the largest and fastest-growing poor population in the nation, according to a 2011 analysis of U.S. Census data by the

Brookings Institution. From 2000 to 2010, the report also says, poverty grew by 53 percent in the nation's suburbs. This rapid change has left many educators behind. They are still teaching as if the suburbs have remained immune from the poverty that has long troubled urban areas, says M.J. Lechner, a University of Colorado-Denver professor who oversees seven student teachers at Parr. "Some teachers have been responsive [to the changes]," she says, "while others are still struggling to give up the notion that all kids are the same as they were 10 years ago." The explosion in suburban poverty is part of a larger, more disturbing trend. Childhood poverty nationwide is at its highest point since 1993, with 16.5 million, or 22 percent of children ages 18 and under living in poor families, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Race is still a factor. For African-American children, the poverty rate was 38 percent; for Latino children, it was 32 percent. The growth in suburban poverty has had a major impact on suburban schools. Without the safety net of social services that city governments provide for the urban poor, suburban schools have had to scramble to set up programs that address basic needs, such as adequate food and clothing, for their students from low-income families.

Teachers can help low-income students simply by knowing all their students better. A teacher who's aware that a student is sleeping in a car—or just struggling to stay in her house—will be more sensitive about approaching topics like homelessness. Teachers can also help by confronting biased attitudes against low-income neighbors. Jokes about "rednecks," "white trash" or dressing "ghetto" should be addressed as they come up in classrooms and hallways. But much of the most important work needs to take place at the administrative level.

Here are some tips for school administrators who might be seeing widespread poverty at school for the first time:

- ♦ **Watch for changes of address.** Families facing sudden poverty may move a lot. In many cases, the parents are understandably afraid their children will be forced out of a desirable school or district. This puts great stress on the students—stress the school or district can ease in part by helping the parents understand their rights.
- ♦ **Work around the car culture.** Gasoline and car maintenance can be huge expenses. Don't assume that parents can always shuttle their kids to and from school activities.
- ♦ **Become familiar with the McKinney-Vento Act.** This federal law guarantees the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness to a free and appropriate public education. It requires a local homeless education liaison in every school district. It also ensures enrollment, access to services, school stability and academic support.
- ♦ **Help with fees.** Students who are suddenly impoverished usually avoid field trips and extracurricular activities that require fees. In some cases, they'll even misbehave right before a big event to be prohibited from going. Make sure teachers are on the lookout for this behavior, and make sure the school has a response. For example, see if the PTA can create a fund to keep these students from being marginalized.

- ♦ **Find out what's needed.** Ask parents what's needed to help their children stay in school. Perhaps they need the library open late a few nights a week to have a place to go after school. Perhaps students need more computer access to complete assignments. Perhaps they need help with meals or transportation.
- ♦ **Provide services.** After the problems have been identified, advocate for ways to address them.

Also, educators should understand that the families of these students now face the daunting task of navigating the labyrinthine social-service network—a disorienting and often embarrassing task. <http://www.alternet.org/education/homeless-suburbia>

New NYS Laws:

Vaccinations against whooping cough among new laws for New Yorkers beginning this year <http://tinyurl.com/ac3dpxk>

- ♦ Nov. 27: Enables survivors of sexual assault who have undergone a forensic rape exam to receive a seven day starter pack of HIV post exposure drug treatment.
- ♦ Jan. 1: Allows support magistrates in family court more power to how to deal with child support scofflaws. Currently, those who don't pay child support can lose their drivers' licenses. If that person requests a hearing, the matter goes before a Family Court judge rather than the magistrate that has more direct knowledge of the case.
- ♦ Jan. 1: Allows small breweries to have more competitive contracts with wholesalers.
- ♦ Jan. 1: Directs the New York Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation agency to begin selling three-year and five-year access passes.
- ♦ Jan. 1: Allows businesses who install solar energy systems to receive state sales tax credits for the purchase and installation of the system.
- ♦ Jan. 1: Universities with at least a \$1billion endowment can create a self-funded insurance plan for students.
- ♦ Jan. 1: Allows victims of domestic violence using health insurance to pay for care associated with abuse to designate a second address or contact person to keep the insurance claims private.
- ♦ Jan. 14: Requires hospitals to offer Bordetella pertussis vaccinations (against whooping cough) between September and March to infants and any adults caring for those infants.
- ♦ Jan. 19: Requires providers to tell patients if a mammogram shows dense tissue, a common finding that can make it harder to detect cancer. The law encourages patients with dense tissue to ask doctors for other screening methods.
- ♦ Jan. 28: Allows homeowners and business owners with surveillance systems to voluntarily register with the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. The database will not contain surveillance footage; rather, it's meant to give a head start to law enforcement looking for recording devices in a certain area. Those who register with the database are not required to turnover their footage.

Share your Branch Public Policy News!

The **Ithaca Branch** has a great program scheduled for Mon., Jan. 28 with their community partner, the **League of Women Voters**. They are co-sponsoring “**Healthcare: What’s up in Albany?**” There will be presentations and a panel discussion on **The Affordable Care Act, Health Insurance Exchanges and New York State Medicaid Redesign Team recommendations** and how they affect Tompkins County residents. The featured speakers are:

- ♦ **Nate Shinagawa**, Vice Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature and Administrator for the Robert Packer Hospital
- ♦ **Linda Smith**, Legislative Aide to Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton
- ♦ **Sarah Jane Blake**, Outreach Counselor for Statewide Senior Action Council, facilitator

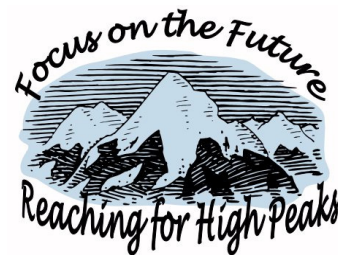
Remember that Legislative Aides to our NYS Assembly members and Senators are often experts in policy areas and much easier to schedule than the actual legislator when it comes to putting together a community program. There are many issues of concern across our public policy areas and bringing in experts like these to explore topics is a service to AAUW members and the general public alike. **Keep working with the coalition partners you connected with for last fall’s GOTV efforts!**

The 13 in ‘13 Public Policy Challenge Update:

Have you started working on your 13 in ‘13 Public Policy Challenge? Learn more at: <http://www.aauw-nys.org/pp.htm>

AAUW Calendar Reminders:

- ♦ March 8: International Women's Day
- ♦ April 9: Equal Pay Day
- ♦ **April 26-28: AAUW-NYS Convention, Lake Placid ****
- ♦ May 2013: Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month
- ♦ May 10: 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act
- ♦ May 30 - June 1, 2013: National Conference for College Women Student Leaders
- ♦ June 23: 41st Anniversary of Title IX
- ♦ June 9-12, 2013: The AAUW National Convention in New Orleans Hotel.
- ♦ July 2: 49th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act
- ♦ July 19-21: AAUW-NYS Summer Conference, Cazenovia College



**** Lisa Maatz**, the AAUW director of Public Policy and Government Relations, has been invited to be our keynote speaker on Friday night! As AAUW’s top policy adviser, Lisa advances AAUW’s priority issues on Capitol Hill, at the White House, and in coalition with other organizations. **The Saturday keynoter is NYS Assemblywoman Addie Jenne Russell**, 118th District, a former AAUW-Jefferson County Branch president.