



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Sen. Krueger Joins Legislators and Women's Equality Coalition to Demand Legislature Allow Votes on Governor's Full 10-Point Women's Equality Agenda

LIZ KRUEGER May 15, 2013

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State legislators, New York City Council members, and leaders of prominent organizations advocating for women's equality and health gathered today to demand an open floor vote in the State Senate on Governor Andrew Cuomo's 10-point Women's Equality Act, whose introduction is expected this legislative session.

Senate Majority Co-Leader and Republican Conference Leader Dean Skelos has repeatedly stated his categorical opposition to allowing a vote on the governor's Women's Equality Act because of the governor's commitment to include provisions modernizing New York's laws on reproductive health, bringing New York State's statutes in line with federal law by guaranteeing *Roe v. Wade* and current practice in New York. The elected officials and advocates present urged the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) members of the Senate Majority Coalition to insist that the governor's bill be allowed a fair debate and vote on the floor of the Senate.

"Any women's equality bill that is advanced must include significant improvement in reproductive health for the women in New York State," said **Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick**. "The citizens of this state deserve nothing less. Making personal decisions about our health is not a criminal offense."

New York is an historic leader on women's rights and equality, with some of the most significant events and victories of the American women's rights movement in its past, such as the Seneca Falls Convention. New York, too, was a leader with the passage of its law decriminalizing abortion in 1970, years ahead of *Roe v. Wade*. The large coalition of elected officials and advocates assembled on the steps of City Hall insisted that New York take this year as an opportunity to reinforce its legacy of leadership on these issues, and further reaffirmed their commitment to see all ten issues in Gov. Cuomo's Women's Equality Agenda addressed together, as a comprehensive package.

"Large majorities of New Yorkers are demanding equality and fairness for women under our state laws. Here in New York in the 21st century, it is outrageous for equal pay to be unenforceable, or for a woman's right to make her own personal healthcare decisions to be in

doubt. That's why we are all standing here in support of the full, 10-point Women's Equality Agenda that Gov. Cuomo announced in his State of the State," said **Senator Liz Krueger** (D-Manhattan). "Too often in Albany, progress on the big issues stalls out not because the votes aren't there, but because majority leaders -- who should only have one vote each -- are allowed to say no to bills ever receiving a vote. But on these fundamental issues of equality and fairness for women in New York State, we will not take no for an answer. We demand a vote."

"We have to end the inequalities that women face from the cradle to the grave," said **Senate Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins**. "Governor Cuomo's Women's Equality Agenda addresses ten specific inequities in women's lives ranging from housing discrimination, pay equity and the right to make personal and private health care decisions. It is a comprehensive package which will improve the lives of all New Yorkers. I urge my colleagues in the State Legislature to approve the Women's Equality Agenda."

"The Women's Equality Act will move New York forward on many of the issues the City Council Women's Caucus has long been fighting for -- reproductive freedom, pay equity and domestic violence prevention," said **Councilmember Jessica Lappin** (D-Manhattan). "Over 300 New Yorkers signed my petition supporting Governor Cuomo's plan. Senate Republicans should listen to the people and allow a vote."

Despite the advances that women have made in New York, many barriers still exist.

- Women in New York earn 84 percent of what men earn, and that disparity is even more drastic for African American and Hispanic women.
- Inequality persists throughout the course of a woman's life, meaning a woman is twice as likely as a man to live out old age in poverty.

- Women who are pregnant or have children are less likely to be hired, promoted, or given raises.
- Eighty-eight percent of public assistance cases for families are filed by women, and 71 percent of public housing units are occupied by female-headed households.
- Women are five times more likely than men to be sexually harassed, and one in four women will experience intimate partner violence in her lifetime.

“I support the governor's 10-point Women's Equality Act as he presented it,” said **Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee** (D-Rockland County). “I am optimistic that lawmakers from both parties will recognize the important protections and benefits this will give New York women. At this time we must stand together in order to send an unequivocal message that New York State guarantees all women from all over our state, from every walk of life, the same rights as men, which includes ensuring that reproductive healthcare decisions are both a right and a private matter.”

A Siena Research Institute poll conducted in March shows that 84 percent of New Yorkers support pay equity and 80 percent support updating New York's abortion law – a near consensus among New Yorkers in support of the two components of the Governor's 10-point proposal that have garnered the most attention. A high level of support was consistent upstate, downstate, among women and men, in cities, suburbs and rural areas, and across all age groups and party affiliations.

Additional Quotes from Elected Officials

“Women's equality is not something that should be approached piecemeal,” said **Senate Deputy Minority Leader Michael Gianaris** (D-Queens). “In light of recent attempts to roll back hard-fought women's rights victories, full equality needs to be achieved quickly and

comprehensively and must include protection for women's reproductive rights. New York is poised to continue its tradition as a progressive leader by passing Governor Cuomo's full 10-point Women's Equality Agenda. I am proud to reaffirm my commitment to doing so during this legislative session."

"New York has long been a leader in the fight to extend equality to people who are historically and routinely denied it," said **New York City Council Speaker Chris Quinn**. "And although we've achieved meaningful advances in women's rights, women still endure unfair burdens including barriers to equal pay, the right to choose and protection against domestic violence – obstacles that continue to affect their livelihood, wellbeing, safety and health. The Women's Rights Agenda will improve these areas of life for women and ensure equal treatment under the law. I thank the Governor for spearheading this critical proposal, and I know that New York State will be stronger and better for it."

"As the chair of the Women's Issues Committee, I commend Governor Cuomo for making his Women's Equality Agenda a priority in New York," said **Councilmember Julissa Ferreras** (D-Queens). "His calls for toughening of New York Labor Law's equal pay provisions, expanding protections victims of domestic violence and trafficking and job protections for pregnant women and women with children are not only deeply needed but long overdue. Today, I am proud to stand side-by-side with the New York State Women's Equality Coalition to advocate for the passage of Governor Cuomo's full 10-point Women's Equality Agenda in this year's legislative session. It is time all women across New York receive the equal treatment we fully deserve."

"It is simply unacceptable that women in New York still face discriminatory practices in the workplace and unnecessary obstacles when it comes to reproductive health," said **Senator Gustavo Rivera** (D-Bronx). "Passing Governor Cuomo's 10-point Women's Equality Act is an

essential step in ensuring that a broad spectrum of women's rights are fully protected in New York . As a state, we cannot continue to allow inequitable policies and antiquated laws to stand any longer."

"Women in New York continue to face unnecessary hurdles in the workplace and in access to reproductive health services," said **Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh** (D-Manhattan). "The Women's Equality Agenda is critically important to secure women's rights in our state. I am proud to stand with my legislative colleagues and members of the Women's Equality Coalition to continue to fight for equality and fairness for women. I look forward to working together to get this legislation passed."

"The women of New York deserve a vote on Governor Cuomo's comprehensive 10-point Women's Equality Agenda," said **Senator Jose M. Serrano** (D-Manhattan, Bronx). This plan not only promotes fairness and equal opportunity for the women of New York, but also bridges income disparities due to gender discrimination. I applaud Governor Cuomo for proposing a plan that will address many of the great public health and safety concerns affecting women today and puts the State of New York at the forefront of women's rights."

"There's simply no excuse for playing politics with women's health and equality. That's why it's vital that the Women's Equality Act get done this session. From securing pay equity and ending income discrimination, to ensuring freedom of choice and protecting victims of domestic violence, the time to act is right now," said **Senator Daniel Squadron** (D-Brooklyn, Manhattan), who sponsors legislation to end source-of-income discrimination when it comes to housing. "Thank you to Governor Cuomo for his vision and leadership, and to Senator Krueger and the Women's Equality Coalition for fighting for this critical legislation."

“I am proud to stand with my colleagues and support the governor's full agenda to advance equality for women,” said **Assemblymember Aravella Simotas** (D-Queens). “New York is lucky to have a Governor who understands that creating an equal playing field is important both in and of itself, and as a solution to many of the issues we face as a state.”

“I’m proud to join State Senator Liz Krueger and my other Senate Democratic colleagues in standing ready to provide the necessary margin of votes to pass Governor Cuomo’s entire 10-point Women’s Equality Act,” said **Senator Brad Hoylman** (D, WF-Manhattan). “It’s unconscionable for the legislature not to act in a decisive and comprehensive manner and address the disparities that exist for millions of women across New York State, whether it be in pay equity, workplace discrimination, reproductive freedom, or domestic violence safeguards. Enacting this package of legislation will send the message that New York is finally getting serious about gender equality.”

Quotes from Advocates

“New York has a long and proud tradition of supporting women’s dignity and equal rights, but sadly, New York today is not a place where little girls from the Bronx to Buffalo can grow up knowing that they will be treated fairly and equally,” said **New York Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Donna Lieberman**. “The ability of women to make their own personal health care decisions and provide for and support their families is not a game and must not be used as a political pawn. We are proud to be working with leaders in the Senate and Assembly and a diverse group of people and organizations across the state to pass the Women’s Equality Agenda, and we know that voters in all corners of the state support these common sense reforms. Our leaders need to get on the right side of history and support a fair and just society for all of New York’s women.”

“Governor Cuomo’s Women’s Equality Agenda will strengthen our laws and address issues that will be transformative in lives of women - foremost among them is the protection of women’s reproductive freedom. Once again, politics should not dictate women’s health. New Yorkers demand and deserve a vote on the WEA in the State Legislature now,” said **Joan Malin, President & CEO of Planned Parenthood of New York City.**

“Thanks to the leadership of elected officials like those standing here today, New York has a historic opportunity to improve the lives of the state’s women and families,” said **Family Planning Advocates President and CEO M. Tracey Brooks.** “Any member of the legislature who stands in the way of the Women’s Equality Agenda coming to the floor for a vote this legislative session will be viewed as having rejected the women of New York. That would send a message that women don’t count, and I do not think that is a message lawmakers want to send to their constituents.”

“Right now is a key leadership moment – for Albany and for the nation,” said **Andrea Miller, President, NARAL Pro-Choice New York.** “The Women’s Equality Agenda will not only level the playing field for New York women, but is the only piece of legislation to affirmatively secure reproductive rights that is moving in any state in the country right now, and the only bill to address gender disparities across a broad range of arenas. New Yorkers want to see the Women’s Equality Agenda passed, they want to see their elected leaders make this a priority this session, and the time is now to get it done.”

“This is about women’s jobs, women’s safety and women’s reproductive health care,” said **Sonia Ossorio, President, NOW-NYC.** “At a time when women’s health and rights are being attacked across the country, New York State must move women’s equality forward in a very real way.”

“The Women’s Equality Agenda has propelled action on crucial issues affecting the lives of women throughout New York State, issues on which the League of Women Voters has advocated for many years. Now is the time to end discrimination against women in the economic arena and cement current reproductive health practices into the law,” said **Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director of the League of Women Voters of New York State.**

“The Women’s Equality Agenda represents one of those rare opportunities to correct historic wrongs and support sweeping changes that will positively impact virtually every woman in New York State,” said **Martha Kamber, Executive Director of the YWCA of Brooklyn.** “It is inconceivable that in 2013, we are still fighting for basic human rights, such as equal pay for women and an end to sexual harassment in all workplaces. Given the groundswell of support for the Women’s Equality Act, we know the time has come to pass a comprehensive bill by the end of this legislative session.”

The 10 Points of the Women’s Equality Agenda

The full ten-point Women’s Equality Agenda announced in the governor’s 2013 State of the State address includes:

1. Protecting Reproductive Health Decisions
2. Achieving Pay Equity
3. Stopping Sexual Harassment in All Workplaces
4. Allowing for Awards of Attorneys’ Fees in Employment, Lending and Credit Discrimination Cases
5. Strengthening Human Trafficking Laws
6. Ending Family Status Discrimination
7. Stopping Source-of-Income Discrimination

8. Stopping Housing Discrimination for Victims of Domestic Violence
9. Stopping Pregnancy Discrimination Once and For All
10. Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence by Strengthening Order-of-Protection Laws