



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senator Klein and Independent Democratic Conference Releases Five Point Working Women's Agenda

JEFFREY D. KLEIN May 9, 2013

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Today, the Independent Democratic Conference released its 2013 Working Women's Agenda, a five point plan to build a stronger future for New York's working women and their families. As part of the IDC's agenda, the conference also released a comprehensive report entitled *Building a Stronger Future for New York's Working Women* that details the impact each proposal will have on New York's workforce.

Senate Majority Coalition Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) said, "Millions of New York women get up every morning and work hard to raise a family. Whether its earning a paycheck, caring for their families, or moving up the economic ladder, it's clear that New York women deserve more. With the focus on women's issues greater than ever before, we need to ensure that the needs of working women are addressed in a smart, comprehensive, way. The IDC continues to strongly support all ten points of the Governor's women's agenda and is committed to seeing all elements of both plans pass the legislature this session."

Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), Chair of the Senate Labor Committee said, "I'm extremely proud to support a comprehensive plan that addresses the needs of modern day women. New York has been a leader in women's issues for decade, but now it's time for a comprehensive plan that brings working women's issues to the forefront. Our Working Wome's Agenda provides women with the tools they need to provide for their families and to advance their careers."

The IDC's Five Point Plan Working Women's Agenda includes:

- **New York's first comprehensive paid family leave program.** The IDC's plan would double the amount of time working mothers can take off after the birth of a child—expanding minimum leave time from 6 weeks to 12 weeks. The IDC's plan would increase the weekly benefit that working mothers could receive during family leave from the current cap of \$170, to \$500 by 2017. The IDC's plan would also expand program eligibility, enabling working women and men to use this time not only during the birth or adoption of a child, but also in the case of a family member's serious illness. The program's expansion would be full employee-paid, at a maximum costs to employees of \$1.69/wk, once fully implemented in 2017.
- **Pursuing a standard of comparable worth for New York's public workforce.** The IDC's proposal requires public employees to be compensated on the basis of comparable worth. This standard, first introduced in New York under Governor Mario Cuomo in 1987, will require male and female workers with comparable positions or titles to be compensated equally. By adopting a policy of comparable worth, the IDC believes that New York State can close the income gap between male and female workers, which, as the IDC's analysis illustrates, has resulted in women currently earning 23.5% less than men in the state's public sector.
- **Increasing New York's Child Care Tax Credit by 50% across the board and expanding eligibility for New York State's child care assistance subsidies.** Under the IDC's proposal, all families who qualify for New York's Child and Dependent Care Credit would receive a 50% increase in annual tax credits. For example, under the IDC's plan, families earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 would receive additional tax savings of \$367, raising the average credit for these taxpayers to \$1,100. The IDC's plan would also expand the number eligible families under the child care subsidy program and will require New York State to conduct a comprehensive study on the affordability and availability of day care throughout the state.
- **Assisting women's reentry into the workforce.** The IDC proposes major changes to the Department of Labor's Self-Employment Assistance Program. These changes are aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship among women and improving long-term job creation in **women**-owned businesses. As today's IDC report illustrates, long-term job creation at women-owned businesses currently lags behind that of male-owned businesses.
- **Supporting the upward mobility of low-income working and providing a pathway to unlock their full earning potential.** The IDC proposes changes to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program that will provide women in low-wage jobs with the skills and know-how to improve their career trajectories.

Senator David Valesky (D-Oneida) said, “This report illustrates what we already know--that women face significant economic challenges above and beyond their male counterparts. Recognition of the problem is not enough. This package of legislation gets at the root of the issue on several levels, from child care to entrepreneurial assistance, and will provide the tools that are needed to overcome the obstacles that put women at an economic disadvantage.”

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland) said, "New York must develop a 21st century plan of action to level the playing field for women in the workforce. Even in today's day in age, women continue to face discriminatory practices and income inequality, lagging behind their male counterparts for comparable work and losing out on economic opportunities. This must change. **I** believe that our policy proposals will ensure that women have well-deserved financial and job security, allowing them to climb up the economic ladder while taking care of their loved ones."

“Empire Justice Center is so pleased to see women's issues placed front and center this legislative session. As an anti-poverty organization working with low income women, we know firsthand how essential quality child care is. For low income women, quality child care is often more costly than the rent or mortgage payment and can be out of reach without a subsidy. Access to quality child care also gives women peace of mind, allowing them to focus on their careers knowing that their children are safe and happy,” **said Kristin Brown Lilley, Director of Policy Advocacy for Empire Justice Center.** “The policies put forth by the Independent Democratic Conference today will help make good child care more accessible to New York families over both the short and long term. We are proud to stand in support of that vitally important goal,”

"The Early Care & Learning Council supports this package of legislation which provides fairness for both women and families. These laws will further the goal of equitable child care services within our communities and allow parents to pursue employment opportunities while keeping in mind the best interests of the entire family unit," **said Jessica Klos Shapiro, Senior Policy Associate at the Early Care and Learning Council.**

“We applaud the inclusion of low-income women to be exposed to the possibilities of great careers in the unionized building and construction trades,” **said Elly Spicer, Director of NYC District Council of Carpenters Labor Technical College.**

“Health & Welfare Council of Long Island is pleased to see Senator Klein and other elected officials taking a comprehensive look at how to ensure that critical supports for struggling families – such as affordable and equitable child care -- are in place. We look forward to these efforts leading to economic stability for families who need it most,” **said Gwen O’Shea, President/CEO, Health & Welfare Council of Long Island**

Karen Freedman, Executive Director of Lawyers for Children said, "The Working Women bills are a welcome signal to women and children that our representatives in Albany will actively support progress and change on behalf of the children of New York State through reforms in child care and expanded work options for women receiving public assistance."

Vanessa Wilson, Chief Financial Officer of Golden Seeds, an angel investment firm dedicated to women-owned businesses and investors and former Managing Director of Deutsche Bank Securities, and board member of Futures and Options said, "Golden Seeds has frequently seen women entrepreneurs applying to us for funding who have put their financial futures at risk with significant debt, not realizing that many founders do not draw salaries in the first 1-2 years of operations. Women who are unemployed and contemplating following a passion to start a business will need not only start-up capital, but also the basic skills to run the financial and operational aspects of a business, so they can make informed decisions about debt and future income. We believe it is especially vital for unemployed individuals to be given adequate support/education/mentorship to navigate the complex tasks of product development, customer acquisition, and cash flow management. We're glad to see the IDC taking this concern seriously."

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