

**Report of the  
National Women's Committee  
to the  
74<sup>th</sup> Convention**



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Report of the  
National Women's Committee  
to the  
74<sup>th</sup> Annual International CWA Convention

To say that a woman's work is never done is more true today than ever. Decades of issues continue to resurface and we have to confront them on a daily basis. Many of them have never been fully resolved.

Key issues, which you will hear more about, include violence against women, discrimination against women, voter registration, the 20th Anniversary of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), human trafficking, and, most importantly, going forward with our movement building.

Violence against women laws have come a long way, but not far enough. They must continue to be supported via the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act – and we must thank those that supported strong language in this bill.

Passing a simple treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW, that condemns discrimination against women should be a no-brainer.

The United States needs to achieve a universal voter registration system. Election 2012 taught us some valuable lessons in what needs to be done to preserve and improve the basic democratic right to vote.

Human trafficking in the United States has increased dramatically and sadly most of it goes unreported. It is not just a third world problem. This cannot continue.

It is the 20th Anniversary of the FMLA, but still more needs to be done. Join in both the celebration and the legislative battles to fill the gaps.

When it comes to movement building, the progressive course of organized labor is to improve the lives of working men and women. To continue forward momentum, and not lose hard fought gains, it is imperative we forge alliances with natural allies and partners.

The issues we face include:

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)**

Senator (now Vice President) Joe Biden led Congress to enact VAWA in 1994. This landmark federal legislation holds domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking offenders accountable and provides services for victims – *male and female*.

VAWA was reauthorized in 2000 and again in 2005, with bipartisan support. VAWA expired in September 2011, but continued to be funded through the appropriation

process in its 2005 version. Reauthorization will provide a five-year authorization for VAWA programs, and *reduce* the cost by more than \$135 million by streamlining some of its programs.

VAWA improved the criminal justice response in many ways:

- Strengthened federal penalties for repeat sex offenders;
- Created the Rape Shield law, preventing the use of the victim's past sexual conduct at a rape trial;
- Mandated that victims do not have to bear the expense for rape exams or for a service of protection order;
- Required enforcement of protection orders in all state, tribal, and territorial jurisdictions in the United States;
- Increased rates of prosecution, conviction, and sentencing of offenders due to dedicated law enforcement and prosecution units, as well as dedicated domestic violence court dockets;
- Funded training for over 500,000 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and others annually, ensuring that police officers who respond to crisis calls and judges who rule on them understand the realities of domestic and sexual violence; and
- Created a federal habitual offender crime to provide additional protection for women on Indian reservations.

VAWA established a National Domestic Violence Hotline that has answered three million calls – at the rate of 22,000 calls per month! It also affords legal relief and protection for underserved communities – i.e., battered immigrants, American Indian, and Alaskan Native tribal women and men. The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women finds that 200,000 victims of violence would have lost services if VAWA had not been reauthorized.

Since the original passage of VAWA, gender-based violence was reduced by 64 percent between 1993 and 2010 – from 2.1 million reported cases in 1993 down to 907,000 cases reported in 2010 – even though victims are now more likely to report domestic and sexual violence to police.

- Intimate partner violence declined 67 percent.
- Intimate partner homicides of females decreased 35 percent.
- Intimate partner homicides of males decreased 46 percent.

In addition, the passage of VAWA has led to more arrests of domestic and sexual offenders.

VAWA has also influenced legislation at the state level:

- All states now have laws that treat date or spousal rape as seriously as stranger rape.
- All states have made stalking a crime.

- All states have authorized warrantless arrests in misdemeanor domestic violence cases, if the arresting officer finds probable cause.
- All states have criminal sanctions for violation of civil protective orders.
- Many states prohibit polygraphing rape victims.
- 35 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have laws that require time off from work, protection from employment discrimination, and unemployment insurance for victims of domestic or sexual violence.

Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Michael Crapo (R-ID) reintroduced the VAWA Reauthorization Act (S.47) in 2013. It was similar to the bill (S.1925) passed by the Senate last year with 68 votes – including fifteen Republican Senators and *all* of the female Senators – but died in the House in 2012. Senator Leahy explained that the provision for an increase in U visas was not included in this year’s bill, “in order to remove any excuse for House inaction.” U visas are made available to immigrant victims who help law enforcement. Senator Leahy stated, “I remain committed to . . . ensuring that the needed U visa increase is adopted. I intend to work to include it in comprehensive immigration reform legislation.” Representatives Gwen Moore (D-WI) and John Conyers (D-MI) introduced H.R.11, identical to S.47, in the House of Representatives.

VAWA reauthorization will strengthen and improve existing programs to protect all victims, including students, racial minorities, tribal members, immigrants, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community by:

- The Campus SaVE Act that requires colleges and universities to report the number of dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking incidents. This initiative would also strengthen prevention programs, victim services, disciplinary action, and law enforcement on campuses;
- The reauthorization of Grants to Reduce Violent Crimes Against Women on Campus program;
- Specific language to protect the LGBTQ community, as well as youth. Also, programs receiving VAWA funding cannot discriminate against anyone, including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity;
- The Creating Hope through Outreach, Options, Services, and Education for Youth (CHOOSE Youth) program that combines services to create coordinated community responses to dating violence and sexual violence against youth;
- The Saving Money And Reducing Tragedies Through Prevention (SMART) program that combines grants to assist youth exposed to violence by engaging men and youth in prevention efforts;
- The Improved Grants for Outreach and Services to Underserved Populations that supports services tailored to the young – LGBTQ youth, youth of color, youth with disabilities, and immigrant youth;
- The reauthorization of the Sexual Assault Services Program to respond to sexual coercion and violence experienced by young people; and by
- The reauthorization of the Legal Assistance for Victims program.

Republicans in the House of Representatives resisted expansion of coverage to include gays, illegal immigrants, and Native Americans, suggesting that some victims are more

worthy of protection than others. Shortly before the vote was taken in the House, the right wing attempted a substitute bill that weakened the provisions in S. 47/H.R.11, primarily by eliminating provisions that protected Native American and the LGBTQ communities.

It must be noted that existing law denies Native American women equal access to justice.

But, it must also be noted that *all* of us need VAWA.

- One out of three Native American women will be raped in her lifetime.
- Two out of five American Indian and Alaskan Native women are victims of domestic violence.
- The murder rate for American Indian and Alaskan Native women is ten times the national average.
- One out of four women in the United States *has been* the victim of severe physical domestic violence, and one out of five *has been* raped in her lifetime, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Carmen Tarleton, of Thetford, Vermont, is nearly blind, disfigured, and in constant pain from an attack five years ago when her estranged husband broke into her home, beat her with a baseball bat, and poured industrial-strength lye on her.
- A man was released from jail on domestic violence charges in Colorado last month, and then killed his ex-girlfriend, her sister, her sister's husband, and himself.
- 45 percent of those seeking refuge at a shelter were turned away.
- 55 percent of those seeking restraining orders against abusers were denied.
- Undocumented women risk being held hostage by abusive spouses who threaten deportation and separation from their children if their wives report abuse.
- Eighty percent of migrant agricultural workers report sexual harassment, including rape, so endemic that workers often call their workplace "fil de calzon" (field of panties).

Americans were horrified when a young Indian woman died from internal injuries after being gang-raped and when a Pakistani girl was shot by the Taliban for wanting an education. Yet similar crimes occur every day in the United States. Ilyse Hogue, co-director of Friends of Democracy, advises us to "face the unchecked bigotry in our own Congress."

Congressman Steve Cohen of Tennessee issued the following statement: "The Violence Against Women Act represents a firm promise: no woman should ever be forced to feel unsafe or insecure in her own home and no woman should ever suffer in silence in the face of domestic violence."

Shortly before we went to press, we learned that the weakened right wing version of VAWA was defeated. Instead, the Violence Against Women Act has been passed and reauthorized in its strongest version. By the time this report is read, it will have been signed by President Obama. This democratic achievement, in the face of the existing

“blocks to democracy,” exemplifies the true spirit of President Cohen’s call for movement building. The CWA, and close to one hundred other constituency groups, partnered with the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights to *finally* get justice for victims of violence. Please thank your elected representatives who voted for this important legislation. Seldom are our heroes thanked, let us not forget to do so this time.

But, remind them that there is more unfinished business – the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The CWA National Women’s Committee reported on this treaty before. It is a landmark international agreement, or treaty, that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world. It recognizes that women’s rights are human rights. It also seeks to end sex trafficking against women, a horrifying global problem that you will learn about further into our report. Countries that have ratified CEDAW have partnered with their governments to improve the status of women and girls. Sadly, the United States has not yet approved this international treaty; along with Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Tonga.

We can do so much better. Tell your congressional representatives that this, too, needs attention, and we will partner with our national allies to ensure that CEDAW is ratified in the United States.

## **MOVEMENT BUILDING**

Organized labor historically supports progressive policies. Progressive policies improve the lives of working women and men. The Progressive Movement began in cities in the late 19th century due to tenement housing and unsafe workplaces. Progressives spoke out about the need for laws regulating dangerous tenements, child labor, and harsh working conditions for women. Progressives believe that the voices of many speak louder than the voices of the few.

The CWA National Women’s Committee has been inspired by President Cohen to improve our ability to link the voices of many to promote issues that matter to us. There are three categories of organizations that will provide a source of support for labor initiatives.

First, there are labor organizations themselves. These AFL-CIO constituency groups are focused on core labor goals. For example, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Pride@Work, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), the A. Phillip Randolph Institute (APRI), the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), and the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) each have logistics in place to reach out and ask their constituencies to support a cause.

Second, there are congressional caucuses designed to allow members of Congress to pool resources and contact lists in support of common goals. These include the

Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues (CCWI), the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), and the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) Equality Caucus.

Third, non-labor strategic partners, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), and the National Council of La Raza (La Raza), have experience in movement building and raising awareness. These partners represent modern progressive activism.

Experience shows that banding together with other organizations can bring tens of millions of activists to our causes. This is the spirit of the Progressive Movement. Movement building is creating leaders and followers. With partners, CWA can chart a path to a movement of fifty million Americans.

Progressive thinking is pragmatic and flexible. Progressives understand that government can be used as a force for good. But, Progressives do not simply ask, "How can government help this situation?" Rather, we ask, "With the tools we have, both public and private, how can we solve this problem?" Progressives use the tools available to make change. African Americans won the civil rights movement using strikes, marches, and political pressure to get Congress to pass civil rights laws, but they were not alone. Labor and other progressive organizations created the movement for change. Movement building is key to all progressive causes.

The CWA National Women's Committee observes that women's rights, labor rights, and human rights are all interconnected and that the best way to move forward is to harness the power of solidarity. Such rights should be obvious, but world leaders felt it necessary to underscore them in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the protection of women from exploitation, just and fair conditions of employment, protection against forced labor, and the right to form and join trade unions. These are essential and fundamental human rights. But, despite these well-respected sentiments, we constantly need to remind our government of these fundamental human rights.

So, where can our partnerships with non-labor organizations bring us? How do they fit in with our objectives? The list of non-labor organizations with recent experience building movements is long and growing. Many have demonstrated that they are effective communicators. By focusing on working with these non-labor organizations, progressive movements can be built.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a civil rights organization with a mission "to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination." The CWA National Women's Committee, other committees, and LPATS should continue to work with the NAACP on issues that threaten equal rights, such as fighting voter suppression.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) has long taken action to bring about equality for all women. Since 1966, they have led the battle for equality, ending violence against women, eradicating racism, sexism, and homophobia. Local Women's Committees should reach out to local and national NOW Chapters to increase pressure on Congress to pass laws that protect women's rights. The NOW national website calls passing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) a critical objective. CWA helped raise the volume of pressure on Congress and obtained recent passage of this important law, by working with organizations like NOW. NOW also fights for economic justice, equity in pay, better job opportunities, political access, Social Security, and education. These are all traditionally union objectives as well. We can build a movement around any or all of these issues.

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is the nation's leading voice for the millions of domestic workers in the United States, most of whom are women. Often members of this organization mistrust labor. Reaching millions of such workers through movement building should be our way of overcoming such mistrust. CWA should work with the NDWA in an effort to raise labor standards for all working people. The AFL-CIO formed a national partnership with the National Domestic Workers Alliance in 2011. This relationship permits advocacy and organizing at both the local and state level. Domestic workers are joining together with the union movement to help build power for working families, and CWA is at the forefront of this partnering.

The National Council of La Raza (La Raza) declares that its mission is to improve opportunities and open doors for Hispanic Americans. La Raza believes that advocacy, civic engagement, and community-based support are essential parts of any community-empowerment strategy. Thus, the organization concentrates on advocacy activities at state and local levels through advocacy initiatives. The CWA should approach and work with La Raza to pass the Dream Act. La Raza has stated that the "Latino community will not forget the members of Congress who voted against the 'DREAM Act,' depriving our country of the contributions of so many talented youth." Through movement building, we can help remind Congress that a path to citizenship will help keep talented workers here in the United States instead of sending them to India and China.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's (NGLTF) mission is to build the grassroots power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. They do this by training activists and equipping state and local organizations with the skills necessary to build broad-based campaigns. Our work with VAWA legislation included retaining a key provision that protected domestic violence victims in the LGBT communities – a major win against the right wing.

The key to finding partner organizations is to find leaders who have goals we share, and then build bridges with their groups. Not all partner groups will have a core mission that appeals to all. Partner group agendas might, on the surface, appear to have nothing in common with traditional labor goals. Those groups do, however, have a membership core. Their motivated members can help us raise awareness and apply political pressure on common issues.

Many examples of successful movement building exist within CWA. You do not really have to have a particular issue in mind when you start. You can explore possibilities

with a non-labor organization. The Texas Sierra Club and CWA Local 6215 started with a single meeting between a pair of activists to explore and find common ground. This start prompted the groups to organize a two-day training meeting. The meeting drew in more than 100 participants. With an army of activists, rallies were organized to oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) meeting in June of 2012. The NAFTA-like TPP threatens to off-shore more jobs and to erode environmental protections. The rally-building experience mushroomed into cooperative work during the 2012 Elections to elect pro-worker and pro-environment candidates.

CWA Local 1103 and a nearby community organization joined forces based on a shared concern for economic justice. In the process of organizing they decided to stress three things when meeting with other organizational leaders:

- Unions and community groups have different things to offer and can complement one another;
- All must respect each organization's changing needs; and
- Any organization can opt out of planned events.

Since forming, this coalition has written letters to the editor, visited Congress, organized Town Hall meetings, pushed for the millionaires' tax, and rallied together.

Following the 2010 Election, CWA believed that Ohio was preparing anti-worker legislation. District 4's V.P., Seth Rosen, reached out to community organizations. Their first meetings involved sharing personal stories and this led to a vision for social and economic justice. Activist training with community and national groups, such as Jobs With Justice, the Ohio Organizing Cooperative, Working America, and others, grew out of the time spent building relationships. Activists created "Stand Up for Ohio," a coalition that worked to repeal the anti-collective bargaining bill known as Senate Bill 5.

Sisters and Brothers, movement building is about restoring democracy. We must restore democracy if we are to have a fighting chance for all of the things we hold dear. Movement building is a huge concept, but it starts very small. It starts with you, your Local, and your local activists. It starts with understanding that workers rights, civil rights, and women's rights are ALL **human rights**. Are we serious about human rights and building a progressive movement for change? Does your Local have a Women's Committee or a Civil Rights and Equity Committee? Is it actively working with NOW, the NAACP, the NDWA, La Raza, the NGLTF, or ANY organization outside of CWA? Reach out to them! If you do not have their contact information, Google them or call 411. Tell them you want to meet with them to talk about their mission and how you can work together on issues of mutual importance. Tell them you'll have their back if they will have yours. This work also pays off during collective bargaining!

The success or failure of any relationship depends upon keeping a positive frame of mind. Abraham Lincoln famously said, "We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or we can rejoice because thorn bushes have roses." So, find a common "rose" that we can build partnerships around.

Pledge with me as the Jobs With Justice members do: "During the next year, I will be there at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own. If enough of us are there, we'll start winning."

President Cohen wants us to build a movement to restore democracy and ensure that *all* human rights are protected. As you can see, the first step is to reach out, build relationships of trust, and find common ground. If we all bring it locally, we will soon have a national impact – the voices of fifty million Americans.

## **UNIVERSAL VOTER REGISTRATION**

One of the first laws requiring citizens to register to vote was in Massachusetts in 1801. Many saw the law as designed to keep new citizens, the poor, and other so-called “undesirables” from voting. As the century went on, more states enacted similar legislation, concerned with the growing number of immigrants participating in the electoral process. Not only did this disenfranchise immigrants, many poor citizens were also excluded from the voter rolls.

Toward the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the newly freed slaves were also disenfranchised by these laws. Although the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guaranteed voting rights for black voters, minorities still faced discrimination at the polls. More than fifty years later, on August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law to permanently prohibit such practices. But, even though Congress passed the 1993 National Voter Registration Act and the 2002 Help America Vote Act, there are still between 28 percent and 32 percent of eligible citizens who are unregistered to vote. This needs to change.

Currently, our voter registration system is broken:

- In the United States, anywhere from 50 to 65 million citizens are disenfranchised.
- This system disproportionately affects the poor, minorities, the young, and the disabled.
- The United States has one of the worst voter registration rates in the developed world.

The Solution – Universal Voter Registration:

- Mandate that all states establish a state-wide database that automatically adds and updates voter information of eligible citizens.
- Establish federal funding to help states implement these systems.
- Mandate that a registered voter be given permanent status as long as he or she resides in the same state.
- Institute mandatory Election Day Registration (EDR) and the ability to update voter information at polling places.

The United States does not have a national registration system, but several states have voting systems based on some of the principles discussed above. Eight states allow Election Day Registration and the correction of information at the polling place. Two states have limited Election Day Registration, allowing voters to register during the early voting period. Seven states have forms of permanent registration for their citizens. As a result, in the 2008 Election, the turnout rate of eligible voters was higher in these states than the national rate.

As President Cohen emphasized, “Voter fraud is not a problem in the United States, but blocking the democratic rights of citizens to vote is.” More than thirty states passed voter suppression legislation in the past two years. These measures were designed solely to lower turnout among minorities, the young, and older Americans who would likely vote for change. These state actions demonstrate that we need national legislation to protect the rights of all Americans.

Currently, there is legislation under consideration in Congress: The Voter Empowerment Act of 2013 (H.R.12). This bill already has a lot of support among members of Congress, but we could always use more. H.R. 12 includes the following:

- Amends the 1993 National Voter Registration Act to require states to make online voter registration available;
- Authorizes automated and streamlined voter registration, such as same day registration and automatic registration for those eighteen years old;
- Amends the 2002 Help America Vote Act to promote access for those with disabilities;
- Adds hindering, interference, and prevention of voter registration to federal criminal codes;
- Provides grants to improve access;
- Removes the prohibitions of felons from voting once their time has been served;
- Provides for voting system auditing; and
- Requires states to allow early voting and the ability to vote by mail.

In order to make common sense solutions to facilitate a true democratic process that is “inclusive not selective,” I urge you to get with your elected officials to support this bill. Most importantly, this bill requires states to have Election Day Registration (EDR). This is the most important provision because EDR is the safety net. Even if all of the other provisions fail, with EDR those that may have fallen through the cracks can still vote. Furthermore, EDR increases voter turnout. In 2008, states with EDR had a turnout rate that was, on average, seven percent higher than states without. In fact, the top five states in voter turnout had EDR.

CWA must join forces with other organizations, such as the NAACP, La Raza, Sierra Club, APRI, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to influence legislators at both the state and federal level to support Universal Voter Registration. It is critical that we all work together to achieve this vital goal.

## MODERN DAY SLAVERY

2012 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the date Abraham Lincoln gave notice of the Emancipation Proclamation. That document and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, three years later, represented more than just policies written on paper. They represented the promise of freedom. Today, slavery has resurfaced and goes by the name “human trafficking” or “trafficking in persons.”

Human trafficking refers to the illegal and immoral buying and selling of human beings as commodities to meet global demands for commercial sexual slavery or forced labor. The trafficking of individuals means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, or harboring of people by means of threat, fraud, deception, or force. Apart from sexual trafficking and labor trafficking, there are other examples, such as slavery, domestic slavery, and forced labor. It is a crime that exploits women, children, and men for numerous purposes.

It is hard to believe that such a blatant violation of basic human rights is seen in developed countries like the United States. Besides being a violation of human rights, the trafficking of people opens the door for violations of women’s rights, child exploitation, and child labor. Human trafficking is one of the most serious crimes in the world, second only to drug trafficking in terms of its magnitude. There is a reason the business of human trafficking is booming; it is extremely profitable, with sex trafficking generating over \$36 billion in annual profits. And, when you calculate slave labor into the mix, the total exceeds \$91 billion. Progression of this crime is fueled by consumer demand.

The International Labor Organization estimates that, globally, over twenty million people are victims of forced labor. This includes victims of human trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation. One and a half million victims are in developed economies. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that 100,000 of these people are children within the United States. Trafficking is not only a foreign problem, it is an American problem.

In the United States, over the last few years, the problem of human trafficking in America has increased by massive proportions. As many as 14,000 to 18,000 victims are trafficked every year. Most victims in the United States are from Mexico and Southeast Asia, along with a few other countries in Africa and Europe. Recent trends, however, reveal that a significant proportion of these victims are citizens of America. Men are more often trafficked into agricultural labor work or the crime and drug trade, while women are trafficked into the commercial sex trade and domestic work.

The United Nations has stated that approximately 2.5 million people are trafficked in different parts of the world every year, with as many as 127 countries directly or indirectly involved. CIA calculations have traffickers earning up to \$250,000 per victim of the sex trade per year. Of that, victims are paid trivial amounts or nothing at all on the pretext of clearing up debts and paying expenses such as food, clothing, and lodging. Victims are paid very meager wages for strenuous physical labor which prevents them from fleeing, often leaving them stuck in foreign countries and living in deplorable

conditions. The availability of such cheap labor hinders employment opportunities and subsequently reduces per capita income of the nation.

Financial repercussions cannot be overlooked. In fact, the network of traffickers has gained immense financial strength, which allows such illegal activities to thrive without fear of the law. Forced cheap labor creates unnecessary competition for genuine businesses, but, above all, the loss of valuable human resources is the most regrettable.

Labor traffickers use violence, threats, lies, and other forms of coercion to force people to work against their will in many different industries. Common types of labor trafficking include people forced to work in homes as domestic servants, farm workers coerced through violence as they harvest crops, or factory workers held in inhumane conditions with little or no pay.

Victims of forced labor are brought to the United States because there is a market for their services, along with poor legislation and insufficient laws that allow the problem to persist. Forced labor operations thrive in several areas: industries that offer low wages, where the U.S. law requires little or no regulation or monitoring of working conditions, and where a huge demand for cheap labor exists. Forced labor in the industries of sex services, domestic servants, farm workers, sweatshops, and factory workers is perpetuated by the potential for profit and a minimal risk of prosecution.

Prostitution has the highest incidence of forced labor, with domestic workers ranking second. The demand for cheap household help and a lack of legal protections makes exploitation of domestic workers easy, because U.S. law prevents domestic workers from having a voice. It is also hard to monitor because it takes place in private homes. They are not considered employees under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), so their ability to organize for higher wages and better treatment is restricted. U.S. immigration policy plays an important role indirectly supporting forced labor practices, because the law stipulates that domestic workers brought to the United States by their employers are required to remain with their original employers or face deportation. That fact tends to discourage workers from reporting abuses and puts the power in the hands of their employers.

In the agricultural sector, there is a high occurrence of forced labor. This stems from the absence of labor standards and regulations in the industry. In addition, an increasing number of undocumented immigrant farmworkers are excluded from NLRA, which denies them the ability to organize and form unions. Many farmworkers enter the United States illegally and speak no English; they are unaware of their rights and fear deportation. This creates a situation where many workers live in poverty and feel powerless, making them easy to exploit.

Sweat shop factories, where employers violate labor laws, are another economic sector that utilizes forced labor in the United States. Low cost imports create competitive pressures on U.S. based manufacturers to cut costs. Forced labor exists in this industry because U.S. labor laws do not offer adequate protections. Corporations and manufacturers are not held legally responsible when an outside firm that is sub-

contracted to produce their products uses forced labor. This allows many manufacturers to profit from forced labor without being held accountable for violating labor laws.

The CIA estimates that the United States receives 50,000 people annually who are victims of human trafficking. Most traffickers recruit their victims between the ages of 6 and 24, because young victims easily succumb to force and give up. They are forced into heavy physical labor in hazardous environments. The U.S. Department of State also estimates that two million children globally are trafficked into the sex trade each year.

One of the biggest concerns of trafficking has been the increase in child victims, which has increased from twenty percent in 2003-2006 to 27 percent in 2007-2010. Another major concern is the low conviction rates against the traffickers. While difficult to document, several governmental and non-profit organizations have published some data on the extent of this growing issue. Only about one percent of traffickers are prosecuted worldwide, despite the fact that slavery is illegal everywhere. There are 42,291 victims identified and reported, with 7,909 trafficking prosecutions, and 3,969 convictions. Unfortunately, most cases of human trafficking go unreported.

Many citizens are completely unaware of the extent of this travesty. The trade in human beings is the world's fastest growing criminal industry. Today, more than thirty million individuals are enslaved, more slaves in the world today than ever before. The ongoing battle for civil rights includes federal agencies, state and local law enforcement partners, non-profit social service providers, private industry, and non-governmental organizations around the world, which are working to end human trafficking. Everyone must join together as a nation and global community to provide a safe haven by protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers.

We must confront the problem. Law enforcement budgets are being cut drastically and despite strong mandates, Congress and state legislatures allocate meager resources to anti-trafficking initiatives. Complicating the problem, Congress has, for the first time since the bill was signed, failed to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). We need an escalation of fiscal commitments. We need to curb the demand for prostitution and slave-made products. It is a daunting task but not impossible. Targeting "johns" with minor penalties would deter them, as would a short jail sentence, monetary fines, and public exposure.

On the labor front, the fair trade movement has established that conscientious consumers will pay for ethical products. In the wider marketplace, supply-chain transparency is virtually non-existent, but two initiatives are aiming to change that. The State Department recently launched "SlaveryFootprint.org," which exposes the prevalence of slave labor in the production of common goods. It states that slavery is wrapped up in almost every industry's supply chain, tainting the food we eat, the clothes we buy, and the electronics we love. I would encourage you all to take the survey on that website, which, based on your household items and food that you consume or purchase, will calculate how many slaves have worked for you. I took the survey and was shocked when it calculated forty slaves have worked for me. In addition, the "Not for Sale" campaign has unveiled a smart phone app entitled "free2work" that grades popular brands against fair labor standards. These are small steps, but steps in the right

direction. Above all, educating the public and increasing awareness will aid in the fight to end human slavery. Ignorance of slavery is what keeps it alive.

The U.S. commitment to fighting modern slavery did not simply materialize twelve years ago with the passing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) or the adoption the same year of the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol). This country's tragic history is not forgotten, nor is the bloodshed and lives lost in the fight to end state-sanctioned slavery. Our history gives us reason to be optimistic. It has shown us that we can turn the tide against human trafficking.

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

It was 20 years ago, on February 5<sup>th</sup> that President Clinton signed the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) into law. FMLA was the first law President Clinton signed after his inauguration in 1993 and was enacted six months later on August 5, 1993.

It took nine long years of organized effort and coalition building to pass this modest policy. FMLA supporters had to overcome strong public opinion that women with children should not work outside the home. The FMLA message had to help people recognize that we needed to support mothers and fathers caring for their newborns at home, as well as link the working-mother issue with the need to care for aging parents. Even most conservatives found it very difficult to argue that job needs should undermine family needs.

FMLA was originally created to bridge the gap between the demands of the workplace and the needs of family. Gone are the days when we could afford to have a "stay at home" caregiver. The Act allows eligible employees to take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave during any twelve month period to attend to the serious health condition of the employee, parent, spouse, or child, as well as for pregnancy, care of a newborn, adoption, or foster care. FMLA was expanded in 2008 to increase the time off to include up to 26 weeks for caregivers of a service member.

The current law is a great beginning, but that was what it was intended to be – a beginning. There is still so much work that needs to be done, such as:

- Paid sick time;
- Coverage for employers with less than fifty employees;
- Expanded illness coverage; and
- Reduced work hours needed to qualify.

An employee taking unpaid time off work to care for him or herself, a child, spouse, or parent can be a financial burden on the family. Often, the employee caregiver returns to work earlier than required just to make ends meet.

Employers with less than fifty employees are exempt from participating in FMLA altogether. Employees in this situation would be forced to make a decision between work and family, with the looming fear of losing their jobs should they choose family.

Currently, FMLA excludes employees who have not worked a sufficient number of qualifying hours and only covers a few of the reasons someone would need to be away from work.

New Jersey and California have already taken the next step in enhancing FMLA. California enacted the “paid sick time insurance” policy. Business fears that paid sick time would have a negative impact have been completely unfounded. In fact, studies show that the impact on business is very low. In some instances, there is a cost savings for the employer due to a lower rate of employee turnover. More to the point, nine out of ten employers state that there is no negative financial impact. One quarterly report actually showed a financially advantageous increase.

Two very important pieces of legislation will be introduced this year. The first is The Healthy Families Act. The Healthy Families Act is designed to fill in some of the gaps remaining in FMLA by setting a national standard for paid sick time.

The second, The Family Act, is still under construction. The Family Act is a paid insurance proposal, with the intent to provide up to sixty days of paid leave. The funding for The Family Act would be similar to the funding for the Social Security Trust Fund.

Both bills are designed to complement the Family Medical Leave Act. They will not, however, succeed without your help. Please reach out to your political committees and legislators to work with our national partners on passage of these bills.

It took movement building 20 years ago and it will take movement building today to reach our goals!

In celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the FMLA, CWA National Women’s Committee invites you to share your FMLA stories at the Human Rights Booth. We are collecting audio and video stories to be shared with our national partners at this year’s Convention. Come and help build the movement by visiting us today.

## **CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION**

The issues we have discussed are not only important to women, they are important to all of us. We have fought for years and will continue to fight for them.

Again, our recommendations are as follows:

- Urge your elected officials to support H.R.12, The Voter Empowerment Act of 2013. Fight together to achieve a universal voter registration system.

- Thank your members of Congress if they supported VAWA, and let them know that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is up next. Join the movement for women’s rights with our constituency groups and natural allies to ensure that the United States ratifies this important international treaty.
- Give the Domestic Workers a voice and support their important work as they partner with us in ours.
- Join forces with our allies to educate the public, increase awareness, and stop human trafficking.
- Support The Healthy Families Act and The Family Act, two new pieces of legislation that will be introduced this year.
- Join us at the Human Rights Booth, here at the Convention, and videotape your story on what FMLA means to you. We will share your stories nationwide in celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the FMLA.
- Take the pledge: “I will be there at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own.”

Women’s rights are **HUMAN RIGHTS**. We need to stand up and fight **TOGETHER**.

Respectfully submitted,

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