Legislative Agenda for 2009

As the economy continues to worsen and layoffs plague working families throughout our state, issues surrounding economic security for working families become even more important. That’s why the NHWL has created our “Work and Family Economic Sustainability Initiative” and filed three crucial pieces of legislation in 2009. Policies which help women weather this economic storm are critical. Paid Sick Days, Paid Family/Medical Leave Insurance and the Right to Request Flexible Employment are 3 policies which will do just that.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 254,148 New Hampshire residents—47% of New Hampshire’s private sector workers—are not able to take a paid sick day when they are ill. They find themselves forced to choose between going to work sick or staying home without pay. Unlike 145 other nations, the U.S. has no law that requires employers to provide paid sick days. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends we stay home when we’re sick and keep sick children out of school and child care.

Nikki Murphy, Director of the NHWL/NHWA, elaborates, stating, “New Hampshire’s working families shouldn’t have to choose between a paycheck and taking care of themselves or their families when they are sick. By offering paid sick days as a benefit of employment, employees would be able to take time off for preventative and diagnostic care. Research shows that businesses experience significant savings when they provide paid sick days. Over the next year, we will be working hard to inform the business and larger New Hampshire community of the benefits of offering paid sick days,” continued Murphy.

In addition to our Paid Sick Days bill, our two other pieces of legislation, Paid Family/Medical Leave Insurance and the Right to Request Flexible Employment, will create necessary support systems for working women and their families. Currently, workers in companies with 50 or more employees are covered by the FMLA, which allows up to 12 weeks of unpaid time off when a medical crisis hits your family or when you have a baby. However, most people can not afford to use this benefit because they simply cannot afford to take unpaid time off from work.

Our Paid Family/Medical Leave Insurance would allow up to 6 weeks of paid time off to care for a new baby or to take care of yourself or a sick family member. At some time in all of our lives, we will have a baby, get sick, or need to help care for a sick family (Continued on page 2)
Flexible work, paid sick, and paid family leave con’t

In a worldwide study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 57 percent of business school graduates reported that “attaining a balance between personal lives and career” is their primary career goal. “Our workforce is not made up of male workers with full-time wives at home. The reality is that three out of four women with school aged children are in the workforce, yet women continue to be the primary caregivers of children and elderly parents. 21st century workforce policies should reflect the demographic changes in today’s workforce and the NHWL is taking the lead on legislation in our state which supports our working families,” states Murphy.

The NH Women’s Alliance and Girls Day at the State House

Greetings Friends, both old and new,

I would sincerely like to welcome all of you to the Lobby’s 2009 “new and improved” electronic newsletter.

This new quarterly messenger is chock full of information. Information not only about what the NH Women’s Lobby and the NH Women’s Alliance are up to as organizations, but how we inform you of what is happening inside our State government. In addition, we will be adding member profiles along with an interesting “did you know?” or two.

For instance, did you know that in the last year, the Lobby gained a little sister to help with some homework and educational presentations? Her name is The NH Women’s Lobby and her President is Gayle Kimball.

The Alliance does some of the background work to insure we Lobby-folk are in compliance with our mission, goals and our values. In addition, the Alliance provides us with the tools to take our show out on the road to help educate New Hampshire’s citizens on various policy issues and legislation affecting women and families.

Did you know that one of the Alliance/Lobby projects this spring is to expose New Hampshire’s younger women to what drives our state government and what happens in the halls of our statehouse? This project called “Girl’s Day at the Statehouse” will bring approximately 50 middle school-age girls and their mentors from such organizations as The Friends Program, Girls Inc, The Girl Scouts, Girls and Boys Club and the Appalachian Mountain Project for a day spent with our lawmakers. Each girl and her mentor will be paired with a lawmaker for a fun- and information-filled lunch including a live performance about Susan B. Anthony.

Our new Director, Nikki Tobiasz-Murphy, working together with Sylvia Gale of the Commission on the Status of Women (our co-sponsor), has also included the NH Business and Professional Women and the Women’s Fund of New Hampshire along with several private donors as funders for this first-time in New Hampshire event. If you’d like to join in this endeavor as a sponsor or as a legislator, please make sure you contact Nikki at 224-9105 or 978-1032.

In the past year, while keeping a watch over policies and legislation, we have been growing our membership and rebuilding our infrastructure. In addition, we hired a fabulous new director, Nikki Tobiasz-Murphy.

This year we hope to continue forming new coalitions as well as nurturing old ones and making one of our goals to be more vocal on a broader variety of issues. I hope you will join us in what promises to continue to be an exciting organization (or two). Please keep reading for more information on what’s in store for New Hampshire’s women and families.

Best Wishes,

Ingrid Braulini
Board Chair, NHWL

nh women’s lobby

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It was a true pleasure to sit down with Liz Hager, one of the founding mothers of the New Hampshire Women’s Lobby, Executive Director of the United Way of Merrimack County since 1996 and former Republican legislator in the New Hampshire House of Representatives. Hager, who received her Masters from UNH in 1977, has been an intricate part of the lobby since its inception. In addition to being a founding mother of the New Hampshire Women’s Lobby, Hager has also been a city councilor, mayor of Concord, a delegate in the New Hampshire Constitutional Convention and a Commissioner with the New Hampshire Commission on the status of Women.

On November 15, 1980 an event was planned called “Women’s rights in 1981, the legislative strategy, second biennial conference.” The goal of the conference was to promote action on issues affecting women in the 1981 legislative session. Several of the Lobby’s founding mothers attended, including U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Sandra Smith (then state coordinator for NH NOW) and the Honorable Liz Hager. At the end of the afternoon, Lois Reckitt, the Northeast Regional Director for NOW, spoke about the Maine Women’s Lobby, of which she had been a founder. Liz Hager knew NH needed a women’s lobby as well. And the second oldest Lobby in the country, the NHWL, was born.

In the beginning, the Lobby focused on economic security for women, spousal rape, choice, and the right to take your birth name back after getting a divorce.

Hager remembers meetings in her living room, cutting the picture of the statehouse out of the Concord Monitor to use as our logo and printing out the first Lobby Letter, which she named. At the time, the information age was not upon us and the Lobby had a telephone tree to get people to show up for hearings and to build membership.

“Making the laws of NH more coherent and friendly to women, benefits not only me as a woman, but gives me great pride that I was a founder of the Lobby and that it has existed all of these years,” said Hager, “What I really want for the future, is for women to continue to be aware of and want to work for their rights. The next generation has to not take their rights for granted and continue to fight for them universally.”

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Meet our youngest member of the Lobby, Evangeline Violet Murphy, who received a membership to the Lobby for her 2nd birthday. Join or renew now and support education, advocacy and public policy reform for NH’s women and families!

Please send your check to: NHWL, P.O. Box 1072, Concord, NH 03302
April 30: 9:30-2:30 p.m. New Hampshire State House: Girls Day at the State House.

- 70 girls from programs throughout NH, will join us for an educational and empowering day at the State House. Hosted by the NHWA and the NH Commission on the Status of Women, with support from the Women's Fund of NH, BPW and the NH Humanities Council.

May 13: 5:30-7:30 p.m. Capital Center for the Arts, Concord, NH: 21st Annual Spring Celebs.

- Cost $25 for members, $35 for the public. Join us as we celebrate our legislative successes and honor people who make a difference in the lives of NH women and families!

For more information, contact the NHWL at info@nhwomenslobby.org