

# BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



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## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

This issue of our newsletter begins with a sad note. Longtime member and activist Constance Pigozzi has died. She fought hard for women's equality and hard to beat the cancer that ultimately took her life. See the tribute by Shirley Ranz in this issue to learn more about Constance's life. We will miss her wonderful voice and feminist insight.

This summer marks the hearings for Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan. Could you have imagined the day when our US Supreme Court will have 3 women justices? How about a woman **chief justice**???? Summer also marks the start of **campaign season** at the state and federal levels. Every office, from the governor to state assembly and senate members will be decided by YOU. In addition, the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the US Senate will stand for election. Senator Charles Schumer's term is up. As we have seen, a handful of senators can hold the entire body hostage to their will (both state and federal senates). It's up to us to get active and choose wisely if we are to get the government that truly represents us. **No one party should take your support for granted. Candidates should EARN our support by their words and actions.** Contact Shirley Ranz to get involved in BQNOW-PAC. If you know candidates who would benefit from our PAC support, encourage them to complete our questionnaire. They can get a copy from our website ([www.brooklynqueensnow.org](http://www.brooklynqueensnow.org)).

**Paycheck Fairness and Pay Equity** are issues currently before Federal and NYS legislatures.

Without an **Equal Rights Amendment**, there is no current protection that guarantees women and men are paid equally for work of comparable value. Without an ERA we need to pass piecemeal legislation that we can then build on. We've been working since 1963 to get the Paycheck Fairness Act passed. Now is the time to make it a reality. As for Pay Equity, NYS has two key bills which have both passed in the assembly and have sufficient votes to pass the state senate if we can get them released from their respective committees. The first, S5271, sponsored by BQNOW member State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, would eliminate wage inequality on the basis of sex, race and national origin for NYS Civil Service employees. The second, S5480, sponsored by BQNOW ally, State Senator Diane Savino, makes it illegal for employers to pay differently for work of comparable value. There is other key legislation pending such as Senator Diane Savino's bill S2311C which would regulate employment of domestic workers, such as nannies and home attendants. This bill passed both Assembly and Senate but was amended and now sits in committee. Contact your state senator and ask for support for all 3 bills.

August marks our annual celebration of ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment which guaranteed women the right to vote (Aug 26, 1920). We gather at a potluck to kick up our heels and engage in music, good food and great conversation. This year, Shirley Ranz is

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## BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW CHAPTER CALENDAR-2010



Chapter meetings take place the first Monday of the month at 7pm, unless otherwise noted. Inclement weather may force the rescheduling of a chapter meeting, so be sure to RSVP to the number provided or call 718 769-0101. Call the numbers below for exact location and directions.

- July 12                    **Chapter Meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 646-228-7570.
- July 21, 10am            **NOW Rally** in Washington, DC for **Women's Equality Amendment**.
- Aug 14 (12-7pm)        **NOW-NYS Council** meeting. Albany, NY. Call 718-769-8901 for details.
- August 22, 1-5pm      **Annual Woman's Suffrage Day Party**. Call 718-769-8901 for Potluck instructions.
- Sept. 5                    **Chapter Meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-769-8901.
- Oct. 4                     **Chapter Meeting** in Forest Hills. Call 718-263-7638.
- Oct. 16                    **NOW-NYS Convention & Elections**. Albany, NY. Call 718-769-0101 for details.

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opening her home for the event. Come and join us and recharge your feminist batteries!!!!

Finally, our chapter, one of the largest in New York State and one of the most active nationally, has been operating without income from dues for over a year. While we understand that National NOW has been slow to recover from financial loss, we too have expenses. Our treasury is very low. If possible please consider a donation to BQNOW either as a one shot or a small monthly donation. Mail checks, payable to BQNOW to our PO Box 350-746, Brooklyn, NY 11235.

### **For Susan Guggenheim Jury Service is not an option**

On July 4<sup>th</sup> one woman in Pennsylvania made a stand recently for the natural rights memorialized in the Declaration of Independence.

Susan Guggenheim was standing at the door of her home, stooping over to pick up the

mail, when she spied the jury notice. She had just joined the ERA Campaign Network, a group dedicated to the ratification of the ERA Amendment written by Alice Paul, the woman responsible for obtaining for women the right to vote in 1920. Susan reports she was experiencing a growing anger at the failure of the Women's Movement to affirm women in their inherent rights.

After carrying the card around for several days she filled it out, declining to serve, the reason being that she is not a full citizen of the United States and therefore cannot sit as a juror. In part, she was angry at the long pause in the campaign to affirm the rights of women. In part, she recognized the opportunity to focus attention on a fact which has evaded the attention of American men and women for nearly a century.

Women can vote but they are not full citizens, with their rights affirmed by the Constitution. This fact should give women pause today and send them on line to read the Declaration of Independence, America's mission statement. The card was mailed off. In due time Susan received a card which accepted her reason and excused her from jury duty.

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### ***Constance Pigozzi 1922-2010***

A favorite memory of Constance's involved her joining in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary march of Women's Suffrage Day on August 26, 1970, which also happened to be her birthday. As she sought to find a place in the march she suddenly realized that she had found a spot behind such feminist leaders as Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, and Betty Friedan among others. "That was the happiest and best birthday celebration of my life!" she said. Active in NOW since the 1970's she served as Treasurer of the Brooklyn-Queens chapter for 10 years. In addition to being a great role model for her sister feminists, Constance was also a leader in the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture, serving as its President, Vice President, Treasurer and being in charge of music and hiring musicians.

She had a 25-year career as an opera singer, touring the country and later performing with the Amato Opera Company. She continued singing with various choruses in Brooklyn, including as a soloist for the East Midwood Jewish Center. In 1943 she married George Pigozzi, who worked as Maitre D' in some of the poshest restaurants in NYC. He died in 2000. When she retired from the stage she went back to school, obtaining a college degree for her new career in teaching. Starting with early childhood education she then branched out into bilingual education, teaching a newly arrived Italian-speaking population in the 1970's, and finally expanding into a more diverse ESL population. She retired in 1987 after 16 years of teaching. She remained vital, active and intellectually nimble till the end of her life.

She is survived by 2 sisters: Maria Spinazola and Jeanette Picarelli several nieces, nephews and their children. She will be very much missed by those of us who were fortunate to know her.

#### ***-Jury Service from Page 2-***

Which is, according to Ms. Guggenheim, the beginning of the real story.

Women, she said, can protest the failure to ratify the ERA by following her example. Despite expressed concerns such a protest will be viewed as 'domestic terrorism,' many women are now eagerly awaiting their jury notice and will follow Susan's example. According to Susan, many are already doing so.

And women who understand the danger in which they stand, especially today with the propensities

of government revealed, are willing, knowing how much is at stake.

Asked if she expected to start a movement Ms. Guggenheim responded, "it could happen. The issue has been reviewed. We are standing on firm ground." And ultimately, as Susan B. Anthony said, "Failure is Impossible."

You can get in touch with Susan through the website *Women of the Jury*.

By Melinda Pillsbury-Foster  
The Equal Rights Amendment  
Simple Justice  
It's about Time !

## **ACTION ALERT**

### **Urge Senate to Vote on Paycheck Fairness Act**

Women Can't Wait Much Longer: The House of Representatives passed a bipartisan Paycheck Fairness Act more than a year ago, but Senate action on this important bill is stalled. The **Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 182)** would make it easier to prove sex discrimination by requiring disclosure about wages, toughening penalties and preventing retaliation. S. 182 is a strong and needed step in the right direction. In honor of Equal Pay Day, urge your senators to move this legislation to a floor vote ASAP.

Among the remedies found in the Paycheck Fairness Act is a provision that allows wronged women to collect compensatory and punitive damages -- a standard practice in discrimination cases based on race or ethnicity that is still unavailable to women.

The new act will also prohibit employers from retaliating against their staff for sharing salary information with each other; this will allow an employee to freely determine if she is experiencing wage discrimination and take appropriate action.

### ***The National NOW 2010 Conference***

By Rachelle J. Suissa

BQNOW sent 4 delegates to Boston, the site of this year's conference. Its theme was *Loving Our Bodies and Changing the World*. Many of the workshops were devoted to the issues of pornography, women's misrepresentation in mainstream media, sex trafficking, how the beauty industry is harmful to women, and the national campaign for safe cosmetics. Massachusetts has legalized same-sex marriage, and this conference featured its first same-sex wedding (The rest of the country needs to catch up!). On Saturday morning, I attended a workshop titled *Toxic Media; Misogyny, Pornography, and Pop Culture*, which looked closely at how women are represented in pornographic films and on websites, as well as how the mainstream media continues to hyper-sexualize women in magazines, billboards, television ads and to combine sex with violence in many of these images. A new film, *The Price of Pleasure*, examines the role commercial pornography

now plays in the lives of men and women in the United States. In particular, it examines the viewpoints of the pornographers as well as the consumers of porn, and provides an interesting glimpse into the way in which porn has shaped the personal lives of these people.

In addition to the online explosion of the pornography industry in recent years, speakers also discussed how magazine ads continue to misrepresent women by putting them in compromising situations, such as the image of one woman being gang-raped by four men in an ad for Dolce and Gabbana. Ms Magazine singled out this ad because of its sexually violent undertones and the message it sends to men and women of all ages. Women continue to be depicted as passive and demure, and their body parts are objectified to sell a wide range of products, from perfume to shoes to sporting equipment. Another workshop, entitled *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*, discussed the National Cosmetic Safety Act and provided an in-depth glance into some of the toxins that are being used in fragrances, cosmetics, hair and skin products. The \$50 billion cosmetics industry opposes laws that would protect consumers and the environment. The European Union has already banned more than 1,100 chemicals from personal care products because they may cause cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm. Why isn't our FDA doing the same?

On Saturday afternoon, at the second plenary, *Expand Abortion Access: Envisioning Reproductive Justice for All*, Dr. Leroy Carhart, one of the few remaining late-term abortion providers in the country, addressed the NOW membership with a heartfelt speech about why he does this work and about the women and teenage girls that he has helped along the way. He recounted stories of girls who came to him for help when they had been abandoned by their parents and partners and had no way to raise a child on their own. He

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## ADVERTISING

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### ELDER LAW AND GUARDIANSHIPS

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*Thank you to the Brooklyn-Queens  
Chapter of the National Organization  
for Women for all of the wonderful  
work you do.*



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### BQ NOW PAC ENDORSEMENT

The BQ NOW PAC is recommending **Mike DiSanto** for endorsement by our State chapter for the NYS Senate seat currently occupied by Marty Golden- District 22. Mike DiSanto is an advocate for women's rights, equal benefits, Marriage Equality and immigrant rights.

To volunteer for his campaign call 718-354-9611, or go to: [DISANTO2010.COM](http://DISANTO2010.COM).

NOW is the time.  
Keep up the good work!

**Councilman Lew Fidler**

1402 East 64th Street  
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(718) 241-9330

*Lew, Robin, Max & Harry Fidler*

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**Use NOW's Capwiz interactive political page  
(<http://www.capwiz.com/now/dbq/officials/>) to send  
messages to your elected officials.**

***ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION***

**OUR CORE ISSUES:**

- Reproductive Rights
- Passage of the Federal ERA
- Equal Economic Opportunity
- Stopping Violence against Women
- Ending Discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation

Our activities focus on political, legislative and educational arenas.

***NOW Conference -from Page 4***

vowed to continue performing late-term abortions for as long as he could, and to train new doctors to do so. Last year, after the murder of Dr. Tiller in May, I sent a letter to Dr. Carhart and Dr. Hern on behalf of the Brooklyn-Queens Chapter of NOW, imploring them to continue their work providing abortions for women despite obstacles presented by those who call themselves pro-life. It was an honor and a privilege to hear from Dr. Carhart that he would continue to support women in the most difficult circumstances that they face. Dr. Carhart brought shirts and mugs that read "Trust Women" to sell at the conference, and the proceeds went to helping to pay for abortion procedures that women could not afford on their own. What an excellent use of my money—naturally I bought a t-shirt and a mug.

The conference overflowed with a renewed sense of dedication and commitment to working for women's rights. A humorous highlight occurred when NOW President Terry O'Neill referred to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as Dick Armey, who currently chairs the right-wing group Freedom Works. This Republican served as a representative to the Texas House of Representatives, where he voted to ban family planning funding abroad, partial-birth abortions, and transportation for minors to obtain an abortion. The double meaning of his name speaks for itself. Bottom line: NOW members and the Feminist Movement will not allow the Catholic Church to roll back women's rights. Period.

**National Organization for Women**

Brooklyn-Queens Chapter  
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