

BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



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Can our legislators put Problem Solving over Partisanship? They can, with YOUR help!

New York State has the opportunity to become the national leader for progressive action on behalf of women's rights. Both houses (State Assembly and Senate) claim they've acted to pass landmark legislation to: Achieve Pay Equity, Stop Sexual Harassment in All Workplaces, Allow for the Recovery of Attorneys' Fees in Employment, Credit, & Lending Cases, Strengthen Human Trafficking Laws, End Family Status Discrimination, Stop Source-of-Income Discrimination, Stop Housing Discrimination for Victims of Domestic Violence, Stop Pregnancy Discrimination Once and For All, Protect Victims of Domestic Violence by Strengthening Order-of-Protection Laws. The last piece: Bringing NY's abortion legislation up to current federal protection is the one place the two houses cannot agree.

October marked the 35th anniversary of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that requires employers to treat pregnant women the same way they do other employees or job applicants. Yet pregnant workers continue to be unfairly fired, demoted, and their health put at risk by employers who are not legally obligated to provide accommodations as simple as a stool to sit on or extra bathroom breaks. That's because there's a gap between discrimination and disability laws and it is low-wage workers in retail, manufacturing and distribution who fall through the cracks.

This legislative session 850 women's organizations throughout NY State have joined together to lobby as one voice for the Women's Equality Act

(WEA). Each group (BQNOW was one of the first to join) has pledged to move this legislation forward. We had great success in the NYS Assembly. Led by its women, the Assembly passed the Omnibus WEA Bill (A8070). When it reached the NYS Senate, the bill was broken into 10 separate pieces of legislation, 1 for each component. All but one, relating to Reproductive Health, passed in the Senate and was sent back to the Assembly. Understandably outraged, the Assembly refused to act. As it stands, both houses claim they've done right by women. The result: WOMEN IN NY STATE ARE NO BETTER OFF THAN THEY WERE LAST YEAR!

Here's where YOU come in. **This legislation can still become law if both houses decide that their constituents are more important than partisan politics.** If they can compromise and pass existing legislation (either the Omnibus WEA Bill or the 10 separate bills) before 12/31/13, life for women and families in NY will have advanced by giant steps. After that date, all pending legislation is erased and the process must begin again in the new session. Between now and then, the Coalition (www.nywomensequality.org) will post daily actions you can do to "encourage" your legislator to make NY's laws as strong as NY Women!

Right now you can contact your state Assembly member and Senator (call the district office, write or fax). See the "Take Action" section on our website. Tell her/him to put problem solving above partisanship and pass the Women's Equality Act legislation this year. Schedule a meeting with your legislator at the district office. Put a face to the

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BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW CHAPTER CALENDAR-2013



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. Check for Calendar updates on our website: www.brooklynqueensnow.org.

- Dec 2 Chapter meeting in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-769-8901.
- Dec 7, 12-2pm Sat- **Post Election Forum** at Brooklyn College Women's Center. New Ingersoll Rm. 227
- Jan 6 Chapter meeting in Sheepshead Bay. Call 917-923-4657
- Jan 25, 12-2pm **30th Anniversary of Roe v Wade** at Brooklyn College Women's Center. New Ingersoll Rm.227
- Feb 3 Chapter meeting in Forest Hills. Call 718-263-7368
- Mar 3 Chapter meeting in Jackson Heights. Call 718-672-6399.

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request. Explain how you've been disadvantaged without this legislation (e.g., pension benefits based on lower pay, pregnancy discrimination, lower wages to support you/your family, etc.). In November, there will be college tours, daily actions and Twitter campaigns geared toward Pay Equity. Keep checking the NY Women's equality website for more information. Many thanks on behalf of our sisters, daughters, mothers and those yet to come!

THE 2013 NOW-NYS CONVENTION

by Rachele J. Suissa, BQ NOW President

The 2013 NOW-NYS Convention featured a number of speakers who have done wonderful work on behalf of women's and girls' issues. Plenary I was a discussion of the Women's Equality Act and the legislative attacks on Women's Reproductive Health. A panel consisting of Sonia Ossorio, President of NOW-NYC, National NOW President Terry O'Neill, Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Executive Director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, and Kimberly Allen, of Higher Heights for America, which supports

Black women's civic participation, discussed the challenges facing women of color in the battle for reproductive rights. Plenary II featured an array of speakers who discussed working with newly elected legislators at the local and state levels. Featured speakers were Margarita Lopez, a former New York City Council Member, L. Joy Williams, a political strategist for LJW Community Strategies, and Heidi Siegfried, the NOW NYS Legislative Vice-President. Each of them discussed the work they've done on various issues, including raising the minimum wage, providing decent child care for working parents, and the role of politicians in helping to accommodate the needs of women and girls.

I moderated a panel entitled *Advancing Girls' and Women's Issues through Public Policy*. On this panel sat a variety of young women, all at different stages of their careers and with very interesting stories to tell. Dr. Danielle Ms. Lee, CEO of the YWCA of New York and former President and CEO of Harlem's Educational Activities Fund, discussed her role in working with young women, and came to the conclusion that the issues of concern to young women actually change at different times according to what they're going through. Donya Nasser, Chair of the NOW-NYS Young Feminist Task Force,
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Keep up the good work!

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is a junior majoring in Political Science and Women's and Gender Studies at St. John's University. She discussed the challenges of attending a Catholic institution, which is not always sympathetic to the needs of its female students, as well as the work she has done with the NOW NYS Young Feminist Task Force. Liz Abzug discussed her work as the creator and founder of the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute, which trains young girls from junior high school to college, in how to become good leaders in their communities. She paid a unique tribute to her mother, Bella Abzug, the first Jewish woman to occupy both the U.S House and the Senate. And

finally, Auretnisse Santos, the youngest Member of the NOW Young Feminist Task Force, and Executive Director of the Mirabal Sisters Family Center, discussed her work with young girls and the challenges they face growing up in impoverished communities with little access to food, clothing, and a decent education. But the real treat came when Sydney Ireland came to the podium to speak. Sydney is a 12 year-old girl and a member of the Girl Scouts who drafted a resolution to encourage the Boy Scouts to put an end to their policies of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender and allow young girls into their group. She wrote an editorial for

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Town and Village newspaper in which she made the following statement: "I cannot change my gender to fit the Boy Scout Standards, but the Boy Scouts can change their standards to include me." It really gives me great pride to see the torch being passed to a new generation of young girls who will carry the efforts of gender equality into the 21st century. Sydney, I salute you!

We concluded with the NOW NYS Council Meeting, in which Brooklyn-Queens NOW agreed to host next

**National Organization for Women
Brooklyn-Queens Chapter
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Brooklyn, NY 11235**

Address Service Requested

PRO-CHOICE IN QUEENS

Clinic Escorts Needed!

On a typical Saturday at **CHOICES**, a women's health clinic in Queens, anti-choice protesters outnumber pro-choice volunteers 5 to 1. Escorts provide a buffer zone from the lies and harassment coming from the anti's.

Join us on Saturday mornings from 7 to 11am at **CHOICES** in Jamaica, Queens. Located at 147-32 Jamaica Ave, the clinic is close to the E, J, Z and LIRR trains.

year's Convention. In addition, the Rosalba Polanco Leadership Award was given to Noreen Connell, Former NOW-NYS President, Donya Nasser, Chair of the NOW NYS Young Feminist Task Force, and Miriam El-Amin, Nurse, Educator, and Trainer of Child Care Providers. A fascinating poetry and dance performance was given by Josefina Baez. It was an honor to see so many different women from a broad range of ethnic and religious backgrounds coming together in support of gender equality in New York State.