



Wider Opportunities for Women

President Announces White House Council on Women and Girls

For Immediate Release

Contact: Susan Rees

srees@wowonline.org

202/464-1596

WASHINGTON, March 11, 2009 – Wider Opportunities for Women, one of the nation’s oldest women’s employment rights organizations, applauds President Obama’s formation of a White House Council on Women and Girls. The Council, chaired by Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to the President, is charged with promoting interagency collaboration and formulating federal policy to address issues of critical importance to women and girls. Executive Director of the Council will be Tina Tchen, Office of Public Liaison Director.

“This action is another example of how President Obama listened to the voices of women during the campaign and during the transition period,” said WOW Executive Director Joan Kuriansky, who attended the signing of the executive order in the East Wing. “The fact that he appointed one of his closest advisors to convene cabinet-level officials and other senior officials to craft holistic solutions to those policies and programs that have a particular impact on women and girls of all backgrounds and levels of achievement points to a commitment to translate the ideals of his campaign into federal mandates for action.”

On Dec. 17, WOW convened a listening session for transition team members on “Women, Work and Families.” The leaders of some 20 women’s organizations participating in the briefing called for better-paying, higher quality jobs for women, the Paycheck Fairness Act, Social Security caregiver credits, more adequate child care and various measures to improve workplace-family balance. Some recommendations, such as unemployment coverage and the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act have been enacted in the President’s first the six weeks.

In school and the workplace, differences between how girls and boys, and women and men, are treated magnifies the gap between the incomes of single men and single women after age 65. Women’s retirement income is only 74.8 percent of men’s. WOW urges the Council to provide data on the percentage of women living alone who live in poverty compared to men.

“Our government must help working women reach a level of economic security for themselves and their families, both while they’re working and after they retire,” said Kuriansky. “The first order of business for the Council should be to direct the Departments of Transportation, Energy, Housing and others to ensure that women get a fair share of the green and infrastructure jobs created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.” She urged the new White House Council to move quickly to revitalize the Women’s Bureau and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in the Department of Labor. OFCCP,

which is charged with enforcing equal opportunity for women and minorities in federally assisted projects, has a major role to play overseeing the implementation of the recovery act.

###