



Wider Opportunities for Women

November 25, 2008

The Honorable Barack Obama
President-Elect
United States of America

Dear Mr. President-Elect:

Wider Opportunities for Women extends our congratulations on your historic election and our heartfelt best wishes for your presidency and new administration. WOW is a national organization that has helped women and their families achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for over 40 years. Through our national Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project and Elder Economic Security Initiative, we work with over 2,500 allies and partners in 40 states.

WOW shares the goal you so frequently evoked during your campaign – economic security for all. Like you, we have a vision of the American dream in which all men and women have access to quality jobs that enable them to pay their bills, give their children a good education and prepare for the day they can retire in dignity with financial security in their own communities.

Toward that end, we urge you to include among your top priorities in the first hundred days to:

- As one of its goals in recommending national economic policy, charge the National Economic Council with promoting the economic security of all Americans from childhood throughout their lifetime.
- Convene an Interagency Task Force on Economic Security composed of representatives of all relevant departments and agencies, including but not limited to Labor, Treasury, Health and Human Services, Housing and Agriculture, and the Social Security Administration. The charge of the Task Force would be to define an economic security benchmark for the income required by families of different ages and sizes to meet the cost of basic necessities in the marketplace and to implement coordinated federal policies and programs with economic security as a unifying goal.

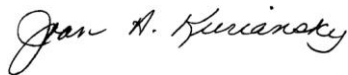
- Direct the Secretary of Labor to:
 1. Restore the Equal Opportunity Survey to the regulations of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (41 CFR 60-2) that were rescinded during the previous administration. The survey required federal contractors to submit information regarding the average compensation of employees, by gender and race, according to established job categories. Without this information, the OFCCP is unable to accurately identify federal contractor establishments whose compensation policies and practices are most in need of compliance review. Current information collection instruments, including the EEO-1 form, do not require compensation data.
 2. Restore, the number of FTE at the OFCCP to the levels that existed prior to 2001 (approx. 815 FTE.) Without adequate staffing and resources, none of the federal civil rights agencies can do the work delegated to them under federal law.
 3. Review and update the OFCCP regulations for construction contractors (41 CFR Part 60-4) as they relate to the affirmative action goals for women and minorities. These goals continue to be based on the 1970 census.
 4. Scale up the Women's Bureau with permanent career staff and an adequate budget, both in its national office and in all ten of its regional offices, so that it can carry out its historic and ever important mission protecting and empowering the hundreds of thousand America's working women who are its constituents.

- Ensure that upcoming legislative decisions include provisions to help American families who are struggling in today's economy by working with Congress to:
 1. Enact an economic stimulus package that puts money in the pockets of those who need it for basic goods and services through the extension and modernization of Unemployment Insurance, nutrition and energy assistance, child care, housing, job training, and aid to states for health care and other services.
 2. Support an infrastructure program that develops the skills of workers while securing a clean energy future through green jobs and modernizing our nation's roads, bridges, schools, public housing, schools and other facilities.
 3. Dedicate a specific minimum number of the jobs and training slots created by the economic stimulus package to low income minorities and women. Without such a commitment, women and minorities will continue to represent a disproportionately small percentage of the workforce in jobs that can offer true economic security.
 4. Extend COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act) eligibility to enable individuals between the ages of 62 and 65 to pay for health coverage under their previous employers' plans prior to their eligibility for Medicare.

5. Enact a one-time increase in Social Security payments to offset the impact of the economy's downturn.
- Pursue a comprehensive economic revitalization program to expand the middle class, through universal health care, an increase in the minimum wage and subsequent indexing, reform of financial regulations and restoration of the freedom to form unions and bargain collectively.
 - Invest in skill development and education programs with wrap-around family support services in order to prepare men and women of all ages for jobs enabling them to advance along career pathways toward economic self-sufficiency.

Thank you, Mr. President-Elect, for the inspiration you have provided Americans and people all over the world. We look forward to working with you in the days and years ahead. We stand ready to be of service to you and your administration in any way that will be of use.

Sincerely,



Joan Kuriansky
Executive Director