



Wider Opportunities for Women

Ensuring Women's Employment in Jobs Created by Economic Stimulus

We applaud President-Elect Obama's commitment to get Americans back to work by creating or saving 2.5 million jobs. An investment in the construction of roads, bridges, school modernization and the retrofit of public buildings for energy efficiency will build the economic security of these workers and their families as well as stimulate the overall economy.

Congress must ensure that the economic recovery legislation benefits all Americans and does not perpetuate the workforce segregation that continues to exist in a large number of jobs that will be created as part of the investment in infrastructure and green jobs. Although women have been entering the skilled trades in sizable numbers since the 1970s, they continue to occupy a small fraction of existing jobs in lucrative job categories. Since 1972, for example, the number of electricians who are female nearly quadrupled, yet in 2007 women made up only 1.7 percent of all electricians.

Programs tailored to recruit, train, place and retain women have succeeded in employing women in the construction trades and have increased women's employment rates in these occupations. Such programs assess skills and aptitudes, provide information on transferrable skills, and teach occupationally specific math and language skills, facility with tool use and how to leverage one's body strength. These programs also address family care and transportation needs and implement policies prohibiting sexual harassment.

- Preparing women for jobs in non-traditional occupations¹ benefits women and their families as these workers experience earnings gains of up to 30%.
- Holding a non-traditional occupation increases a non-college woman's chances of earning high wages by 48.66%.²
- A study of the impact of Women Apprenticeships for Nontraditional Employment Occupations Act (WANTO) found that women were 25 percent more likely to hold nontraditional jobs in geographic areas where collaborations between labor, management and community-based organizations were established under WANTO.³

Importantly, the success of job training programs and coordinated outreach to recruit and hire women meets the needs of employers who will be seeking workers to fulfill the workforce goals of the economic

¹ Non-traditional occupations for women (NTO's) are those occupations where less than 25% of the workforce is women.

² Mastracci, "Labor Pains: Employment and Training Programs for Women in NTOs," Ann Arbor: UMI Publishing, PhD Dissertation, 2001

³ Sharon H. Mastracci, "Labor and Service Delivery: Training Programs for Women in Nontraditional Occupations," University of Texas at Austin, 2001.

stimulus plan. Even before the recession, employers asserted that there was a shortage of skilled construction workers to meet their workforce needs.

In order to ensure that women get a fair share of the job opportunities created through the economic stimulus plan, such legislation should allocate funds, incentives and benchmarks to ensure that women are prepared for these jobs and are hired and retained in those job categories where women are absent or represent a disproportionately small percentage of the workforce. We therefore, urge Congress to:

I. Set a goal of hiring women in a minimum of 10% of jobs created in high wage, nontraditional job categories where women currently make up less than 25% of the workforce. In the alternative, establish a goal that 10% of the work hours performed in these jobs is performed by women.

II. Hiring, Retention and Promotion –Require that each Governor dedicate a specific percentage of funds for each job-creating project under the economic stimulus package to promote collaboration among employers, labor, workforce intermediaries, community-based non-traditional employment and training programs and other stakeholders to establish strategies for:

1. Outreach and recruitment of women;
2. Creation of career paths including retention and promotion of women into high wage/quality jobs; and
3. Provision of work supports such as transportation to remote work sites and child care to enable workers to meet the specific demands of jobs in the building and trades job categories.

III. Job Training, Supportive Services and Technical Assistance – Dedicate no less than \$500 million for the Secretary of Labor to distribute on a formula basis to Governors of each state to prepare women for jobs established through the economic stimulus package. These funds will be used for skill training and supportive services offered through a range of programs, including community based training programs, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and community colleges. The Governor shall establish a planning committee of representative stakeholders to allocate and oversee the utilization of these funds. An additional 1% of funds allocated to the Secretary for this purpose shall be set aside for administrative purposes and to provide technical assistance to these job training programs.

IV. Accountability – The Department of Labor shall authorize the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFFCP) to develop procedures for annual monitoring and reporting on the extent to which women have been trained, placed and retained in the jobs created under this bill. To that end, Congress will authorize adequate funds to oversee and enforce compliance with the regulations outlined in this provision and those embodied in the Executive Order 11246.