
COUNCIL on the ECONOMIC STATUS of WOMEN

400SW, State Office Building, St. Paul MN 55155

(612) 296-8590

NEWSLETTER #70

MAY/JUNE 1983

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LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY 1983, with
information about action on
proposals endorsed by the Council.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Legislation which passed this session changed the Council's name. Beginning July 1, this agency will be the Commission on the Economic Status of Women. Membership will consist of five state senators and five state representatives. This change makes the Council more similar to other legislative commissions.

The Commission's purpose and methods will remain the same as those of the Council: to study and make recommendations on all matters related to the economic status of Minnesota women, through public hearings, task forces, and other research.

1 Legislative Summary

The following proposals endorsed by the Council on the Economic Status of Women became law in the 1983 Minnesota legislative session.

CHILD CARE TAX CREDIT:

This credit is provided on state and federal income taxes. The amount of the credit depends on amount spent for child care, number of dependents, and family income. In 1982, the federal credit was increased to a maximum of \$720 for one dependent and \$1,440 for two dependents, for families at the lowest income levels. However, the Minnesota credit remained at \$400 for one dependent and \$800 for two dependents.

Legislation: Increased the maximum credit to \$720 for one dependent and \$1,440 for two or more dependents on state income taxes, for families with incomes under \$10,000. The Minnesota credit is phased out for higher-income families. (Chapter 342)

CHILD CARE SLIDING FEE:

The state child care sliding fee program provides a partial subsidy for child care costs of families with incomes too high to qualify for federal assistance but still below the state median income. About one-third of Minnesota counties made the program available to their residents in fiscal year 1982.

Legislation: Maintains the child care sliding fee program as a categorical program. In addition, funds will be allocated to each county based on its estimated need, rather than distributing funds through a grant application process. Allocations are made by the Department of Public Welfare. (Chapter 312)

FAMILY PLANNING:

The Minnesota Health Department makes grants to local communities to provide family planning services. In fiscal year 1983, funds were awarded to 43 agencies which together served 52 of the state's 87 counties.

Legislation: Provides \$2.0 million for Family Planning Special Projects under the Community Health Services Act. (Chapter 312)

MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH:

The new federal Maternal & Child Health Block Grant provides funds for prenatal and nutritional care. However, the federal standards do not include required targeting to high-risk, low-income families.

Legislation: Requires targeting of these funds in Minnesota to high-risk low-income mothers and families. (Chapter 312)

PART-TIME STUDENTS:

Women are more likely than men to be part-time college students. However, many financial aid programs exclude part-time students. In 1977, the legislature established a program to earmark funds for students enrolled part-time in Minnesota post-secondary institutions.

Legislation: Provides \$300,000 for the biennium to the Higher Education Coordinating Board to continue the part-time student grant-in-aid program. (Chapter 258)

OTHER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:

In the Council's report, "Minnesota Women & Education" (1979), it was recommended that female students be encouraged to take elective math and science courses in secondary schools; and that studies should be undertaken on faculty employment in post-secondary schools. Legislation which passed this session was related to these recommendations.

Legislation: (1) Affirmative action is required in high technology education programs at elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels; (2) It is recommended that the University of Minnesota implement a system-wide review of sex discrimination in employment, and adjust policies and practices to assure equal opportunities. (Chapters 258, 314)

SET-ASIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS:

The Department of Administration administers a set-aside program for awarding state government contracts to small businesses, including small businesses owned and operated by socially or economically disadvantaged (SED) persons. Beginning in 1980, women were included in the definition of socially or economically disadvantaged.

Legislation: (1) Provides for set aside of state procurements for consultant or professional and technical services as well as commodities and construction; (2) Provides for technical assistance to help firms perform a set-aside contract; (3) Requires that half the value of a set-aside award be performed by businesses owned and operated by socially or economically disadvantaged persons. (Chapter 301)

CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT:

Some cases have been reported in which child care workers have a history of conviction for child molesting. However, such persons were able to maintain a license for a child care facility if there was evidence of "sufficient rehabilitation."

Legislation: Provides for information on abuse and neglect of children to be made available to the child care licensing agency and strengthens the local welfare agency's authority to deny or revoke a child care license. (Chapter 304)

3 Legislation, continued

AGE DISCRIMINATION IN APPRENTICESHIP:

In the Council's report, "Women In The Trades" (1979), it was recommended that rules be developed to indicate circumstances under which apprenticeship programs could be exempted from the age discrimination prohibition in the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Women are more likely than men to seek entry to the skilled trades at older ages.

Legislation: Requires the Human Rights Department to adopt rules on age restrictions in apprenticeship programs, specifying which apprenticeships may discriminate on the basis of age. (Chapter 301)

STATE EMPLOYED WOMEN:

About 44 percent of the 32,000 employees of the State of Minnesota are women. On the expectation that the state should serve as a model employer, the Council has supported a number of programs to improve the status of state-employed women, including job-sharing, affirmative action, and pay equity.

Legislation: (1) Provides \$21.7 million for pay equity increases to "female" classes which are underpaid in relation to "male" classes of comparable value; (2) Continues the state job-sharing program and removes the sunset date; (3) Requires affirmative action in the career executive service. (Chapters 301, 145, 299)

CHILD SUPPORT:

The numbers of female-headed single-parent families continue to increase, and a large proportion of these families are living in poverty because of inadequate or unpaid child support. Despite improvements in the child support enforcement program, a number of problems remain.

Legislation: (1) Establishes guidelines for the amount of support to be awarded for public assistance recipients; (2) Allows a continuing child support order for 90 days after termination of public assistance; (3) Provides for a biennial cost-of-living adjustment in the amount of support ordered; (4) Requires employers to notify the collection agency of termination of an employee whose income was being withheld for child support, and allows employers to claim a \$1 fee per collection period for administrative costs; (5) includes payor of funds in income withholding statutes to clarify that income such as workers' compensation may be withheld as well as wages.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS:

In 1982, 26 local sexual assault programs provided services to 2,900 victims and training to 9,600 community professionals as well as 61,000 members of the general public. The Department of Corrections provides statewide coordination and administration and makes grants to local communities.