

COMMISSION ON THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

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NEWSLETTER #92

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IN THIS ISSUE

LEGISLATION 1985, summarizing action on Commission-endorsed legislative proposals during the 1985 legislative session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMMISSION ISSUES NEW REPORT

PAY EQUITY: THE MINNESOTA EXPERIENCE, the Commission's newest report is now available from the Commission office. This report contains information on pay equity in the United States, the history of pay equity in Minnesota, pay equity for Minnesota state government employees and Minnesota local government employees. The report is free and can be ordered by writing or calling the commission office.

COMMISSION TO HOLD HEARINGS

The Commission will hold a public hearing in Duluth in mid-August. When hearings are held away from the Capitol, participants are welcome to address any topic related to the economic status of women.

The Commission will hold a public hearing on Women and Economic Development September 19, 1985. This hearing will be held in conjunction with the Women's Trade Fair.

For more information on either hearing contact the Commission Office. All meeting and hearings of the Commission are open to the public.

COMMISSION ENDORSED LEGISLATION WHICH PASSED

The following proposals endorsed by the Commission on the Economic Status of Women became law during the 1985 Minnesota legislative session.

Commission on the Economic Status of Women:

The legislature approved funds for the Commission for the 1985-87 biennium. The biennial budget contains a three percent increase for inflation in each year of the budget and a small increase in complement that allows a staff position to become full-time. (Special Session Chapter 13)

Battered Women's Programs:

Funding to the Department of Corrections for battered women's programs was increased this session to \$5.1 million for the biennium. This appropriation provides continued support for the 17 battered women's shelters in Minnesota, and will allow for the development of additional non-shelter services and intervention programs which operate in conjunction with local police departments. (Special Session Chapter 9)

Displaced Homemaker Programs:

The legislature provided continued support for the state's ten displaced homemaker programs. Funds for the displaced homemaker programs come from the marriage license fee. This fee was increased this session to provide additional support for these programs. Funds collected from the marriage fee will be distributed to the displaced homemaker programs by the new Department of Jobs and Training (formerly the Department of Economic Security) based on a formula being developed by the Department. (Special Session Chapter 9)

Family Planning:

The Legislature renewed the Family Planning Special Project funds with an increase for inflation. \$2.1 million was appropriated for the biennium. (Special Session Chapter 9)

Pay Equity:

Appropriates \$14 million to complete implementation of pay equity for state employees. (Special Session Chapter 13)

The legislature made no changes in the local government pay equity law.

Sexual Assault Programs:

Provides \$1.2 million to the Department of Corrections for the Sexual Assault Services Program. This program provides training, develops materials and provides state coordination, administration and grants to local communities for sexual assault programs. (Special Session Chapter 9)

Women Offenders:

Funding to the Department of Corrections for women offenders was increased and will provide six additional staff at the Minnesota Correctional Facility at Shakopee in 1986 and 20 additional staff in 1987. The Northwest Regional Correctional Center was also given funds to expand their programming for women. (Special Session Chapter 9)

Affirmative Action:

Strengthens the state's affirmative action laws. Requires a report to the Governor and the legislature evaluating the affirmative action progress of state agencies. The new law also requires the Department of Employee Relations to study methods to improve the performance of agencies not in compliance with affirmative action. Requires every state agency with more than 1,000 employees to have a full-time affirmative action officer. (Special Session Chapter 13)

Child Care:

Funding for child care was increased by the 1985 legislature, \$10.1 million was appropriated for the biennium. The sliding fee program which provides a subsidy for child care costs of low income parents will be administered by the new Department of Jobs and Training. The sliding fee program will now be available statewide to eligible families. Funds are available to parents who need child care to find or keep employment or to obtain the training or education necessary to find employment.

Funds in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) special needs program have been earmarked for employment related child care.

The State continues to provide the refundable child care tax credit to Minnesota taxpayers with incomes below \$24,000. (Special Session Chapters 9 and 14)

Extended Medical Assistance Coverage:

Extends medical assistance coverage for an additional three months (now for a total of twelve months) to AFDC households that have been terminated from AFDC due to the loss of the \$30 and one third work incentive disregard. (Chapter 252)

Child Support:

Child Support enforcement efforts were strengthened by conforming the state's child support enforcement laws to the new federal legislation. The first \$50 of child support collected for a public assistance recipient must now be paid to the recipient within 15 days of its collection. The fee that may be charged to a non-public assistance recipient who uses the county collection services is limited to five dollars. Income withholding is now required when child support is 30 day overdue. (Chapter 131)

Maintenance Awards:

Clarifies the legislature's intent that a court award permanent maintenance when a spouse's earning capacity has been permanently diminished because employment was subordinated to homemaking and/or child rearing. The new law requires the court to award permanent maintenance when there is uncertainty and leave the order open for later modification. (Chapter 266)

Equity in Education:

Provides that community education programs dealing with early childhood and family life education be reviewed to insure that materials are not racially, culturally or sexually biased. These programs must also encourage parents to become aware of sex stereotyping practices which affect the equitable development of children.

Requires that the evaluation of technology demonstration sites must include an analysis of the extent of equal participation of girls and boys in courses and other training opportunities. Requires the collection of data on enrollment, participation and equipment usage in these programs. (Special Session Chapter 12)

Part-Time Students:

Continues the Part-Time Grant Program for students of post-secondary institutions. After July 1, 1986 the Part-Time Grant program will be expanded to include students who attend school less than half-time. (Special Session Chapter 11)

University of Minnesota Women's Athletics:

Provides \$5.7 million for the biennium for women's intercollegiate athletics at the University of Minnesota to ensure equal access to athletics for women students. (Special Session Chapter 11)

OTHER LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

The following legislation related to the economic status of women became law during 1985 Minnesota legislative session.

Inheritance:

Changes the probate laws to provide that when there is no will the surviving spouse receives the first \$70,000 of an estate and the balance is shared with the children. Also provides for the portion of the estate which can be claimed by a surviving spouse who is omitted from a will. (Chapter 250)

Domestic Abuse:

Increases penalties for a second domestic assault within five years of a conviction for the first. Makes it a gross misdemeanor to trespass on the grounds of a shelter facility. (Chapter 159)

Makes some changes in the Domestic Abuse Act, including: requiring the courts to give primary consideration to the safety of the victim and children when awarding temporary custody and visitation rights in an Order for Protection; provides that an order may prohibit either party from concealing or disposing of property, allows for the extension of an Order for Protection beyond one year when the court determines that a longer period is appropriate. (Chapter 195)

Job Training:

Places the administration of all work and training programs for AFDC recipients under the new Department of Jobs and Training. Provides that AFDC special needs funds may be used for child care, transportation, tuition and other items associated with education or seeking employment. Provides for the establishment of a grant diversion program which subsidizes the wages of employed AFDC recipients and requires the establishment of a supported work program for long term AFDC recipients. Adds AFDC recipients to the priority category for placement in subsidized jobs.

Directs the Commissioner of Human Services to seek waivers from federal regulations so that AFDC recipients may remain eligible for AFDC while establishing a business. (Special Session Chapter 14)

COMMISSION LEGISLATION WHICH WAS NOT PASSED

The following Commission-endorsed proposals did not pass during the 1985 legislative session.

Child Care Resource and Referral:

Provides matching funds to encourage community support for public and private non-profit child care resource and referral programs. No hearing were held. H.F. 1068. S.F. 1196.

Child Care Licensing:

Eliminates some of the exclusions for child care programs from child care licensing requirements. Passed the Senate. No hearings were held in the House. H.F. 1207. S.F. 682.

Set-Aside Program for Small Business:

Establishes a centralized certification program for SED vendors to eliminate the need for SED vendors to be certified by more than one department. No hearings were held. House H.F. 868 and H.F. 1267. One bill was introduced in the Senate, S.F. 955 which is the companion to H.F. 868.