



## In This Issue **Message from the Director**

Director’s Message.....1

WESA: Status of Imple-  
mentation... .....2

WESA: The Legislation...3

WESA: Overview.....3

Resources, Research  
& News.....4

Answer to Photo Quiz....4

On Mother’s Day of 2014, Minnesota women cheered Governor Dayton as he signed the Women’s Economic Security Act (WESA) into law.

WESA is a broad bundle of provisions that homes in on the causes of the gender pay gap and provides support for working parents, especially women, to help them balance their work responsibilities with their family care-giving responsibilities.

So...it’s been over a year now. What has WESA done and how is it doing?

This issue of the OESW newsletter will update you on what has happened with each of the provisions of WESA. You’ll also find a link to the 2014 legislation and a summary of WESA.



We hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative. Its purpose is to provide information to legislators, legislative staff, and the community on priority and emerging women's economic issues.

Please send us your suggestions to [barbara.battiste@oesw.leg.mn](mailto:barbara.battiste@oesw.leg.mn) and visit our [Facebook Page](#) and [Twitter](#).

*Barbara Battiste, Director, Office on the Economic Status of Women*



**What is this picture? Here’s a hint: it’s on the State Capitol Grounds. More picture clues on next pages. Answer on page 4.**

## WESA: Implementation

It's been over a year since WESA became law. Is it living up to its promise of helping women and all working parents balance their work responsibilities with family caregiving responsibilities? Is it giving women the tools to close the gender pay gap?

Read the OESW report on WESA implementation to see what grant projects are underway to train women for nontraditional occupations and to encourage women entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses in high-growth, high-revenue industry sectors. Check out the grants for apprenticeships for women in nontraditional occupations. See the type and number of complaints that have been filed since WESA passed alleging workplace violation of WESA protections of working women and parents—an indication both of compliance with WESA and general awareness of WESA's new provisions. Find out how the Equal Pay Certificate program is coming along.

[Click here for the report on WESA implementation.](#)

*(See page 3 for a link to the actual WESA legislation and to an overview of WESA.)*



**Clue #2**

## WESA: The Legislation

You can cross-reference the overview of WESA (below) and the report on WESA implementation (page 2) with the actual wording of the law that passed in 2014.

[Laws of Minnesota 2014 Chapter 239. Click here.](#)

**Clue #3**



## WESA: An Overview

A detailed summary of the law: non-traditional jobs for women; unemployment benefits; equal pay certificates; women entrepreneurs; study of state-administered retirement savings plan; pregnancy, parenting and sick leave; pregnancy and nursing mother accommodations; wage disclosure protection; familial status protection; penalties for non-compliance. [Click here.](#)

## Resources, Research & News

### Workshop on Legislative Research

On July 14, the Minnesota Women's Consortium and OESW co-sponsored a workshop on how to use the legislative websites to research and track legislation. Elizabeth Lincoln, Director of the Legislative Research Library, was our excellent guide. To tailor the workshop to gender equity research, the issue of child support/child custody was used as an example. Melinda Hugdahl, Staff Attorney with the Minnesota Legal Services Advocacy Project, provided an overview of legislative activity on this issue. [Here is a link to the video of the legislative research workshop.](#) (OESW thanks the Minnesota House Public Information Services for recording the workshop and making the video available to the public.)

### Women and Medicare: An Unfinished Agenda

This report by the American Society on Aging (ASA) provides evidence that lack of Medicare coverage for long term care services and high out-of-pocket costs place a disproportionate burden on older women. The report documents the social and economic disadvantage of our current generation of older women.

[Click here for the ASA report.](#) You may also want to look at the OESW reports on [Older Women & Poverty](#) and [Older Women & the Basic Cost of Living.](#)

### The Cancer Legal Line

Cancer has a large economic impact on residents of Minnesota. Every year, approximately 23,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed in the state, and over 9,100 Minnesotans die from cancer. Cancer Legal Line's mission is to alleviate the non-medical stressors faced by cancer patients and their loved ones, including economic stressors.

Studies show that 30%-50% of all cancer patients fall below the poverty line during their treatment, and that 16.5% are unable to work during treatment [*Journal of Clinical Oncology, Vol 24, No 32 (November 10), 2006: pp. 5149-5153*] (Minnesota's current unemployment rate is 3.9%.)

Seventy-five percent of the Cancer Legal Line clients are women, and breast cancer is the most common cancer that the nonprofit legally assists with.

Education and cancer-related information, resources, and referrals are all offered for free by the Cancer Legal Line. [Visit the website here.](#)

### Women, Especially Young Women, More Likely than Men to Work Multiple Jobs

[See this report](#) by the Economic Policy Institute.

### Why has Japan surpassed U.S. in women's workforce participation?

Japan, long troubled by a large gender work gap, now surpasses U.S. in women's workforce participation. Chris Farrell, on American Public Radio's Marketplace Morning Report, says, "What I find so dispiriting about the numbers is less what it says about Japan and more about what is going on here in the U.S." Farrell holds that the high cost of child care in the U.S. discourages women from entering the workforce, and that's bad news for our economy. Japan's government has invested in child care; ours has work yet to do. In two-thirds of the states, says Farrell, the cost of full-time, center-based child care is greater than the average annual cost of tuition and fees at a four-year, public university. [Listen to the podcast here.](#)

**Answer to the photo quiz:** The pictures are of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Memorial, on the State Capitol Grounds in St. Paul, on Cedar St., across from the Centennial Building. This memorial recognizes the efforts of Minnesota women to win the right to vote. The memorial's woven metal represents the time taken to achieve equal voting rights.

**Bonus points** if you knew that the photo on p. 3 refers to the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention—the first women's rights convention, which called for women's right to vote.