

Obama Administration Record for Women and Girls

“I didn’t run for President so that the dreams of our daughters could be deferred or denied. I didn’t run for President to see inequality and injustice persist in our time. I ran for President to put the same rights, the same opportunities, and the same dreams within the reach for our daughters and our sons alike. I ran for President to put the American Dream within the reach of all of our people, no matter what their gender, or race, or faith, or station.”

-President Obama, March 8, 2010

Today, more than ever, women are often the breadwinners in many American families. Yet women in our economy and our workforce still aren’t getting a fair shake, earning just 77 cents on every dollar paid to men. Women have been subject to deceptive loan practices, and have paid additional premiums for health insurance coverage. Expanding economic opportunities for women and ending discriminatory practices is critical to building an economy that restores security for middle class families, where hard work and responsibility are rewarded, and where everyone who wants to can find a good job. That’s why President Obama has fought for America’s women by combatting discrimination, increasing access to health care, and supporting women-owned businesses. From creating the White House Council on Women and Girls, which produced the first comprehensive Federal report on the status of American women in almost 50 years, to appointing two women to the Supreme Court and a strong team of women leaders to his Cabinet and White House staff, President Obama has taken concrete steps to ensure that women’s voices are heard in government and society. The Obama Administration’s record of supporting women and girls includes:

- **Supporting Women in the Workforce:** The Obama Administration has supported women in the workforce by:
 - **Fighting Pay Discrimination:** The first piece of legislation President Obama signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which restored basic protections against pay discrimination. The President continues to advocate for the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act, which is common sense legislation that gives women the tools they need to fight pay discrimination. And President Obama has convened an Equal Pay Task Force to ensure that existing equal pay laws are fully enforced. Through this Task Force, key agencies in the Federal government are coordinating and enhancing their efforts to protect women from pay discrimination.
 - **Providing Tax Credits For Working Families:** In the Recovery Act, the President extended expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for larger families and reduced the marriage penalty, benefiting over 7 million people and making the Child Tax Credit (CTC) available to more low income families, benefiting 14 million children. In December 2010, the President signed the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010. The expansions in the EITC and the CTC that were extended as part of this legislation benefitted an estimated 12 million women – 4 million of them single mothers.

- **Promoting Workplace Flexibility Efforts:** In March 2010, the President’s Council of Economic Advisors issued its first-ever report on the economic benefits of workplace flexibility, concluding that flexibility strengthens a company’s bottom line while helping workers meet the needs of their families and stay in the workforce. The President hosted a White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility and the Department of Labor led subsequent efforts around the country to promote workplace flexibility and generate best practices in the private sector. To strengthen the government’s position as a model employer in this area, the President signed the Telework Enhancement Act which requires Federal agencies to promote the use of telework.
- **Ensuring Fair Labor Standards for In-Home Care Workers:** President Obama has proposed a rule to provide minimum wage and overtime protections for workers who are employed providing in-home care services for the elderly and infirm. This rule will make a tremendous difference for the nearly two million workers in this industry—roughly 90% of whom are women, and a large portion of them women of color—by helping to ensure they earn fair wages for a hard day’s work.
- **Increasing Access to and Improving Early Childhood Programs:** In the Recovery Act, the President made an historic investment in Head Start, expanding access to 61,000 more children and their families. Those service levels were maintained in 2011 and, the program now serves nearly 1 million children, the most in the history of the program. The President also took action to improve early learning, investing \$500 million in the Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge and reforming Head Start.
- **Attracting and Retaining Women and Girls in STEM:** Building a pathway to high-paying, high-skilled jobs for women and girls, the President’s \$4.35 billion Race to the Top education policy featured competitive preference for states that demonstrate efforts to remove barriers to their participation in science, technology, engineering, and math fields. Supporting and retaining America’s female scientists and engineers is also the goal of the National Science Foundation’s 10-year “career-life balance initiative,” launched at the White House in September 2011 to promote flexibility for researchers who wish to work and care for families.
- **Supporting Mothers Who Choose to Breastfeed:** As a result of the Affordable Care Act the President signed into law, many women will now be provided reasonable break times and private space at work to express breast milk, up until a child’s first birthday. The U.S. Surgeon General also launched a nationwide effort to support mothers who are breastfeeding.
- **Expanding Women’s Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care:** President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law, which includes a number of new benefits and protections for women. And he’s fought to expand women’s access to health care both at home and abroad.
 - **Preventing Insurance Companies from Denying Coverage or Raising Premiums Based on Gender or Pre-Existing Conditions, Including Pregnancy:** As part of

the Affordable Care Act, in 2014, it will be illegal for insurance companies to discriminate against anyone with a pre-existing condition. Before the law, insurance companies could deny coverage to women due to pre-existing conditions, such as having cancer, or being pregnant. And in 2014, many insurers will not be able to charge women higher premiums than they charge men.

- **Making Women’s Prevention Affordable, Including Contraception:** For the first time, the Institute of Medicine has set forth guidelines for women’s preventive health care, and, as part of the Affordable Care Act, new insurance plans must cover these services with no deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance, including mammograms, HIV testing and counseling, domestic violence counseling, and testing for gestational diabetes. This includes the option for women to access contraception with no cost sharing with limited exemptions (e.g., health plans sponsored by certain religious employers or those that are grandfathered are exempt). Women typically use contraception for 30 years of their lives, with the average cost of contraception of \$30 to \$50 per month. As of February 2012, due to the Affordable Care Act, 20.4 million women are estimated to have received expanded preventive services coverage in private insurance plans.
- **Covering Maternity Care:** Starting in 2014, many health plans will be required to cover the cost of a pregnancy—a monumental win for women because 68 percent of enrollees in individual market plans today lack such coverage.
- **Supporting and Defending Funding for Women’s Health Services:** President Obama has consistently supported and defended Title X Family Planning clinics that provide crucial health services to persons from low-income families. In both FY 2011 and FY 2012 funding bills, he refused to allow language barring funding for Planned Parenthood to be included in the Federal budget.
- **Expanding Opportunities for Women-Owned Businesses:** The Obama Administration has worked to expand opportunities for women-owned businesses through increased access to credit and Federal contracting opportunities.
 - **Increasing Access to Credit and Counseling Services for Women Business Owners:** Small Business Administration (SBA) loans are 3 to 5 times more likely to be made to minority- and women-owned businesses than conventional small business loans made by banks. The President has expanded SBA lending, making more than \$7 billion available through 29,000 SBA loans to women-owned businesses between 2009 and September 2011. Additionally, the SBA has opened 10 new Women’s Business Centers around the country, for a total of 110 centers that trained and/or counseled over 139,000 people in 2011, primarily underserved and economically disadvantaged women.
 - **Expanding Access to Federal Contracting for Women Business Owners:** The Obama Administration has implemented the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program, which helps level the playing field for women-owned small

businesses in over 300 industries where women are underrepresented by giving them greater access to Federal contracting opportunities. In 2010, women owned small businesses were awarded nearly \$18 billion in federal contracts.

- **Protecting Women From Violence:** Because violence against women remains all too common, the Obama Administration has worked to protect women from violence on college campuses and in their homes by:
 - **Combating Sexual Assault on College Campuses:** In April 2011, Vice President Biden and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced comprehensive guidance to help schools, colleges, and universities better understand their obligations under Federal civil rights laws to prevent and respond to the problem of campus sexual assault.
 - **Expanding Services for Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children:** In December 2010, the President signed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act which provides funding for nearly 1,700 shelters and service programs for victims of domestic violence and their children. It also supports the National Domestic Violence Hotline, whose staff answers more than 23,000 calls each month, linking victims with the resources they need to rebuild their lives.
 - **Victim Homelessness:** Domestic violence is a leading cause of women's homelessness. In October 2010, the Department of Housing and Urban Development released new rules that provide protection to victims living in subsidized housing and allow landlords to evict perpetrators of abuse and ensure victims do not lose their housing due to crimes committed against them.
- **Supporting Women in the Military and Women Veterans:** President Obama has increased opportunities for women service members and supported women veterans by:
 - **Expanded Health Care for Women Veterans and Service Members:** With 1.8 million women veterans in America, the VA is working to provide comprehensive health care for women veterans, including full-time Women Veterans Program Managers at 144 VA health care facilities. Additionally, the President continues to fight to ensure that servicewomen and military dependents have the ability to obtain reproductive health services at military hospitals using their own money.
 - **Removing Barriers for Military Service Members:** In February 2012, the Department of Defense announced it intends to eliminate the "co-location exclusion" barring women U.S. military service members from being co-located with ground combat units, a change that will open over 13,000 new positions to women soldiers. This change reflects President Obama's commitment and the commitment of the Department of Defense to eliminating barriers that prevent service members from rising to their highest potential according to their individual abilities, not constraining them through gender-restrictive policies.

- **Supporting Women and Girls Worldwide:** President Obama worked to elevate and integrate women and girls in all aspects of his foreign policy and assistance, from diplomatic engagement to strengthening global health systems, to combating violence against women and promoting economic opportunity, including through new initiatives such as:
 - **Promoting Women in Conflict Prevention and Resolution:** In December 2011, President Obama released the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security and signed Executive Order 13595 directing the Plan's implementation. Together, these documents will chart a roadmap for how the United States will accelerate and institutionalize efforts to advance women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. They represent a fundamental change in how we will approach diplomatic, security, and development-based support to women in areas of conflict, by ensuring that their perspectives and considerations of gender are woven into the fabric of how the United States approaches peace processes, conflict prevention, the protection of civilians, and humanitarian assistance.
 - **Safeguarding Women's Reproductive Health Internationally:** In January 2009, President Obama rescinded the Mexico City Policy which denied federal funds to health care and aid organizations that used non-U.S. government funding to perform or offer information about abortion services. The Administration restored funding for basic services critical to women's health and empowerment, including through increased support for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which provides a broad array of services, including family planning as well as programs to combat gender-based violence, eradicate female genital mutilation and cutting, reduce transmission of HIV/AIDS, and ensure access to essential health care services and supplies for women and families impacted by emergencies.

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