Legislative Routes for Improving Workplace Flexibility

Angela Carlberg and Ariane Hegewisch

According to the latest data from the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, prime-aged women in the United States are now less likely than women in many other high-income countries to participate in the labor market. This is a clear reversal of past trends in which US women were at least as likely as women in other developed countries to be in the labor market, if not more so.

US workers are often confronted by an either/or choice: either someone works full-time and all the time, or works part-time or part-year under very poor conditions, with low pay, no benefits, and little opportunity for advancement. Although there has been some progress in workplace practices, flexible work arrangements of high-quality are still the exception. When lack of high-quality flexibility and lack of child care combine, many women stop paid work altogether. The long-term negative consequences for women’s lifetime earnings and advancement were described in IWPR’s 2004 report Still a Man’s Labor Market.

While the United States is not alone in its slow progress toward workplace change, other advanced economies are much more likely to recognize inadequate workplace flexibility as an economic policy issue. When an experienced woman leaves the labor market, the whole economy loses “human capital,” not just the individual employer, and there are fewer workers to contribute to publicly funded programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

A new IWPR report published jointly with the Center for WorkLife Law, University of California Hastings College of the Law, Statutory Routes to Workplace Flexibility in Cross-National Perspectives, by Ariane Hegewisch, Scholar-in-Residence at IWPR, and Janet Gornick, Professor of Political Science at CUNY and Director of the Luxembourg Income Study, shows that the large majority of high-income countries have legislation making it easier for individual employees to adjust their total work hours as well as where and when they work. Such policies can benefit those trying to balance work and family, as well as individuals who are pursuing education or easing into retirement. Such laws not only benefit individuals, but can have broad economic impacts by keeping workers attached to the labor force and increasing worker skill levels.

Of the 21 countries surveyed, 17 have statutes that allow parents to adjust their working hours: 12 allow for gradual return to work after the birth/adoption of a child; 8 allow parental leave via reduced hours when a child is older; and 8 have statutes facilitating alternative work arrangements for parents. Twelve countries have statutes to help workers adjust work hours for training and education, 11 have statutes to allow reduced hours with partial pension

(cont’d on p. 3)
“It’s the most wonderful time of year!” declared a popular office superstar commercial each August when I was a kid, delighting my mother, but sadly signaling the end of long, playful summer days for me. However, this fall, I could not help but cheerfully hum the tune to myself as I roamed around Target filling my cart with pens, pencils, notepads, and my personal favorite school supply, the academic year planner. The academic year was off to such a gleeful start because I was beginning graduate school part-time to pursue a Masters Degree in Public Policy with a Concentration in Women’s Studies. As a full-time employee at IWPR, my graduate education at The George Washington University (GWU) is funded thanks to IWPR’s ten-year affiliation with the University. As a 25-year-old who is surrounded by friends who are desperately trying to pay off their undergraduate student loans, while in many cases, also taking out loans for graduate school, I truly appreciate this amazing financial benefit, but my love for the IWPR/GWU relationship goes deeper than that!

The most beneficial aspect of my status as both an IWPR staff member and a GWU student has been that this combination allows me to begin what I hope will be a long career in feminist research and public policy. When I joined IWPR, I knew I was interested in pursuing a Ph.D. in women’s studies and/or public policy. The class demanded intellectual engagement and rewarded creativity. I left the class feeling challenged to develop new ways of thinking about feminist theory that could fuel change for women in today’s world. My public policy class taught me how to develop my theoretical ideas into actual policies through strategic thinking about the policy process. Feminist Media Theory has been a treat because it has allowed me to think through ways that studying pop culture (one of my favorite hobbies) is also an important component of change. In that class, I am currently interested in the media coverage of Hillary Clinton’s campaign and a more “fun” project focused on the ways that humor, specifically feminist sitcoms such as 30 Rock, can be used as feminist projects. Economics has been truly beneficial in my work with Dr. Hartmann.

As I progress in the graduate program, I hope to develop a thesis project focused on addressing the issues of twenty-something women. I’ve been concerned about the unique issues that young women face as the twenties have become a time of “extended adolescence.” My project will hopefully address issues as they apply to young women such as student loans, high costs of living, employment issues such as the pay gap and job quality, physical and mental health issues (health care coverage, reproductive health), political engagement issues, and the challenges young women face in the media. While this is an ambitious project that requires further refinement, I’ve imagined modeling it on IWPR’s Status of Women in the States Reports. Perhaps it could be titled The Status of Young Women in America and conclude with policy recommendations for this often overlooked group. In addition to finishing up my Masters, I plan to apply to Ph.D. programs to further develop my interests in women’s studies and public policy. Ultimately, my work at IWPR and as a student at GWU has been truly beneficial for me and I’ll always thank IWPR for getting me started on my career as a feminist policy researcher.

In my first two semesters at GWU, I have been enrolled in four classes, Fundamentals of Feminist Theory, an introduction to the public policy process, Feminist Media Theory, and Microeconomics. Fundamentals of Feminist Theory convinced me that I definitely want to spend my life in feminist policy research. The class demanded intellectual engagement and rewarded creativity. I left the class feeling challenged to develop new ways of thinking about feminist theory that could fuel change for women in today’s world. My public policy class taught me how to develop my theoretical ideas into actual policies through strategic thinking about the policy process. Feminist Media Theory has been a treat because it has allowed me to think through ways that studying pop culture (one of my favorite hobbies) is also an important component of change. In that class, I am currently interested in the media coverage of Hillary Clinton’s campaign and a more “fun” project focused on the ways that humor, specifically feminist sitcoms such as 30 Rock, can be used as feminist projects. Economics has been truly beneficial in my work with Dr. Hartmann.

As I progress in the graduate program, I hope to develop a thesis project focused on addressing the issues of twenty-something women. I’ve been concerned about the unique issues that young women face as the twenties have become a time of “extended adolescence.” My project will hopefully address issues as they apply to young women such as student loans, high costs of living, employment issues such as the pay gap and job quality, physical and mental health issues (health care coverage, reproductive health), political engagement issues, and the challenges young women face in the media. While this is an ambitious project that requires further refinement, I’ve imagined modeling it on IWPR’s Status of Women in the States Reports. Perhaps it could be titled The Status of Young Women in America and conclude with policy recommendations for this often overlooked group. In addition to finishing up my Masters, I plan to apply to Ph.D. programs to further develop my interests in women’s studies and public policy. Ultimately, my work at IWPR and as a student at GWU has been truly beneficial for me and I’ll always thank IWPR for getting me started on my career as a feminist policy researcher.

In this issue, the column has a guest writer, Ashley English of IWPR.
Workplace Flexibility
(cont’d from p.1)

prior to full retirement, 5 have statutes allowing working time adjustments for those with family care giving responsibilities for adults, and 5 have statutes that give everyone the right to alternative work arrangements, whether they want the flexibility to care for a child or write a book.

Most countries have different statutes for different purposes. Recently, as noted, five countries have taken an all encompassing approach—providing a mechanism for changing working time arrangements for all employees regardless of why they want change. Such a universal approach circumvents the resentment among employees that can arise when employers allow only some workers to have flexibility for specific, limited reasons, while other employees wish they could have some latitude to refuse proposals on business or organizational grounds.

Most statutes offer the possibility to move from full-time to part-time work and back. The United Kingdom has taken a broader approach, also including flextime, schedule changes and home-based work, changes which allow the number of working hours to remain the same, thus leaving earnings unchanged. This approach makes it more likely that men will request changes. A similar model is being followed by New Zealand and the US Working Families Flexibility Bill introduced in Congress by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) in December 2007.

All of the rights provided in these schedules are conditional, allowing an employer to refuse a request based on business or operational reasons. The United Kingdom and New Zealand statutes (and the proposed US legislation before Congress) take an even softer approach: an employee has a right to request change, and the employer must provide a reasoned answer, within a strict timetable, but beyond that the decision cannot be challenged. Even though this might look like little progress on paper, UK research suggests that this type of soft approach has played a role in creating workable alternative arrangements and increasing managers’ willingness to try something new.

Flexible working rights on their own are unlikely to help many women stay in high-quality jobs. More is needed, and apart from the United States, all countries in the survey provide more. In all countries except the United States, paid maternity leave, paid sick leave, and paid vacations are standard. Likewise, flexible work is no substitute for a lack of affordable quality child care, and in all countries in the study there has been an increase in public investment in child care. Yet enhanced rights to flexible work can improve work/life quality, support economic growth and prosperity, and contribute to greater gender equality.
Making News on the Wage Gap and Women’s Employment

- USA Today cited IWPR’s 2007 fact sheet The Gender Wage Ratio
- Cable World magazine cited IWPR’s 2006 report Making the Right Call: Jobs and Diversity in the Communications and Media Sector

Democracy and Society

- CBC News (Toronto) interviewed Dr. Vicky Lovell on the significance of gender in the 2008 presidential election
- Dr. Barbara Gault gave an on-air radio interview to Gloria Minot of WPFW (Washington, DC) about IWPR’s report I Knew I Could Do This Work

Economic Security

- Forbes.com quoted Dr. Heidi Hartmann and cited The Economic Security of Older Men and Women in the United States
- Dr. Heidi Hartmann gave on-air radio interviews to The Guy James Show (Fort Meyers, FL), WILS 1320 (Lansing, MI) and KBXX 97.9 (Houston, TX), and Dr. Vicky Lovell gave an on-air interview to the Women’s Show on WMNF (Tampa, FL) regarding the proposed 2008 economic stimulus package.

Poverty, Welfare and Income Security

- The Columbus Dispatch (OH), The State Journal (WV), the Omaha World-Herald (NE), and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) cited IWPR’s research on paid sick leave

Linking Economic Development and Child Care 2007-2008 Venture Grantees

Nine venture grants for innovative projects that link child care and economic development were recently awarded by the Linking Economic Development and Child Care Technical Assistance Project, a joint venture of Smart Start’s National Technical Assistance Center, the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance, Cornell University, and the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. Funding for these grants was made possible by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Below is the list of the 2007-2008 grantees. A brief description of their projects can be found at iwpr.org.

- Linking Child Care and Transit Oriented Development, The Local Investment in Child Care Project – Oakland, California
- Mid Coast Maine Child Care Cooperative, Family Focus – Bath, Maine
- Partnering with Municipalities to Improve Access to Economic Development Funds, John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy of Thomas Edison State College – Trenton, New Jersey
- Engaging Local Economic Development, Business and Government Leaders in Tangible Efforts to Stabilize the Child Care Sector, Pro Action, Inc./Steuben Child Care Project – Bath, New York
- Supporting the Child Care Needs of Migrant Workers: Forging Alliances with Growers and Packers, Oregon Childcare Resource & Referral Network – Salem, Oregon
- Increasing Family Child Care Provider Access to Health Insurance and Other Benefits, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association – Madison, Wisconsin
- Tax Strategies to Support Child Care Businesses, Cooperation for Enterprise Development – Washington, DC
- Community Developers Consider Alternative Financing for Child Care Businesses: A National Strategy Session, Aspen Institute – Washington, DC
pany, premiered a new dance entitled *The Distance Between Us*, a piece for an all female cast that depicted the powerful and often complex relationships that women have with each other. Dr. Hartmann joined Ms. Gibney for a post-performance discussion of the dance and its significance to women in domestic violence situations (the dance company works intensively with local area women’s shelters), the dance company, and the feminist movement. The discussion, moderated by Faith Middleton of NPR’s *The Faith Middleton Show*, closed the evening.

IWPR would like to thank all of the sponsors of its 20th anniversary celebration, including ArtTable, Avon, The Bank of New York Mellon, Birks & Mayors, Bloomingdale’s, Gina Gibney Dance Company, Institute of Church Administration and Management, The Jackson House Inn and Restaurant, and long term members, supporters, and board members Martha Darling, Sheila Wellington, Marcia Worthing, Elizabeth Boris, Ellen Delany, Holly Fechner, Nikki Daruwala, Elaine Reuben, Catharine R. Stimpson, Barbara Bick, Carol Baney Martin, Lynn Gitlitz, and Deborah Weinstein.

![Ana Oliveira, President of the New York Women’s Foundation, speaking at the event.](image)

**Women’s Economic Status**

*cont’d from p.2*

Current data on women’s economic status with data released in the 2002 *Status of Women in South Carolina* report. The scorecard shows that South Carolina has fallen from the middle third in the nation on both composite indices in 2002 to the bottom third currently—an unfortunate decline.

Both publications found wide economic disparities by race and ethnicity and recommend policy changes that would allow women of color greater access to higher education opportunities, non-traditional job training, better quality jobs, and expanded child care assistance.

IWPR will soon be releasing resources on the economic status of women in Michigan and New York and national data on the economic status of women of color.

For more information, or if you would like a report or fact sheet done in your state, contact Erica Williams at 202-785-5100 or williams@iwpr.org.

*Statutory Routes to Workplace Flexibility in Cross-National Perspectives*

By Ariane Hegewisch and Janet C. Gornick

This report provides a cross-country overview of laws that make it easier for employees to change the hours they work, summarizing evidence of the laws’ impacts and discussing how such provisions can play an important role in preparing the US economy for the future.

**February 2008, IWPR No. B258**

40 pages, $10

**The Economic Status of Women in South Carolina**

By Erica Williams

This briefing paper assesses women’s economic status in South Carolina in comparison with women in other states and with women nationally. The paper highlights what is most promising and disappointing about women’s economic progress in South Carolina and outlines recommendations for policy changes that would benefit women in the state.

**January 2008, IWPR No. R340**

24 pages, $5

**The Economic Status of Women in Georgia**

By Erica Williams

This fact sheet presents data on a set of indicators of women’s employment and earnings and their social and economic autonomy and compares the status of Georgia’s women to that of women in other states. In addition to overall and regional rankings, the fact sheet provides grades that evaluate women’s economic status in Georgia compared with measures of women’s ideal status.

**January 2008, IWPR No. R339**

4 pages, free of charge

**Women and Unemployment Insurance: Outdated Rules Deny Benefits That Workers Need and Have Earned**

By Vicky Lovell

This fact sheet discusses three aspects of the Unemployment Insurance system that prevent many women from receiving the UI benefits they have earned: monetary eligibility criteria, the exclusion of part-time workers, and allowable reasons for job loss.

**January 2008, IWPR No. A132**

2 pages, free of charge

---

**IWPR Celebrates 20 Years**

*of Changing Women’s Lives Through Research*

Ana Oliveira, President of the New York Women’s Foundation, speaking at the event.

Visit [www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org) for IWPR’s latest press releases and publications.
Member Profile:  
Dr. David Fasenfest

Dr. David Fasenfest first met Dr. Heidi Hartmann around 1977 when they were members of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE). He heard her speak about the need for a women-focused policy shop to promote women’s issues. As this idea developed into the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, Dr. Fasenfest supported Dr. Hartmann and the Institute in any way he could.

For Dr. Fasenfest the question really is: “How can one not support IWPR? Only with efforts like those made by IWPR can we hope to see the kinds of information needed to affect legislation that mandates change and to provide the knowledge that informs the national and local dialogue to promote change.”

Born in Germany, Dr. Fasenfest lived in New York City from childhood through college. He said of the time that New York City was “a truly international city, where neighborhoods could be identified by the smells from the restaurants and the languages in the stores.”

Currently teaching sociology at Wayne State University in Michigan, he has lived in a variety of exciting locations, such as Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Australia, and Germany, where he recently returned to teach at the University of Hamburg for a few years.

Across years of teaching, Dr. Fasenfest has noticed a great deal of change in society, particularly in the classroom. He notes that women from previous generations struggled to make choices and create opportunities for their lives, and even women in the 1980s did not immediately embrace feminist ideas and values. Now he believes young women are more or less born as feminists with expectations of equal treatment and awareness of all available possibilities in life. He says that while this natural inclination to feminism is great, women and men must still remember the struggles of those who came before them and the work it took to achieve greater possibilities, lest they disappear again.

Dr. Fasenfest also cautions that the issues addressed by IWPR are not exclusively for women. “Both men and women need to understand that all of these issues relate to society as a whole,” he says. “When women, or people of color, are treated unequally we have to view this as a mechanism in place that might target others as well. That is, we must not assume as men that some kinds of treatment are reserved for women. Male workers can be just as easily denigrated, and the loss of pensions and health care affect men as much as women. By understanding that this is a struggle for human dignity, and not a special interest agenda, men can see the struggle for equality as a struggle for their own well-being as well.”

Elisabeth Crum

IWPR General and Project Support

IWPR’s research, education, and outreach activities are funded and supported primarily by foundations, organizations, corporations, and individuals. The Institute is grateful for the support of the following foundations: the Ms. Foundation for continued work on the status of women in the Gulf Coast who were affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; the Ford Foundation for IWPR’s work on sex and race discrimination in the workplace, paid family leave and job equality, interfaith activism, and older women’s economic security; the Annie E. Casey Foundation for IWPR’s work on job quality; and the Rockefeller Foundation for studies on women and gender in the workplace; the Rockefeller Family Fund, the Public Welfare Foundation, and the Women’s Fund of Greater Milwaukee for support of our work/family research; the Russell Sage Foundation for work on older women’s economic security; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the National Institute for Early Education Research, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for IWPR’s work on early care and education of children; the Berger-Marks Foundation for IWPR’s work on women’s activism; the Girl Scouts of the United States of America and the Minnesota Women’s Foundation for work on improving the status of young women and girls; the Alliance for Women, the Atlanta Women’s Foundation, The New York Women’s Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation for IWPR’s work on the Status of Women in the States; the Sunrise Foundation for increasing IWPR’s visibility; The Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust and the New Directions Foundation for their general support.

Gifts of Remembrance

This winter, some of our members paid tribute to important people in their lives with these special gift designations:

In memory of

Adoniram Judson Wells, III and Mary Brewster Wells (John V. Wells and Heidi Hartmann)
Susan F. Carr (Rebecca Crum)
Ron Foster (Sheila Wellington)
Joy Simonson (Ruth G. Nadel)

If you would like to designate your next IWPR donation in honor or In memory of someone special, please contact Elisabeth Crum via email at crum@iwpr.org or (202) 785-5100 x24.
IWPR Grows Fellowship Named for Founding Member
Mariam K. Chamberlain (and Celebrates her 90th birthday!)

Val Vilott

This year the Institute for Women’s Policy Research is not only celebrating its past 20 years of success, but also the 90th birthday of a founding member—Dr. Mariam K. Chamberlain. One of the few women of her generation with a Ph.D. in economics, Dr. Chamberlain’s contributions to the field of policy research and economic analysis of women’s issues throughout her career are extraordinary.

Her long list of achievements and contributions to women’s lives includes founding the National Council of Research on Women and being a founding member of the International Association for Feminist Economics. Fighting discrimination and working to provide opportunities for women throughout her life, Dr. Chamberlain’s leadership in working toward gender equality has been invaluable to women throughout the United States and around the world. While a program officer at the Ford Foundation, she seeded many research centers on women and helped to develop the field of women’s studies.

In honor of Dr. Chamberlain’s vision and accomplishments, IWPR offers the Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellowship in Women and Public Policy to motivated individuals interested in pursuing further education and contributing to the field through substantive research projects. Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellows work intensively to conduct research on a variety of women’s issues in conjunction with the research team at IWPR. Past Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellows have made substantial contributions to IWPR’s work in a variety of areas such as job quality; pay equity; paid family and medical leave; Social Security; intersections of race, class, and gender; and child care, among many others.

Present and past fellows describe the fellowship as an opportunity that allows them to gain valuable experience working in a dynamic public policy organization while developing research skills and expertise in their areas of interest. The fellows also have the opportunity to participate in policy briefings, hearings, and other activities in Washington, DC.

To continue providing this opportunity to aspiring feminist social scientists, IWPR is conducting an ongoing campaign to endow the Fellowship. IWPR would like to specifically thank an anonymous individual for a generous donation of $50,000 to the Fellowship endowment.

For more information on the Fellowship, to submit a fellowship application, or to make a donation, please see IWPR’s website www.iwpr.org or call Elisabeth Crum at 202.785.5100 x24.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Policy Council

IWPR would like to thank all the members of the Eleanor Roosevelt Policy Council for their important contributions to our work. Members of IWPR’s premier giving circle receive a comprehensive subscription to IWPR’s Information Network, a complimentary subscription to the Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, and invitations to IWPR events across the country. To find out more about the Eleanor Roosevelt Policy Council or to become a member, contact Elisabeth Crum, crum@iwpr.org, or 202.785.5100 x24.

Dr. Mariam K. Chamberlain and Heidi Hertzson at the 2003 IWPR International Conference.

Stephen Rose
Katrina vanden Heuvel
Reg Weaver, National Education Association
Marcia Worthing

Leadership Council Members,
$2,500-$4,999
Robert Cherry
Daisy Chin-Lor, Birks & Mayors, Inc.
Ellen Delany
Martha Darling
Joseph Hansen, United Food and Commercial Workers Union
Heidi Hartmann
James Hoffa, International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Carolyn Hopley
Cynthia Lloyd
Edward McElroy, American Federation of Teachers
Sheila Wellington
David and Robin Wells
William Young, National Associations of Letter Carriers

Institute Council Members,
$1,000-$2,499
Bill Baer, Bloomingdale’s
Barbara Bergmann
Thomas Buffenbarger, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
Bill Cohen, Harrington Park Press, Inc.
David Fasenfest and Heidi Gottfried
David Goslin
Yvonne Jackson
Susie Johnson, United Methodist Church, Women’s Division
Susan Meade
Barbara Reskin
Cecil Roberts, United Mine Workers
Frank Roosevelt
Clara Schiffer
Evan Stark and Anne Flicraft
Barrie Thorne
James Williams, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades

Community Council Members,
$500-$999
Lenora Cole
Holly Fechner
Jane Mansbridge
Brooke Shearer

President’s Council Members,
$5,000 and up
Anonymous
Bank of New York Mellon
Mariam K. Chamberlain
Cynthia Epstein
Ron Gettelfinger, United Auto Workers
Esmeralda Lyn
Gerald McEntee, AFSCME
Purchase IWPR publications at www.iwpr.org

NAME

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

CITY       STATE   ZIP

PHONE     FAX    EMAIL

SUBTOTAL $________ PLUS SHIPPING & HANDLING $________ = TOTAL $________

I AM ENCLOSING A CHECK FOR: $________ (ADD 5.75% SALES TAX FOR DC RESIDENTS.)

PLEASE CHARGE MY:  ❑ VISA  ❑ MASTERCARD NO.: ________________________________

SIGNATURE      EXP. DATE

IWPR members get a 20% discount on all publication orders.

Call for priority rates and bulk orders.

MAIL or fax payment to:
Institute for Women’s Policy Research 1707 L Street NW, Suite 750 Washington, DC 20036
202/785-5100    fax 202/833-4362