



Equal  
Rights  
Advocates

Since 1974, Fighting for Women's Equality

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## Equal Rights Advocates Provides 2012 Outlook

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 21, 2011 – The year 2012 will bring new strategies to empower women and girls who are facing sexual harassment and assault, less pay for equal work, and barriers to advancement simply because of motherhood status, say the attorneys at Equal Rights Advocates (ERA), a national non-profit advocating for change in the courts and among policy-makers.

“Title IX, the historic federal law prohibiting sex discrimination at educational institutions that receive Federal funding, turns 40 in 2012, yet we’re still fighting battles that should have been settled long ago,” says Arcelia Hurtado, Executive Director of the nonprofit legal organization. The Penn State scandal is just one example. “On the positive side, we and other social justice activists have won some victories for young women being shut out of sports and for pregnant workers needing health insurance during leaves,” Hurtado adds.

“Men and women across the political spectrum can get behind the importance of educational and work environments that are safe and fair. That will buoy ERA’s efforts in 2012,” says Noreen Farrell, ERA’s Managing Attorney.

Here’s a peek at the advocacy campaigns that will impact the news in 2012:

- **Eliminating economic barriers for pregnant workers and working families** – On January 1, 2012, a California bill co-sponsored by ERA takes effect that will ensure continued health care coverage for workers on pregnancy or childbirth-related leave. The law has far-reaching benefits, especially for women working for small employers not covered by other state and federal leave laws. With an estimated 75% of women entering the workforce becoming pregnant at least once, ERA’s advocacy is making good sense in 2012. ERA’s Working Families Campaign will continue in 2012 to provide direct services to pregnant workers and other caregivers who are negotiating leave and battling stereotyping in the workplace.
- **Ensuring equity and safety in schools** – Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in schools, will mark its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2012. Given the foundation for future economic empowerment that education provides, ERA’s enforcement of Title IX as part of its Education Equity Campaign is more important now than ever, notes Farrell.
  - ERA will celebrate its efforts to uphold Title IX at its annual June luncheon. Keynote speaker: Women’s soccer legend and Olympian Julie Foudy (date to be announced).
  - ERA (and its co-counsel The Sturdevant Law Firm and Equity Legal) scored a major Title IX victory in 2011 with a decisive win against the University of California Davis in a case challenging the university’s refusal to provide female students with an equal

chance to play sports. A jury will decide the issue of damages in the case at a U.S. District Court starting on March 5, 2012 in Sacramento, California. ERA is also applying Title IX to combat the epidemic of gender-based bullying at schools, discrimination against female recruits at fire academies, and the unfair treatment of breastfeeding mothers at graduate schools.

- **Preventing the sexual assault of immigrant women workers** – ERA is taking on the dehumanization of immigrant women workers in 2012. Along with co-counsel Talamantes, Villegas, Carrera, LLP, ERA will be taking to trial a case on behalf of a Latina janitor who was sexually assaulted in her San Francisco workplace by her supervisor at ABM Industries, a nationwide maintenance and facility services company. The trial commences in San Francisco Superior Court on March 26, 2012. “We demand a workplace that is free of sexual violence and harassment, for marginalized women and all workers,” says ERA staff attorney Monali Sheth. Also as part of its Marginalized Women Worker Campaign, ERA will continue to assist marginalized women workers in the trades and other male-dominated industries facing hiring barriers, harassment and glass ceilings to promotion.
- **Wage justice** – 2012 will bring renewed efforts by ERA to secure wage justice for women working in retail, service, financial, agricultural and other industries. Litigation against corporate giant Wal-Mart will heat up in 2012, on the heels of a filing of an amended California-focused complaint filed in *Dukes v. Wal-Mart* in the fall of 2011 challenging discriminatory pay and promotion practices. ERA, along with co-counsel The Impact Fund; Davis, Cowell & Bowe; and Cohen Milstein, represent plaintiffs in the suit. Women who have worked at Wal-Mart at any time since December 1998 in California or other states who have pay and/or promotion claims should visit [www.walmartclass.com](http://www.walmartclass.com) for more information about the case.

### **About ERA**

Equal Rights Advocates (ERA), founded in 1974, is a national civil rights organization dedicated to protecting and expanding economic and educational access and opportunities for women and girls. Through its campaign approach—incorporating public education, legislative advocacy, and litigation—ERA seeks to assist women and girls throughout a life-long continuum: ensuring equality in their educational experience, combating sex discrimination in the workforce, and advocating for workplaces hospitable to working families. To learn more about ERA’s work, visit [www.equalrights.org](http://www.equalrights.org).

ERA provides free information about legal rights relating to sex discrimination at work and at school through its toll-free, nationwide, multi-lingual Advice and Counseling Hotline. Hundreds of callers a year receive advice and information on their legal rights. If you or someone you know needs information or has questions about sex discrimination in schools or in the workplace, call **ERA’s Advice and Counseling Line** at **(800) 839-4372**.