

A Stronger Calif♀ernia:

Securing Economic Opportunity
for All Women

2015 Legislative Agenda

About the Stronger Calif[♀]ornia Agenda:

Women are critical to a strong and vibrant California economy and play a pivotal role in spurring economic growth in California. Women comprise almost half the workforce in our state and are primary income-earners in many households. They influence the economy as decision-makers for their families, as consumers, and as workers. In fact, women predominate in industry sectors whose growth can be credited for California's recovery from the Great Recession of 2007-2008.

Yet women in California face obstacles to enjoying economically secure lives. California has the 8th largest economy in the world, but the nation's highest poverty rate and it is disproportionately harming women and children. Childcare access is lower in California than in other states. Women are paid less than their male counterparts for the same work in certain jobs. They are also more likely to work in low-wage jobs and have fewer opportunities to advance in their careers. Unpredictable schedules and the lack of sick and family leave time leave is taking a toll on too many families.

Ensuring the economic security of all Californian women with common-sense public policies will benefit all communities including men, children and families.

The Stronger Calif[♀]ornia Agenda reflects a visionary collaboration among legislators, advocates and those we serve in communities across California. The Agenda has four pillars that frame the policy initiatives critical to the economic security of women and families in this state.

To learn more about this historic effort, see StrongerCalifornia.org. A list of partners in the Stronger Calif[♀]ornia Advocates Network is on the back page.

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The 2015 Legislative Agenda

Ensure Fair Pay and Job Opportunities

Fair Pay

- **California Fair Pay Act – SB 358 (Senator Jackson)**
California women working full time make an average of only 84 cents to every dollar earned by men, and women of color, especially Latinas, face an even higher wage gap (44 cents to every dollar). This bill will help to ensure that women are paid equally when they do the same work as men, and protect workers from retaliation when they inquire or speak out about wage differences at work.
- **Minimum Wage Increase and Indexing – SB 3 (Senators Leno and Leyva)**
Wages have remained mostly stagnant in California, while the cost of living continues to rapidly increase. This bill would increase the minimum wage to \$11 in 2016 and \$13 in 2017. The bill would require the annual automatic adjustment of the minimum wage, commencing Jan. 1, 2019, to maintain employee purchasing power diminished by the rate of inflation during the previous year.
- **Pay Equity for Women in the Workplace – AB 1017 (Assemblymember Campos)**
Existing law generally prohibits an employer from paying an employee at wage rates less than the rates paid to employees of the opposite sex in the same establishment. This bill would state the intent of the Legislature that would require pay equity for women in the workplace.
- **Equal Pay for Equal Work Act of 2015 – AB 1354 (Assemblymember Dodd)**
The gender wage gap continues to persist in California, in part because of a lack of transparency in what workers earn. This bill would hold state contractors to the same standard as federal contractors by requiring them to submit to the state a summary of compensation data based on sex and race in order to encourage compliance with equal pay laws.
- **Eliminate Gap from Workers' Compensation – AB 305 (Assemblymember Gonzalez)**
This bill would amend Section 1174 of the Labor Code. This change would prevent California's workers' compensation system from penalizing female workers for conditions predominantly or only affecting women. It would eliminate practices in the workers' compensation system that have penalized women who seek restitution after suffering injuries caused by their jobs. This bill would eliminate a loophole in the current law that made it possible to discount a woman's workers' compensation claim because of pregnancy, breast cancer, menopause, osteoporosis or a psychiatric disability related to those diseases, which demonstrates unfair gender bias.
- **Equal Pay Day – ACR 50 (Assemblymember Gonzalez)**
This measure would proclaim April 14, 2015, as Equal Pay Day in recognition of the need to eliminate the gender gap in earnings by women and to promote policies to ensure equal pay for all.

Job Opportunities and Skills for a 21st Century Workplace

- **Earn and Learn Bill – SB 342 (Senator Jackson)**
California needs to ensure that we explore all opportunities for job training – particularly in sectors of the economy that are expanding. On-site compensated job training has proven successful and this modality could be replicated to benefit women who are looking for jobs that have upward mobility and steady incomes. This bill would recognize workplace-based training as eligible for state funding.
- **Self-Sufficiency through Education and GI Bill Exemption Act of 2015 – AB 743 (Assemblymember Eggman)**
This bill seeks to amend rules governing income and eligibility for the CalWORKs program to exempt all education benefits paid to military, veteran and surviving family members by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and to make employment training and education a more viable option for low-income parents participating in the CalWORKs program.
- **Basic Skills Innovation Strategies for the California Community Colleges – AB 770 (Assemblymember Irwin)**
This bill will provide more opportunities for campuses of the California Community Colleges to participate in basic skills innovation strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness in improving student success and in increasing the number of underprepared students who complete college-level English and mathematics courses.

Expand Access to Affordable, Quality Early Childhood Care and Education

- **Raising Child Care Quality and Accessibility Act – SB 548 (Senator de León and Assemblymember Atkins)**
This bill would create new child care slots to help close the gap between children who need child care and those who have it, support additional training for child care providers, and establish the right of child care workers to collectively bargain.
- **Child Care Budget Request – Legislative Women’s Caucus**
The Legislative Women’s Caucus requests an investment of no less than \$600 million to be dedicated to the child care system. This investment should be evenly distributed between modernizing rates and increasing slots.
- **Child Care Reimbursement Rates for Alternative Payment Providers – AB 188 (Assemblymember Garcia)**
Existing law requires the state Department of Education to contract with local contracting agencies for alternative payment programs that are intended to allow for maximum parental choice in child care. Existing law requires reimbursement for alternative payment programs to include the cost of child care paid to child care providers plus the administrative and support services costs of the alternative payment program, as provided, and limits the total cost for administration and support services to an amount not to exceed 17.5 percent of the total contract amount. This bill would also require alternative payment programs to be reimbursed for making eligibility determinations at a rate of 3 percent of the total contract amount.
- **Child Care Alternative Payment Programs and Eligibility – AB 233 (Assemblymember Lopez)**
This bill would amend various provisions in the Child Care and Development Services Act related to alternative payment programs and reimbursement rates. It would, in order to provide maximum parental choice and access, authorize alternative payment programs to also include an eligibility determination process of not less than once every 12 months.

Support Family Friendly Workplaces

- **Fair Scheduling Act – AB 357 (Assemblymembers Chiu and Weber)**

Many workers have little advance notice of when they will be required to work, making things like planning for child care, budgeting for groceries and scheduling doctor's appointments nearly impossible. Forty-seven percent of hourly workers know their schedules one week or less in advance, and 69 percent of working mothers experienced fluctuations in their hours in the prior month by an average of 40 percent. This bill will ensure family and financial stability for a vast segment of California's workforce – those employed by food and general retail establishments with more than 500 employees – by granting these workers the right to work schedule predictability and requiring employers to accommodate employee requests for unpaid time off to attend to any required appointments at the county human services agency.
- **California Family Rights Act – SB 406 (Senator Jackson)**

Over 40 percent of the workforce is not eligible for California Family Rights Act leave due to the law's strict eligibility requirements, and low-wage workers are disproportionately excluded from coverage. The CFRA also has an overly narrow definition of family, only allowing leave to care for minor or adult dependent children, parents, spouses, and registered domestic partners. California's Paid Family Leave law – which provides partial wage replacement to workers on leave to bond with a new child or care for a seriously ill relative – was recently amended to expand the definition of family to cover grandparents, grandchildren, parents-in-law and siblings. This measure will provide job-protected time off to more workers caring for their families and better align the definitions of family in the PFL law and CFRA.
- **Expand Paid Family Leave – AB 908 (Assemblymember Gomez)**

This bill would expand the length of paid leave available from California's Paid Family Leave program to 10 weeks to care for a sick family member or bond with a new child. It would also increase the wage replacement rate for workers who make low wages, making this program more accessible to those who earn the least.
- **Paid Family Leave Awareness – Budget Request**

Paid Family Leave is a program that provides up to six weeks of partial pay to workers who take time off to bond with a new child or care for an ill family member. However, a recent Field Poll shows that the majority of California workers – especially those who are young, low income and Latino – are unaware of the program. This bill would ensure funding for outreach and education to reach the populations that need Paid Family Leave the most.
- **Extend Paid Sick Leave to All Workers – AB 11 (Assemblymember Gonzalez)**

The Healthy Workplace Healthy Family Act of 2014 (AB 1522) expanded paid sick days for millions of California workers but it left out In-Home Supportive Services providers. These providers, who are largely women, provide an essential service to California residents and must be afforded the same sick leave protections as other workers. This bill would revise the definition of an employee under the Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Families Act of 2014 to include IHSS providers, thus extending to them the right to three paid sick days.
- **Job Protection for Parents with Child Care Needs – SB 579 (Senator Jackson)**

Women now comprise nearly half of all workers, and mothers are the primary or co-breadwinners in two-thirds of families. Currently, there is no law that allows parents job-protected time off to address child care emergencies, such as the unforeseen unavailability of a child care provider or the temporary closure of a school or child care facility. Nor does the law protect parents and guardians who need time off work to visit, observe or enroll children in child care facilities or schools. This measure would increase job protection for parents with child care-related need for time off.

Build Economic Security by Addressing Poverty

- **Repeal CalWORKs Maximum Family Grant – SB 23 (Principle Author: Senator Mitchell; Senators Liu and Hancock; Assemblymembers Chiu and Chu)**
This bill would repeal existing state law that denies infants and children \$128 in basic needs assistance if the child was conceived and born while a family member was receiving aid unless the parent discloses and can prove that the child was conceived accidentally as a result of failed sterilization, failed intrauterine device or a rape. Repealing the MFG rule doesn't only make the program more just – it also is estimated to reduce childhood poverty rates by 7.4 percent.
- **Earned Income Tax Credit – SB 38 (Senator Liu) and AB 43 (Assemblymember Stone)**
Low-income families continue to struggle to make ends meet in our state. These bills would establish a refundable state earned income tax credit.
- **Supplemental Security Benefits – Budget Request**
Although the SSI caseload has increased by about 75,000 since 2007-08, the Administration proposes to maintain an inflation-adjusted \$1.4 billion cut to 1.3 million SSI/SSP recipients, the majority of whom are elderly and disabled women. This legislative ask would raise SSP payments to the supplemental poverty measure and reinstate the annual state COLA (cost of living adjustment) for SSI/SSP grants eliminated in 2011.
- **Supplemental Security Income and State Supplementary Payment – AB 1394 (Assemblymember Brown)**
This bill restores previous cuts and restores the COLA, establishing the individual grant at 112% of the federal poverty level.
- **Improving Access to CalFresh Employment and Training – SB 521 (Senator Liu)**
This bill would improve access to CalFresh Employment and Training Program support services for community college students, timed-out CalWORKs parents and people who are re-entering the community after serving time in prison or jail.
- **Sales Tax Exemption for Diapers – AB 717 (Assemblymember Gonzalez)**
Diapers are an essential staple and a significant cost for many low-income families across the state. This bill would exempt the sale of diapers for infants and toddlers from taxes.
- **Work Opportunity and Recession Relief Act of 2015 – SB 306 (Senator Hertzberg)**
This bill would require the state to maximize federally funded food aid when unemployment is high and each county to guarantee a placement in employment and training programs when work is unavailable for able-bodied adults without dependents who are subject to the three-month time limit. It also requires that, during a federally declared recession, months on aid should not be counted toward the 48-month lifetime limit in CalWORKs.

The Stronger Calif♀rnia Advocates Network

The Stronger Calif♀rnia Advocates Network is a historic collaboration of advocate coalitions with deep experience working with communities affected by the four pillars of the Stronger Calif♀rnia Agenda. The Network capitalizes on the strengths of our members to advance the economic security of women in California. We seek to promote policy reform in order to meet basic needs and provide better income support, achieve fair pay and working conditions, support workforce development, encourage asset building, and ensure work- family flexibility and access to quality child care. To learn more about this effort, see StrongerCalifornia.org.

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American Association of University Women
California Asset Building Coalition
California Domestic Worker Alliance
California Employment Lawyers Association
California Hunger Action Coalition
California Partnership
California Child Care Resource & Referral Network
California Women's Law Center
California Work and Family Coalition
Career Ladders Project
Center for Popular Democracy
Child Care Law Center
Courage Campaign
Equal Rights Advocates
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center
National Council of Jewish Women
Next Generation
Parent Voices
Raising California Together
Tradeswomen, Inc.
UltraViolet
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Women's Foundation of California