
issue guide



your future



your voice

your vote

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

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Introduction

Social Action and advocacy are the cornerstones of the YWCA. Since our inception 150 years ago, “service” has been linked to “action.” In communities across the United States, YWCAs continue to work to improve social and economic conditions for all people. The YWCA uses our voice in the nation’s capital and in state and local governments to bring first hand knowledge of how federal level policies and programs affect women, girls and their families in communities across the country. Historically the YWCA has fought for issues such as the abolition of child labor, the 8-hour workday and desegregation. Today, the YWCA carries on their long tradition in social action and advocacy to meet the twin goals of women and girl’s empowerment and racial justice.

As the nation’s oldest women’s organization and one that represents more than 2 million women, girls and their families across the United States, we understand that this year, with so many important issues at stake, women’s voices and women’s priorities must be heard. When voters go to the polls they will cast their ballots for elected officials who will be involved in deciding what is done about major issues that impact the lives of women, girls and people of color.

Issues including:

- Social Security
- Poverty
- Equal Pay
- Minimum Wage
- Child Care and Early Education
- Violence Against Women
- Hate Crimes
- Immigration Reform

This guide will help voters become familiar with important issues including Social Security and health care that will be discussed during the election and key questions to can ask candidates running for office.

affirmative action

Affirmative action is a tool designed to expand job and educational opportunities to women and people of color to remedy past and present-day discrimination. Affirmative action tools include outreach, recruitment, training, and promotion to ensure that positive steps are taken to advance qualified women and people of color. Over the past forty years, affirmative action programs have significantly expanded employment and educational opportunities to underrepresented groups.

Opponents of affirmative action policies argue that affirmative action is reverse discrimination because the policies unfairly benefit individuals based on their gender and racial backgrounds for educational and employment opportunities. Some opponents of affirmative action also argue that socio-economic status is just as important, and possibly more important, than gender or racial background and therefore should be taken into account.

Supporters of affirmative action argue that despite recent progress, women and people of color still do not have access to resources and opportunities that allow a person to participate in society with full dignity and equality. They argue that women and people of color still face fewer job and educational opportunities, lower wages, and economic uncertainty and repealing affirmative action programs would reverse hard-fought gains made over the last forty years. Supporters also point out that while much attention is focused on individuals as beneficiaries of affirmative action programs, the programs also help critical institutions in our society. For example, affirmative action programs help businesses compete in today's global economy by providing a workforce that reflects the diversity of the country.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports the maintenance and strengthening of affirmative action laws to protect people from discrimination on the basis of race and gender.

Candidate Questions

What is your position on affirmative action?

What is your policy agenda regarding affirmative action if elected?

budgetary policy

Government budgets important document that impacts the lives of women and girls of all ages. Through their budgets, the federal government and state and local governments outline each year what their priorities are and how much money these priorities will receive. Budgets are important because they fund programs that invest in the lives, well-being, and future of women and girls. Budgets fund K-12 education and student loan programs to educate girls and young women, anti-violence programs including battered women's shelters and rape crisis programs, and affordable housing programs and nutrition assistance programs for elderly and disabled women.

On the federal level, the federal budget details what the federal government will spend its money on and how much it will spend. It is a statement both of the priorities of the President and Congress and a statement of what programs they wish to invest in for America's future.

Advocates for increased investment in programs point out the United States is competing in a global economy and it is important to invest in critical programs to ensure that the United States remains competitive; this means investing in critical priorities including education, workers, and energy resources. Advocates also point out that since 2001 programs that help improve the lives of individuals and families have suffered from lack of investment and in some cases, funding cuts.

Opponents of increasing funding on critical programs argue that the government already too big and spending too much of taxpayers' money. They also argue that there is a limited amount of money in state and federal budgets and therefore decisions must be made on prioritizing funding. Finally, some opponents believe that the defense and security of the United States is a proper function of government and government money, however, and funding for non-defense items should be decided on a case-by-case basis only.

YWCA Position

The YWCA believes that budgets are a statement of priorities. The YWCA supports investments in programs that help improve the lives of women and girls.

Candidate Questions

What programs do you support that improve the lives of women and girls?

What have you done throughout your life to ensure that these have been funded at levels that are sufficient to meet the needs of women and girls?

What will you do in office to continue your commitment to these programs and the women and girls who benefit from them?



cedaw

The Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the most comprehensive international agreement on basic human rights of women. Created in 1979, CEDAW is regarded as the most important international mechanism for women's equality. The treaty addresses physical, sexual, economic, and political abuses against women and promotes women's equality of rights and well-being. This treaty holds that basic human rights for women should be universal across cultures and religions.

In its over 25 years, CEDAW has provided a vehicle for ratifying countries to overcome barriers of discrimination. Its 185 ratifications make it the second most widely ratified human rights treaty. The treaty has created a platform for activists to advocate for change in their national institutions to protect themselves from discrimination.

Because of the CEDAW Treaty, millions of girls are now receiving primary education who were previously denied access; measures have been taken against sex slavery, domestic violence and trafficking of women; women's health care services have improved, saving lives during pregnancy and childbirth; and millions of women have secured loans or the right to own or inherit property. Around the world, the status and rights of women are linked to a broad array of critical global issues including disease prevention, democratization, poverty reduction, environmental protection and economic development and growth. CEDAW is about helping women and girls lead healthier, more secure lives.

The U.S. is one of eight countries that has not ratified CEDAW. The U.S. failure to ratify the treaty allows countries which have weak human rights records to neglect and undermine human rights for women. This is because without ratification, our country cannot credibly demand that others live up to their obligations under the treaty.

The most common arguments against ratification include sovereignty and abortion. Opponents have warned that once ratified, this treaty would usurp the power of the U.S. Constitution and our federal laws. However, the U.S. has ratified several human rights treaties in the past 25 years with no sovereignty implications. Opponents also argue that ratification would ease existing abortion regulations. The treaty does not take a position on abortion. Countries where abortion is illegal, such as Ireland and Rwanda, or strictly limited, have ratified this treaty with no effect to their abortion laws.

YWCA Position

YWCA supports ratification of CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. YWCA supports measures to ensure human rights for women and girls around the world.

Candidate Questions

Do you support ratification of CEDAW?

child care and early education

Child care and early education programs are critical to promoting child development, school readiness and helping parents work. Today, primary sources of care and education for young children are child care, Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten programs.

Child care, a necessity for many working families across the United States, can range from informal care provided by family and friends to formal child care programs. High quality, affordable child care provides an important environment for children to grow and develop. Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten programs are also important for promoting positive child-wellbeing including assisting with child development and school readiness. For example, high quality early childhood education programs have been found to promote long-term positive child development both academically and socially.

For many parents however, finding affordable, accessible and quality child care and early education programs is difficult. Many families earn too much money to qualify for assistance, yet struggle daily to meet their basic needs including paying for housing and food. Many low-income families and families in poverty also struggle with the high cost, while also finding themselves with the additional burdens of needing care for their children during non-traditional hours such as evenings and weekends and/or a lack of quality care in their communities.

One of the main arguments surrounding childcare and early education programs in the United States is the role of government and government funding. Supporters of high quality child care and early education programs argue that government investments in childcare and early education programs not only assist children and parents but society as a whole because these children are the future workforce of our country. Others argue that while high quality child care settings and early education programs such as Head Start are important to child well-being a child development, both state and federal governments have limited amounts of money in their budgets and funding decisions for all things-child care and early education, health care, job training and education programs, etc. should be made on a case by case basis.

YWCA Position

Since 1868, the YWCA has been providing early childhood programs for millions of children across the United States. Currently, many YWCAs are involved in providing childcare and early education programs. The YWCA supports quality, affordable and accessible early childhood education that assists adults in moving towards economic independence and provides children with culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate activities that enable children to succeed in school.

Candidate Questions

Do you support government funding for child care, Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten programs?
Will you make quality, affordable child care a top priority?



equal pay

The Equal Pay Act was created over forty years ago and stronger legislation is needed to address wage discrimination. Today, women are still earning less than their male counterparts, wage discrimination laws are poorly enforced and wage discrimination cases are extremely difficult to prove and win. For example, in 2007, the year for most recent data, women earned only 78 cents for every dollar men received; and in 2007, in a 5-4 decision, United States Supreme Court agreed in the case of [Ledbetter vs. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.](#) to limit the ability of employees to bring wage discrimination claims against employers.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protect workers against wage discrimination. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits unequal pay to men and women who perform the same job. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits wage discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Advocates for equal pay argue that this is an important economic security issue for women and their families. They believe that with a greater percentage of women in the labor force since the 1970's and a greater share of the total household income earned by women, equal pay is directly linked to family well-being. Pay inequity leaves women with less income to pay for items their families need such as health care, housing, child care, groceries and tuition; and it also results in lower Social Security benefits for women when they retire.

Opponents of equal pay argue that the pay differential between men and women is not the result of discrimination against women, but a result of a number of factors that are in women's control. These factors include 1) women and men tend to pursue different educational and career opportunities which result in different earnings and 2) women choose to stay home and care for children, or work less hours while employed so they able to care for their families, both of which result in a loss of employment earnings and career advancement opportunities which can increase pay.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports initiatives to increase the income of women, including policies that raise the minimum wage, protect overtime, strengthen equal pay, maintain the earned income tax credit, oppose the privatization of Social Security, and expand non-traditional training for women from all socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.

Candidate Questions

What is your position on equal pay?

What will you do as an elected official to ensure that women have equal pay for equal work?

What is your position on the United States Supreme Court decision in the case of Ledbetter vs. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co?



hate crimes

Hate Crimes are crimes committed against individuals as a result of personal characteristics of the victims such as race, color, national origin, gender, and or sexual orientation. These crimes fray the fabric of society because though an act of crime may target an individual person, the result is that they invoke fear among many in a community.

Both the United States Government and states have enacted laws to address hate crimes. Across the country, laws addressing hate crimes vary from state to state. However, among the 45 states that address hate crimes, most address crimes that are related to one or more of the following: a victim's race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

On the federal level, the 1968 federal hate crimes law permits the federal prosecution of a hate crime only if the crime was motivated by bias based on race, color, national origin and the person committing the crime intended to prevent the victim from exercising a "federally protected right" such as the right to vote or attend school. Because the crime has to meet both requirements, these requisites substantially limit the likelihood of federal prosecution of hate crimes even when the crime is particularly heinous.

Advocates for hate crimes legislation argue that there is strong public support for preventing and ending hate crimes. Advocates point out that a majority of states already have enacted some form of hate crime legislation and that passage of the federal hate crimes law was a bipartisan effort. Advocates also argue that there is widespread support for federal hate crimes legislation among law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious organizations, including Attorneys General for 22 states, the National Sheriffs' Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Opponents of hate crimes legislation argue that all crimes should be treated the same regardless of motive. Opponents maintain that special legislation is not needed to address crimes that are motivated by a victim's sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports the passage of Hate Crimes legislation that protects people from harassment, violence and other crimes on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Candidate Questions

What have you done in the past to decrease violence against individuals who are targeted for crimes because of their race, sex, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, or sexual orientation?

If you are elected what will you do to decrease violence against individuals who are targeted for crimes because of their race, sex, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, or sexual orientation?

What is your position on expanding federal hate crimes legislation?



health care

Quality, affordable health care is critical to the well-being of women, children and people of color. Today, however, many people in the United States have inadequate health care coverage or do not have health coverage at all. Those who have health care coverage often find that their coverage is limited and does not cover certain procedures, treatments, tests or medicines they need. Others find themselves unable to afford the care they need. While many individuals and families have inadequate health care coverage, millions more individuals are uninsured, forcing them also to suffer from insufficient care or receive no health care at all.

As a result of the crisis in our nation's health care system, health care reform is a major national issue. Reforming the nation's health care system will involve discussions and decisions on critical issues including access to health care, health care quality, and health care affordability.

Three additional health care issues especially important to women include reproductive health care services, health care disparities that affect people of color, and ensuring that special populations including the elderly, chronically ill women and men, low-income children and women, and children living in poverty continue to have access to care through programs including Medicare, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

There is a general consensus that the United State's health care system is in need of reform. However, there are varying ideas on what the reform agenda should and should not include, how to best provide health care to the millions of people who are uninsured including individuals living in poverty, and how to best improve health care for the millions more who have health care but find it too little or too costly.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports quality, affordable, health care. The YWCA supports a strong health care safety net that includes Medicaid, Medicare and State Health Insurance programs; making health care available to people who are uninsured; making health care more affordable; and the promotion of equity in health care access, treatment, and research.

Candidate Questions

What is your proposal for providing affordable, quality health care coverage for the millions of uninsured in the United States?

What is your proposal for addressing the high cost of health care?

If elected, how do you plan on helping individuals and families who have health care but find that the coverage does not meet their needs?

If elected, what is your policy agenda for addressing health disparities?

immigration and immigrants' rights

According to the 2000 census, there are over 30 million immigrants in the U.S., representing 11 percent of the total population; and an estimated one in five children in the U.S. is a child of an immigrant. These immigrants and their children contribute to our communities, economy and our culture. The United States is one of the most diverse nations today, thanks to the millions of immigrants who have enriched our culture and contributed to our economic growth. The discussion of immigration reform and immigrants' rights has gained national attention over the past years. Issues including border security, jobs and documentation have been raised.

Supporters of immigration reform and tougher immigration laws argue that individuals who do not follow the immigration laws of the United States should not be rewarded for their behavior by being eligible to become citizens. These individuals argue that there is a legal process for entering the United States and individuals should follow all applicable laws and processes.

Advocates for immigrant rights counter that policies considered by local communities, and state and federal governments have covered a range of issues from border security to the economy but have not always focused on a broader issue of how immigration reform policies and practices impact individuals and families. Some advocates further argue that while all immigration reform policies affect immigrant individuals and families; rarely has the well-being of women and children been at the forefront of the consideration in these discussions, nor has specific situations involving women and children been addressed. For example, immigrant women may face unique circumstances including being trafficked into the United States or experience domestic violence. Immigration reform policies should include how to address the circumstances and needs of these victims.

YWCA Position

Though border security and the economic needs of our country are important aspects of the immigration debate, the discussion should not be limited to these issues. Any discussion on immigration should include how to best protect the welfare of immigrant women, girls and their families including those who are victims of violence and trafficking.

Candidate Questions

Immigration Reform is a hot topic. What is your policy position on immigration reform?

What is your strategy for assisting immigrant women who are trafficked into this country against their will?

What policy proposals do you support to help immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence? Marriage promotion and family formation are important in policy discussions. As President, what actions will you take to ensure that children who are United States citizens are able to stay in intact families, even if their parents are undocumented?

judicial nominations

Courts and judges across the country make many important and vital decisions that affect women and families. Judges have the ability to make landmark decisions that have national implications on laws affecting women's rights, civil rights, the rights of individuals with disabilities, workers rights, immigrant rights and more.

While most people know about the role of the Supreme Court and understand the importance of a Supreme Court judge, far fewer pay attention to the lower federal courts. Yet these courts can have an even greater effect on the law than the Supreme Court. While the Supreme Court typically hears fewer than 100 cases a year, the federal courts of appeal, which are the courts that are immediately below the Supreme Court, decide almost 30,000 cases a year. Further, federal judges are appointed for life and have the power to change the nation for decades to come.

Advocates on one both sides of the debate argue that it is important to pay attention to who is elected President because they will have the opportunity to propose individuals to serve as judges on the Supreme Court and the federal courts of appeal. The next President of the United States, for example, may have the opportunity to appoint at least one new member to the United States Supreme Court and the legislative philosophy of that individual will have an impact on important laws.

When it comes to making appointments, some argue that the President should support judges who will take a historical view of the law. These individuals maintain that the President should support judges who will uphold a strict interpretation of the law based on the understanding of the law at the time the United States Constitution was written. These individuals also believe that the judicial branch of government should not interpret the law in a way that makes public policy decisions. They argue that such a function belongs to the legislative branch.

Others argue that the President should not support judges who, when deciding cases, limit their analysis to how the laws were interpreted years ago. These individuals instead argue that the President should support judges and courts who will take a different approach to making court decisions. These individuals believe that a judge should look at the history of the issue and the intent of the elected officials who wrote the law, but also consider how the law works in modern day society and with modern day practices and policies.

YWCA Position

The Judicial Branch of government plays an important role in protecting the civil rights, civil liberties women's rights and the rights of all. Being aware of the selection and appointments of individuals to judicial positions, especially to the US Supreme Court, and their positions on civil rights and civil liberties, is important to protecting the rights and well-beings of women, children and men in our country.

Candidate Questions

What is your position on judicial nominations?

minimum wage

Today, the federal minimum wage is \$6.55 per hour. The minimum wage does not increase automatically and it is not adjusted for inflation. In 2007, the federal minimum wage was increased for the first time in 10 years. The new federal minimum wage is \$6.55 or \$13,624 a year for a worker who works 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which sets a wage floor or a level that wages are not allowed to fall below, was enacted in 1938. To raise the federal minimum wage, Congress must pass a bill and the President must sign it to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Many states also have minimum wage laws and currently thirty-two states and the District of Columbia pay more than the federal minimum wage. Ten states have laws that set the minimum wage at the federal level. Three states have lower minimum wage rates than the federal limit and five states (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee) have no laws governing minimum wage. However, in cases where the state and federal minimum wage differ, the employee is entitled to the higher of the two minimum wages.

Advocates for raising the minimum wage argue that raising the minimum wage helps women, girls and their families better afford basic necessities including food, medicine, and clothing for their families or even expand housing, education, and child care options. Advocates also believe that no one who works for a living should be living in poverty, yet a working mother or father who earns the federal minimum wage of \$6.55 an hour will still not make enough to move their family out of poverty.

Opponents of raising the minimum wage argue businesses should set the level of wages not the government. Opponents also believe that increasing the minimum wage helps mostly teenagers, not adults or families, and results in businesses reducing hiring because of the higher costs in employee wages.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports initiatives to increase the income of women, including policies that raise the minimum wage, protect overtime, strengthen equal pay, maintain the earned income tax credit, oppose the privatization of Social Security, and expand non-traditional training for women from all socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.

Candidate Questions

Do you support raising the minimum wage?

What is your position on indexing the minimum wage for inflation?

Do you support the creation of a living wage?

poverty and welfare reform

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) signed into law on August 22, 1996 made fundamental changes to the provision of public assistance for low-income children and families. PRWORA replaced Aid to Dependent Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with a block grant called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and transferred program creation to the states. Major provisions of TANF include ending the entitlement to federal cash assistance, recipients can only receive assistance for five years in their life-time, requiring work as a condition of receiving assistance, cutting benefits for individuals who fail to comply with their program requirements (called sanctions) and banning most immigrants for the first five years they are in the United States from TANF, if they have entered the U.S. after August 22, 1996.

In the late 1990's, the strong economic situation provided numerous employment opportunities for low-income workers, including welfare recipients. Today, the employment situation in the United States has dramatically changed. The weakening economy is leaving many workers unemployed and underemployed. Many low-income families, including families receiving TANF, are struggling with part-time employment, underemployment and unemployment; poverty is increasing in the United States.

Much discussion surrounding welfare reform has focused on caseload reduction and the use of public assistance by low-income women. Less focus has been given to the need for assistance due to poverty and economic inequality in the United States. Though welfare caseloads have dropped dramatically since 1996, poverty in the United States has not decrease to the same extent. The struggling economy and high number of children and families living in poverty means fewer job opportunities and an increased need for services and programs, including education, training and child care. These programs are critical for assisting low-income families in moving toward self-sufficiency and out of poverty.

The two main arguments surrounding welfare reform and poverty focus on personal responsibility and the role of government and government funding in helping individuals and families. Advocates on one side of the welfare reform debate argue that personal choices result in individuals and families living in poverty. These advocates maintain that poverty in the United States would decrease significantly if young adults would stay in school, get married and not have children before they are married. Opponents also argue that these personal choices would result in not only a decrease in poverty but also the need for government assistance.

Advocates on the other side of the welfare reform and poverty debate argue that it is unrealistic to believe that poverty and the need for government assistance is the result of individual choices. These advocates explain that structural factors in society play a large part in the creation of poverty and the need for assistance. These advocates point out that individuals and families may find themselves in poverty as a result of job loss due to a weakening economy, lack of well paying jobs, and outsourcing of jobs or as a result of situational factors including illness or escaping family violence. They note that welfare reform should focus on reducing poverty and its causes and that government should help individuals and families move out of and/or stay out of poverty.



These individuals believe that government investments in child care, early education programs, and job training and education programs for workers can help families escape poverty and become more economically self-sufficient.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports an anti-poverty approach to welfare reform that increases education and training opportunities, opposes marriage promotion/incentives, opposes religious discrimination in hiring, restores benefits to legal immigrants, addresses barriers to self-sufficiency such as domestic violence and substance abuse, and provides affordable and accessible child care.

Candidate Questions

If elected, what is your plan to help women and families who are suffering with stagnant wages, and rising prices for critical necessities such as food, clothing, housing, gas and electricity?

What policy proposals do you support that can help move people out of poverty in the United States

What policy proposals do you support that can help end poverty in the United States?

social security

Nearly two-thirds of retirees count on Social Security for most of their retirement income, and over 30% of Social Security recipients receive survivor or disability benefits. Nearly 60% of all Social Security recipients are women. Social Security serves as a critical safety net for women of all ages, from all income levels, and all racial-ethnic backgrounds. The current program provides women a guaranteed, inflation adjusted lifetime benefit and is a primary source of income for many women. Women are able to receive retirement income, disability benefits and survivors benefits from Social Security—all of which help pay for necessary food, clothing and shelter.

Created in 1935, Social Security is a program that provides cash benefits for retirees, survivors benefits to family members of workers who have passed away, and benefits for disabled individuals and their families. The Social Security system is tied to the employment and earnings history of individuals. The Social Security system itself is funded by payroll taxes that are paid by both the employee and employer on the first \$102,000 an individual makes.

There has been much discussion about the Social Security system being in ‘crisis’ and if and how the Social Security system should be reformed. One response to the belief that Social Security is in crisis is to reform Social Security by creating private accounts. Private accounts are individual accounts that would allow people to invest their Social Security taxes in financial markets. When financial markets go up—investments would go up, and when financial markets experience a downturn, investments would lose money. Advocates of private accounts argue that individuals investing the stock market would receive more money through investing than from social security alone, and that individuals would be able to leave their accounts to family members upon their death. Those who support private accounts, however, do not believe that privatization will fix the long-term funding needs facing the system.

Advocates for maintaining the current Social Security system do not support privatization. They argue that privatization would negatively affect the well-being of women and families. Opponents of creating private accounts believe: 1) Private accounts would result in steep benefit cuts and cost trillions of dollars to create and maintain. 2) Individuals who choose to put their money into private accounts would have their Social Security benefits dictated by the changes in the market, thus losing the guaranteed, inflation adjusted, lifetime benefit of Social Security. 3) Because women earn less over the course of the lifespan compared to men—as a result of the wage gap, part-time employment, and leaving the workforce to take care of family members among other reasons—their contributions to their own account would be limited. 4) Unlike Social Security, which provides a guaranteed lifetime benefit, private accounts by their nature have only the amount the individuals contributed to them. Thus, individuals may outlive the amount in their account. 5) In addition to the risk of private accounts, these accounts may not protect individuals and their families in cases of disability or provide survivor benefits upon death. 6) Unlike current survivors and widows benefits, private accounts can be inheritable by anyone the individual chooses. Therefore if a husband or father does not leave his account to his spouse or daughter, women may lose their survivor and widows benefits.



YWCA Position

The YWCA opposes any plan that would replace Social Security benefits with privatized Social Security accounts which would result in steep benefit cuts and cost trillions of dollars to create and maintain. The YWCA supports strengthening Social Security to ensure that women, girls and their families will continue to have full, guaranteed, inflation adjusted Social Security benefits.

Candidate Questions

What is your proposal to ensure Social Security is there for future generations?

What is your position on raising the retirement/benefit age?

Right now Social Security payroll taxes are paid on a worker's first \$102,000 earnings; earnings above \$102,000 are not subject to Social Security payroll taxes. What is your position on taxing a worker's wages above \$102,000?

tax policy

Tax policies are a statement of government priorities as they detail what individuals or businesses the government decides to provide tax relief for and how much relief. When governments cut taxes they make a statement that they prefer cutting taxes for individuals or businesses to making investments in programs such as housing, health care, and education. Federal tax policy outlines what individuals and/or businesses the President and Congress decide to provide tax relief for and how much relief.

There are two major arguments surrounding tax policy in the United States. On the one side of the debate are those that argue taxes play an important role in our nation. These advocates point out that the money people pay in taxes is not wasted money but funds critical programs on the federal, state and local level; programs such as education, healthcare, defense, and road construction. And because tax payers benefit from government programs tax payers receive a benefit from paying taxes.

In addition, some advocates also believe that tax policy should not be regressive or tilted in favor of wealthy individuals. These individuals argue tax policy should be fundamentally fair and that when state and federal officials pass tax cuts that primarily benefit the wealthy, in addition to taking money away from investments in national priorities such as Social Security and health care, they widen the gap between rich and poor. Advocates point out that that federal tax policy specifically over the past seven years has primarily benefited high income individuals yet little has been done for middle and low-income individuals and families.

On the other side of the debate, there are those who argue individuals and businesses in the United States pay too much in taxes. These individuals argue that the government should not be in the role of spending people's money, even if it would fund national investments that benefit everyone such as investments in education and energy. Some of these individuals also believe that people should be allowed to keep their money-regardless of whether the money was gained through inheritance, passing it down within the family, stocks, workers pay checks- and that tax policy should not be used to redistribute money from the wealthy to middle-low income individuals and families. These advocates argue that the tax cuts passed since 2001 by Congress have primarily benefited the wealthy, because the wealthy are paying most of the taxes in the United States.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports initiatives to increase the income of women, including policies that raise the minimum wage, protect overtime, strengthen equal pay, maintain the earned income tax credit, oppose the privatization of Social Security, and expand non-traditional training for women from all socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.

Candidate Questions

What is your policy position on the Estate Tax?

Many of the tax cuts passed since 2001 benefit wealthy individuals. What is your position on these tax cuts?

victims of crime act fund

In 1984 as part of the Victims of Crime Act, Congress created the Victims of Crime Fund (VOCA). The VOCA fund provides money for victim assistance programs and victim compensation programs and is made up entirely of money collected from penalties, fees and fines that have been paid by federal criminals. The VOCA fund contains no taxpayer dollars. Money in the fund supports investigating and prosecuting child abuse, providing assistance to victims involved in federal criminal investigations, prosecutions and crimes, and, for grants to states to support victim services and victim compensation.

VOCA is an important source of funding for addressing violence against women. Both the VOCA state victim assistance grant and the VOCA compensation grant are provided to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The VOCA state victim assistance grant support direct victim services including rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, counseling programs, support groups, advocacy, and case management services. The VOCA compensation grant provides financial reimbursement to victims of violent crimes for out-of-pocket medical expenses and mental health counseling.

Between 1984 and 2007, a total of \$9 billion dollars was deposited into the VOCA fund. However, because the fund is comprised of money collected from penalties, fees and fines, money in the fund fluctuates from year to year. Today, the fund is estimated to have a balance of \$1.7 billion. In 2000, to address the fluctuation in money in the VOCA fund, Congress took action to stabilize the amount in the fund. Congress limited (capped) the amount of money that could be removed each year from the fund ensuring money will be available for victims in the future. Since 2006, the VOCA cap has been lowered every year. And while the cap on the VOCA fund limits the amount of funding available for VOCA programs every year, the consistent lowering of the cap means less money is available over time. In addition, as money is increased for various other VOCA programs, less funding is available for victims' assistance. Both the continued lowering of the cap and the distribution of money is resulting in cuts to victim assistance programs throughout the country.

Supporters of raising the cap on the VOCA fund argue that victim assistance programs funded with VOCA grants are facing significant financial challenges as a result of lowering the VOCA cap and the continued distribution of money away from victims' assistance. Supporters of raising the cap argue that women and girls who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking may not receive the assistance they need unless the VOCA cap is raised so that VOCA money to assist victims can increase. There is no oppositional group or argument against raising the VOCA cap.

YWCA Position

The Victim of Crime Act Fund (VOCA) assists women who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking receive services that help them heal and rebuild their lives. However, continued cuts undermine the ability of women and girls to receive services that can assist them.

Candidate Questions

What is your position on the Victim of Crime Act Fund?

Would you support raising the cap of the VOCA Fund ?

If elected what will you do to help prevent and end violence against women?

violence against women

Violence against women affects the lives of countless women and their families across the United States. Daily women and girls of all ages, income levels and race-ethnicities are victims of crime including domestic violence, stalking, rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, the trafficking, date rape, verbal abuse and harassment and hate crimes. And many more women are living their lives as survivors of violence.

In 1994, Congress passed the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The law established a comprehensive approach to addressing and ending violence against women. VAWA provides a framework for collaboration that included federal, state and local governments, social service providers, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and the courts. VAWA proved to be a remarkable success at addressing and ending violence against women and girls and has twice been reauthorized.

Key provisions of VAWA include:

- creating the Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE (7233));
- providing assistance to address domestic violence, rape and sexual assault and providing assistance to victims;
- creating provisions to address the needs of battered immigrant women and children, enhancing penalties for repeat sex offenders;
- increasing criminal penalties for crimes against women including domestic violence, rape and sexual assault;
- establishing initiatives to address the impact of domestic violence on children;
- defining dating violence and providing funding to address dating violence;
- addressing violence on college campuses;
- recognizing the unique needs of disabled and older victims of violence;
- providing transitional housing assistance and services to domestic violence victims who are homeless and in need of housing and;
- improving the laws regarding protection orders, sex offender registration and interstate domestic violence.

The Violence Against Women Act also created a number of grants to combat violence against women and girls. VAWA established grants to create and improve law enforcement and prosecution strategies on the state and local levels and to provide services to victims. The measure also established grants to state and local governments to address rural domestic violence and child abuse, grants for battered women's shelters, and grants to address and prevent sexual assault among homeless and runaway youth.

Supporters of ending violence against women argue that violence against women impacts the lives of many women and their families in the United States. They also argue that the success of Violence Against Women Act has proven that it is possible to combat violence against women. Yet there is more work that needs to be done, including eliminating violence against young women and girls and women of color, and addressing the economic consequences of violence on victims.



While there is much bi-partisan support for VAWA, opponents have argued that the measure is not necessary and that too much focus has been put on women as victims and not as perpetrators of violence. Opponents of VAWA also maintain that the law's definition of violence is too broad and that the issue does not warrant federal funding.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports public policies that protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable and work to eradicate sexual assault and domestic violence, trafficking of women and dating violence. The YWCA recognizes the need for anti-violence programs and policies to be culturally sensitive in both their approaches to combating violence against women and in responding to victims of violence. Specifically, we support the continuance and full funding for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The YWCA also supports legislation that ensures employment stability and economic security for victims of violence against women.

Candidate Questions

What is your position on the Violence Against Women Act?

If elected what will you do to help prevent and end violence against women?

voter protection

Voting is the single most important tool that women and people of color have to help shape the policies that are going to affect every aspect of their lives. In 1870, the 15th Amendment to the Constitution gave all men, regardless of race or color the right to vote. Yet, many states continued to use various methods to prevent people of color from voting, including literacy tests, poll taxes, the disenfranchisement of former inmates, intimidation, threats, and even violence. Today, barriers to voting still exist for many through purging legal voters off of voter lists, providing false and misleading information to voters who live in low-income areas, disenfranchisement of former inmates, and even acts of intimidation.

There are two sides to the voter protection debate. On one side argues that voter protection should focus on protecting the integrity and legitimacy of the voting process by ensuring that only citizens, and not people who are legally ineligible to vote, vote in elections. These individuals believe that when people, who are not legally able to vote, cast ballots their ballot may cancel out the vote of a United States citizen and thus the result of the election may be flawed.

The other side of the debate argues that voter protection should focus on protecting the rights of voters to exercise their right to vote. These individuals argue that the main concern for voter protection efforts should be to prevent and address activities that interfere with voter's abilities to cast their ballots. They believe that all eligible voters must be able to vote without the threat or fear of intimidation, disenfranchise or other questionable tactics. Voters should not have to fear being purged from voter roles or that false and misleading information may be given to them or others in their communities regarding voting locations and their rights.

YWCA Position

The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy and every eligible person in the United States should be able to routinely, easily and successfully exercise his or her right to vote. Practices and tactics which disenfranchise voters undermine voters' constitutionally protected right to vote.

Candidate Questions

If elected what would you do to ensure that all eligible voters are able to participate in the electoral process?

What steps to you believe need to be put in place to protect voters' rights?