

The Chicago Women's Agenda What Chicago Women Want For Women Everywhere

Note: For purposes of the Mayoral Forum and other public events this document contains shortened versions of our full agenda. The longer agenda can be found as a PDF at Chicago Women Take Action web site: <http://chicagowomentakeaction.com>.

On October 18, 2014, nearly 200 women from diverse communities across Chicago came together at the end of a two month process to forge, through discussion and debate, the first *Chicago Women's Agenda*. Some issues – like equal pay and reproductive rights – are long time challenges faced by previous generations of women. Others reflect more recent concerns – about Democracy, protection of public assets, gun violence. Together these issues represent the thoughts and desires of women on which we intend to act and on which we should judge candidates, elected leaders and corporate actions alike.

Note: All agenda items are of utmost value. They are numbered for clarity and ease of reference.

1: Full Reproductive Rights – Ensure full, affordable access to health services, including contraception and abortion, as well as the pre-natal and family health care services, paid sick leave, and other family-friendly policies that make real choice possible

The ability to control if and when to become pregnant is central to a woman's ability to control all other aspects of her life – her education, employment, the very life she can lead. Yet full reproductive justice also requires that the choice to have children be made knowing that they can be raised in safe and healthy environments, with economic and housing security.

2: Economic Security – Raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for a full week of work, and ensure equal pay for equal work

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, 476,550 households in the metro area are headed by women. About 29 percent of those households, or 138,676, have incomes below the poverty level. Only by ensuring equal pay for equal work, raising the minimum wage, and guaranteeing a 35 - 40 hour work week will women be assured of a "sustainable family income."

3: Tools for Economic Empowerment – *Ensure that women have the opportunities they need for economic success, including access to quality, affordable education and training and to capital for entrepreneurial ventures*

Women need affordable access to high quality education and access to capital. Increasing financial aid, counseling and career guidance, and support services such as childcare and transportation, will ensure that women receive the education they need and want. But education alone is not enough. While entrepreneurship is perhaps the best route to better only 3 percent of total venture capital dollars, or \$1.5 billion out of the total of \$50.8 billion invested during 2011-2013, went to companies with a woman CEO.

4: Expanded Opportunities for Young Women – *Increase access and funding for sports, education, good nutritional choices, and health care, and end objectification, including rape and sex trafficking, that stifles possibilities*

Girls face unique challenges to their health and development that are often overlooked. Despite Title IX, less than 4 percent of national funding is directed to girl-specific programs and opportunities. While much progress has been made, sex stereotypes, parental, educator and peer expectations as well as the dominant culture too often discourage girls from fully realizing their potential.

5: Real Immigration Reform – *Pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation that protects women and reunites families*

As many as 500,000 immigrants in Chicago live in mixed-status –with the security of their employment and family unity constantly at risk. Fully reforming immigration laws, granting temporary status to those here and creating a clear path to legalization will benefit those families and Chicago as a whole.

6: Freedom from Violence – *Create laws and real consequences to end the violence against women, particularly young women, that affects every realm of their lives – from harassment on public transportation, sexual assaults in the military, and on campus, to the violence that occurs at home*

Sexual assault and domestic violence are pervasive, seen in recent revelations about

sex trafficking, sexual assault on campus and in the military. Domestic violence and date rape are not simply problems; they are crimes and should be treated as such. Girls, in particular, face the challenge of violence; from public harassment to sexual exploitation in the privacy of home, from rape on college campuses to human trafficking. From the smallest harassment to the most egregious enslavement – these practices must end.

7: Common Sense Gun Control – *Enact sensible gun control laws that outlaw assault weapons and make guns of all types less accessible*

Women in particular are vulnerable to gun violence. As moms, sisters, and daughters, spouses and girlfriends, they suffer first-hand the effects of the more than 11,078 homicides and 19,393 suicides that occur each year. According to the Center for American Policy, from 2001 through 2012 alone, 6,410 women were killed with a gun by a husband or boyfriend. This is a figure that, according to the Center for American Progress, is “more than the total number of U.S. troops killed in action during the entirety of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined.”

8: Criminal Justice Reform – *Decriminalize drug laws and reform police, courts and prisons to end brutality, wrongful convictions and sentences that impair lives*

Called the New Jim Crow, today’s criminal justice system is filled with youth of color – victims of poverty, racial profiling, and disparate sentencing, and too often of police brutality and wrongful conviction. That the tragedy of such injustices is compounded by laws that make gainful employment, housing and even voting difficult has created whole communities where poverty, prison, and constrained options combine to harm women and families most at-risk.

9: Protection of Public Assets – *Preserve and protect the public institutions and assets that provide opportunity and well-being for women and their families*

Much of America’s social mobility derives from the creation and protection of public assets – schools, parks, health care, roads, etc., from which all benefit. The privatization of schools, and the shuttering and selling off of assets like schools, health clinics, and roads, deprive women and their families of needed assets, robs communities of anchors, and shuts doors on opportunity.

10: Protection of Democracy – *Ensure the right to vote, the right to speak and voice unpopular opinions, to gather in public places and to unfettered access to the Internet*

Not since African Americans and women won the right to vote has democracy been so threatened. The past decade has not been good for democracy. On the one hand the draconian rules passed in the wake of 9/11 that restrict public gatherings, criminalize certain relationships, and enable the vast surveillance network of the NSA, threaten both public and private spaces for thought and dissent. On the other the U.S. Supreme Court decisions created corporate personhood and 29 states attempted to restrict voting rights diminish democratic power. Both must be challenged. The third front of the battle is one of technology. With the advent of the smart phone and digital technology, the Internet can be a great force for more democracy—only if it remains open and accessible, where all content is considered equal and where access cannot be bought or sold.

11: Livable Conditions – *Pass legislation and engage in practices that ensure that the environments in which women and families live are affordable, healthy, and safe, with access to nutritious food*

A safe, affordable home near employment, good schools, transportation, and nutritious food is essential to raising a family. Toxic chemicals and pesticides in the air, water and earth (crops) are responsible for a variety of women's health risks. Sustainable development demands recognition and value for the many ways women's lives intersect with environmental realities.