April/May, 2024

Zonta USA Caucus Advocacy Bulletin

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL USA CAUCUS
EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

The USA Caucus is a place for clubs and districts in the US to align on key issues and provides a platform for coordinated advocacy actions within the US.

Ending Child Marriage

Good news keeps coming in the realm of ending child marriage in the US. On April 8, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin signed legislation to make the marriage age in the state 18, no exceptions. This legislation closes a dangerous legal loophole that allowed 16- and 17-year-olds to be legally trafficked under the guise of marriage., allowed teens to be entered into the serious contract of marriage before they have the full rights of adulthood and ignored the reality that marriage before age 18 is recognized as a human rights abuse that destroys nearly every aspect of a girl's life. Virginia became the 12th U.S. state to ban child marriage! Congratulations to Caucus Convener, Bobbee Cardillo, and all the other activists who worked so hard to make this happen.

The New Hampshire House recently voted 192-174 to end child marriage. The bill is now on the desk of Gov. Chris Sununu for signature. In addition, on April 11 the Missouri Senate voted 31-1 to end child marriage, and the bill is now pending in the Missouri House. Fingers crossed on these bills.

Unfortunately the strong bill in California is now dead, as the committee chair decided not to bring it forward.

If your state still allows child marriage, use **ACT NOW**, a joint effort between Zonta and UNICEF, to send a message to your state legislators.

Climate Change

The Zonta USA Caucus established the first national Zonta Says NOW Think Tank, and its most recent Think Tank took place on April 21 and addressed preparing for warm weather climate disasters, including the impact on pregnant mothers, children, the elderly, crops and ground water. If you missed the presentation watch the recording **HERE.**

Zonta International invites all Zontians to sign th The **Zonta USA Climate Pledge**, committing to take certain actions to support climate justice.

Violence Against Women

Check out these resources for combatting human trafficking:

Blue Campaign--a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and how to appropriately respond.

Polaris--provides extensive resources including running the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Don't Miss Out!

Don't miss any of the wonderful webinars and other informational videos presented by the Zonta USA Caucus. Subscribe to the Caucus YouTube Channel **HERE.**

Equal Rights Amendment

Zonta continues to use our strength in numbers to obtain signatures on the SIGN-4-ERA Petition, a national campaign led by Hunter College students.. The petition calls on Congress to recognize the fact that the ERA has already been ratified by the necessary 38 states and should be recognized as the 28th Amendment to the Constitution. The petition has a goal of well over a million signatures with close to 100,000 so far.

The Campaign is an easy way to get members, friends and colleagues involved in getting the ERA across the finish line. The Caucus asks that you sign the petition **HERE** or use the QR code below, and use the **toolkit** to share the petition with others and encourage them to sign and share it themselves. Consider printing cards with the QR code and info to place in public places such as bathrooms. Add the QR code to your phone to access easily.

Although you may have signed other petitions for the ERA, this petition is different, as it involves a concentrated effort to have advocates' signatures all in one place. Check out the map **HERE** to see how many signatures your state has. Zonta's goal is to help **double the number** in each state in the next few months. **PLEASE SIGN AND SHARE WIDELY!**

A related effort, **Mayors for the ERA,** was conceived by former NY Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and her students at Hunter College to engage mayors to sign the petition. Determine if your clubs and members have relationships with a mayor, and ask them to approach their own mayor (and/or other mayors they know) about taking a photo with them as the mayor signs the electronic petition. If the photo is submitted to **team@sign4era.org**, they will write a press release and get it out to local news entities, if the mayor agrees.

H.J. Res. 25/S.J. Res.4 affirms ratification of the ERA and removes thetime limit for passage. Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley has filed a discharge petition to bring HJ Res 25 to the House floor for a vote. The Discharge Petition has 204 signatures from House members and needs 218 to move to the floor for a vote. If it gets to the floor, it has a good chance of passing and moving back to the Senate for a vote there. **Ask your representatives** to sign the discharge petition if they have not done so particularly these **Democrats** and **Republicans.**

H.J. Res. 82/S.J. Res 39 states that the ERA has already been validly ratified and is enforceable as the 28th Amendment and calls on the Archivist to certify and publish it without delay. Contact representatives on the **Outreach list** and ask them to sign.

Are you outraged that women still don't have equal constitutional protections? **Let's dial the volume up and literally shout for the Equal Rights Amendment** with a first of its kind petition that can be signed with your voice. Scan the QR code below, follow the prompts, and shout to participate in this new effort to support the ERA . You'll get a signature badge to share on social media along with #ShoutForEquality.

Women's Health

Mark your calendars for May 28: the tenth annual Menstrual Hygiene Day. This year's theme, #PeriodFriendlyWorld, has two key aims: to break the taboo around menstrual health and hygiene and to urge leaders to prioritize and act on the topic at global, national and local levels. Learn more and get involved **HERE.**

Breaking news! **A National Coalition to End Period Poverty has been formed**-- a nonpartisan group of national nonprofits, trade groups, and advocacy organizations promoting affordable access to menstrual products and ending period poverty in the US through education, raising awareness, and driving policy change. Contact comms@allianceforperiodsupplies.org for more information and/or to find out how to join the coalition

Check out "A Kids Book About Periods," which was written in partnership between PERIOD and Jessica Biel to demonstrate to kids that periods are normal and it is normal to talk about them. The book arrives May 14, and you can pre-order **HERE.**

At the other end of a woman's reproductive life, in the US, 75 million women currently are in perimenopause, menopause, or post-menopause and 6,000 more women reach menopause each day. Yet, menopause research has long been underinvested in and overlooked. Help may be on the way from a new historic comprehensive bipartisan bill: Advancing Menopause Care and Mid-Life Women's Health. This legislation would boost federal research on the topic and for the first time coordinate the federal government's existing programs related to menopause and mid-life women's health. Use the Caucus's **pre-drafted letters** to urge your senators to co-sponsor and support this groundbreaking legislation. If your senator(s) have already sponsored or co-sponsored the bill, you can send a message of thanks.

Women's Leadership

The Caucus Leadership in Education, Work, and Government Committee is planning a series of webinars, on Women in All Workplaces, Striving for Opportunities and Equity. The first of these webinars featured Amanda Dilulis, Senior Program Manager of She Should Run, a national non-partisan non-profit working to drastically increase the number of women considering a run for public office. If you missed the event, you can watch the recording **HERE.** The webinar also included a panel of the following women elected officials:

1) Sara Gelser Blouin, Oregon State Senator, Majority Whip and Chair of Senate Human Services Committee

2) Amber Liermann, Vice Mayor of Maricopa, AZ, Zonta Club of Maricopa; and

3) Pam Phillips, Member/current candidate for Jamestown City Council, Jamestown ND, VP Zonta Club of Jamestown

Many women seeking to advance in various professions face a significant challenge related to childcare. Mothers in the US provide the bulk of the caregiving for their children and other family members, with limited high-quality, affordable care options. According to the Center for American Progress, in 41 states and Washington, D.C., child care costs exceed the average monthly mortgage payment! Read about challenges that the child care sector faces and ways federal and state lawmakers can invest in affordable, accessible, and high-quality child care, including passing the **Child Care for Working Families Act HERE.**

Check out also the session at CSW hosted by the US Women's Caucus, of which the Zonta Caucus is a member, titled **Who's Minding the Kids? US Childcare as Vital Infrastructure.**