September, 2025

Zonta USA Caucus Advocacy Bulletin

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL USA CAUCUS

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.

Violence Against Women

More than 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men experience sexual violence in their lifetimes. Community-based sexual assault programs are seeing historic demand but lack the resources to meet it. Nearly half of rape crisis centers report staff shortages, and 66% have waitlists for counseling services. The bipartisan Healing Partnerships for Survivors Act (H.R. 4510) was introduced by Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Representative Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM) on July 17, 2025. The bill is supported by more than 30 leading groups such as the National Network to End Domestic Violence, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, Respect Together, and more. The bill would authorize US$30 million annually for five years to help community-based sexual assault programs provide culturally relevant, trauma-informed services for survivors. Please use our pre-drafted **letters** to urge your representatives to co-sponsor and support the Healing Partnerships for Survivors Act (H.R. 4510).

Women and Tech

While the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) promises numerous advantages to society, there is a growing public concern around AI's impact on the stigmatization and marginalization of women on a global scale. A joint webinar of the ZI Advocacy and Council of Europe Committees on Sept. 29 at 1:00 pm ET will address "How is AI Impacting Gender Equality – Causes and Consequences." The webinar will cover how algorithmic biases and discrimination are inherent to AI; solutions for dealing with this issue and ways AI can instead be used to reduce gender inequities; how the Council of Europe is tackling the unchecked development of AI; and a young person's perspective on navigating the use of AI. Register for this important webinar **HERE.**

Equal Rights Amendment

On Aug 26, Women's Equality Day, the ERA Coalition held a digital launch for its new slogan in its fight for recognition of the ERA as the 28th Amendment: "It's Our Era: Claim the 28th Amendment."

The bicameral resolution, S.J. Res 38 and H.J.Res.80, which would remove an arbitrary deadline for the passage of the ERA set by Congress in 1972, was reintroduced this session in the Senate and the House. The ERA Coalition is focused on encouraging more Democratic co-sponsors for this legislation in the House where a total number of 218 co-sponsors are needed. The Coalition also continues to encourage everyone to sign the **Sign-4-ERA Petition** which supports affirmation of the ratification of the ERA and removal of any time limit for passage.

The Disrupt NOW Campaign is a nationwide movement designed to advocate for women's equality and safety, combat extreme misogynist propaganda and increase feminist education. The campaign addresses critical issues impacting women and girls across the US, such as healthcare, the economy and women's safety.

As the struggle for recognition of the ERA continues, some states are attempting to pass their own legislation. Minnesota has a proposed bill that would put the following question before voters: "Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to say that all persons shall be guaranteed equal rights under the laws of this state, and shall not be discriminated against on account of race, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, or sex, including pregnancy, gender, and sexual orientation?" Read more **HERE.**

Climate Justice

You won't want to miss the next Zonta Says NOW Intercontinental Think Tank, "Toxic Truths: Plastics, Pollution and Health on Sunday, Sept 14 at 2pm ET. Plastics are everywhere, from the products we use to the food we eat. They are polluting our oceans, land and air, but did you know that they are also affecting our health? From toxic chemicals in packaging to microplastics in our bodies, plastics are putting women's health at risk--and harming wildlife and ecosystems. Join us as we delve into the toxic truths about plastics and explore ways to address them. Share the graphic below with others, but be aware that the registration link may not work for all. Register **HERE.**

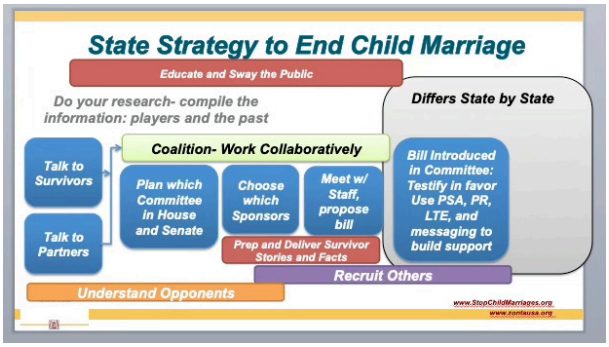
Moms Clean Air Force is a growing US organization that has been instrumental in shaping policy for women and girls. While the mission of the EPA is to protect human health and the environment, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin is poised to stop regulating greenhouse gas emissions. Join Moms in telling Administrator Zeldin that the EPA must cease reducing regulations thus posing health risks to women and girls (and everyone else!) and keep cutting climate pollution from power plants, vehicles, and industry. Sign **HERE.**

The **Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery** features work by 45 different Zonta artists representing every continent. The gallery is meant to help us connect with our feelings about climate justice. Submissions are being accepted now for launch of the next round of art work in 2026. Browse the gallery, and contact **Julie Trone** for ways to promote it to your club.

Ending Child Marriage

The campaign to end child marriage in the US marches on. Good bills in Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina and Hawaii did not pass but will carry over to 2026. Unchained at Last is working to form state coalitions in MD, CA, HI, KY, OH, WI and CO. Representatives from the Coalition to End Child Marriage also had fruitful conversations at the National Conference of State Legislators with legislators from North Dakota, Montana, Kentucky, Hawaii and North and South Carolina. In addition, efforts have started in Colorado. If you have connections to organizations in any of these states and/or want to help with these efforts contact **Becca Powell** at Unchained, **Therese Hartwell** or **Katherine Cleland**.

If your state has not ended child marriage consider hosting a postcard party asking legislators to propose and pass 18, no exceptions legislation. Unchained makes it easy. Find details **HERE.**



Agency Rulemaking

In addition to reaching out to elected officials, Zontians can engage with Federal agencies providing comments on proposed rules and regulations. Federal agencies have been instructed to de-regulate--meaning for each regulation they want to issue, they will need to rescind 10. These rescissions can have a negative impact on women and girls. Most agency rules and rescissions undergo notice and comment rule making with individuals or organizations typically having 30 days to comment. Agencies must respond to the comments and address concerns, otherwise the rule can be thrown out by a judge. Find proposed rules **HERE** and an in-depth guide to the federal rule making process **HERE.**

Women and Leadership

Some good news for a change. According to The Center for American Women and Politics, women have steadily increased their representation in state legislatures, especially among Democrats, over the past 10 years. Women are now near parity with men among all Democratic state legislators, and in 28 states, they are more than 50%. Among Republicans, women are only 21% of state legislators, but still an improvement over the past 10 years. Overall, women are now 33% of all state legislators, up from 24% in 2016, a steady increase. Find the interesting data behind these numbers **HERE.** Thanks to the US Women's Caucus for this information .

US Women's Caucus

An easy way to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Bejing Platform for Action and bring more attention and publicity to your local organization's efforts to advance women's rights, is to ask your local government for an "Official Proclamation" about it. Find more information on what the process entails, and what to include in the proclamation HERE. The goal is to have 100 B+30 proclamations by the end of 2025. Questions: contact Leslie Wright.

ZI and the Zonta USA Caucus have signed onto an adhoc **letter** to the UN Secretary General and others on the UN80 initiative, providing concrete suggestions for a stronger UN gender architecture that can respond to the political realities of this era by supporting women's struggles on the ground to fight gender-based injustices. Clubs as well as individuals can sign **HERE.**

The US Women's Caucus reports that the United States has made a dramatic reversal on foreign policy related to women and a major retreat on previously agreed commitments on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) initiatives. For more information about the status and future of the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the UN and how recent financial considerations may affect it, check out this **article** which appeared in UN PassBlue.

Equal Pay

The Paycheck Fairness Act, which was reintroduced with no substantial changes from the bill introduced in the last session, is still languishing in Congress. Zontians at NAIDM in Novi signed letters to Congressional Leaders in both the House and Senate encouraging them to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. Visibility and continuing to advocate for pay equity is key. As such, the Caucus also signed on to a **letter** asking Congress to support the bill. Please **share** the letter with like-minded organizations and request that they also sign it.

All workers deserve fair pay, and all families deserve quality care. The Department of Labor should be raising standards for domestic workers to ensure fair pay. These workers—over 90% of whom are women, and more than half of whom are Black, Hispanic, or Asian American and Pacific Islander—are already paid far less than other U.S. workers. On average, they earn just $13.79 an hour compared with the national median of $21.76. Instead, the Department of Labor is issuing a proposed rule to remove minimum wage and overtime rights for domestic workers. Removing minimum wage protections and overtime pay will only widen the equal pay gap.

There is limited time to submit comments to the Department of Labor in opposition to this proposed rule. Copy and paste the information in Zonta's **Fast Action Friday** and submit a public comment (as an individual, Zonta club, Zontian, or even anonymously), by September 2, 2025 via this **link.**

August 28 was Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) Women's Equal Pay Day, October 8, Latina Women's Equal Pay Day and October 23, Disabled Women's Equal Pay Day. These dates symbolize the day in 2025 when the earnings of women in each of these categories catch up to men's earnings from 2024. September 18 is **International Equal Pay Day**, representing the longstanding, as yet unsuccessful, efforts toward the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value.