

## ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET INCLUDES IMPORTANT INVESTMENTS IN WOMEN AND FAMILIES IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

President Obama's detailed budget for Fiscal Year 2010 makes investments critical to the well-being of women and their families with regard to education and employment. The President's budget also takes many important steps towards improving the enforcement of civil rights. Critically, after many politicized years, the new Administration prioritizes civil rights enforcement by increasing the budget for the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice by \$22 million. But while President Obama's budget is a step in the right direction, there is still more work to be done.

Here are some highlights of the ways in which the budget affects women in education and employment:

### Education:

- **Dropout Prevention:** The President's budget builds on his commitment to reducing the high school dropout rate by providing \$50 million for a High School Graduation Initiative, which would support grants to local educational agencies to implement proven strategies for reducing the number of students who drop out of high school and for helping youth reenter school after dropping out. This initiative will provide substantial benefit to girls in high school. While all dropouts face significant challenges to obtaining employment and achieving economic security, female dropouts are at particular economic risk. As compared to their male peers, girls who fail to graduate from high school have higher rates of unemployment; make significantly lower wages; and are more likely to need to rely on public support programs to provide for their families.
- **Access to Higher Education:** The FY10 budget aims to make higher education more accessible. The budget proposes large increases in available Pell grant funding. It also increases the maximum award per student to \$5,550 and proposes to index the annual maximum awarded to each student to outpace inflation. Access to higher education is critical for women, who make up a majority of undergraduate students. Indeed, women need some college education to earn as much, on average, as male high school dropouts.
- **Gender Equity:** Funding for the Women's Education Equity Act (WEEA) remains critically low at \$2 million. Although this represents a significant improvement over the Bush Administration's FY09 proposal, which proposed to cut funding for the program entirely, this year's amount may fall short in addressing the critical challenge of combating gender inequity in the nation's education system. WEEA funds curricula and materials to help schools comply with Title IX, research and information on model programs to promote gender equity, and technical assistance and training programs.
- **Career and Technical Education:** The President's budget proposes allocating over \$1.1 billion for career and technical education (CTE) programs, which the Bush

Administration proposed to eliminate in FY09. Funded through Perkins state grants, CTE programs engage students and often prevent students from dropping out of school. It is particularly important that portions of these CTE funds be used to encourage girls to enter CTE programs that are nontraditional for their gender. High school girls make up only a tiny percentage of the students in traditionally male fields such as auto mechanics and construction. It is critical for a girl's lifelong economic well-being that she get an equal opportunity to participate in these programs because girls who enter traditionally female occupations can expect to earn only half—or less—than what they could make if they went into such traditionally male fields as auto repair, welding, or engineering.

- **Title I Grants for Disadvantaged Students:** The budget provides nearly \$13 billion for Title I grants to local educational agencies for disadvantaged students. While this allocation is \$1.5 billion less than the Bush administration's FY09 proposal, the program received a \$10 billion additional funding boost through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act this year, much of which will remain available through FY10. The President's budget also earmarks \$1.5 billion for Title I School Improvement Grants, an increase of \$1 billion over the 2009 level. These grants would increase state and local capacity to identify and implement effective interventions to turn around low-performing schools. In a time when one in four girls and one in three boys fails to graduate from high school in four years, the request takes steps toward tackling the nation's dropout crisis by mandating that 40 percent of these allocations be spent on improvement activities in underperforming middle and high schools.
- **Enforcement:** The new budget increases funding from \$97 million to \$103 million for the Department of Education to enforce civil rights laws, including Title IX, through its Office for Civil Rights.

### **Employment and Training:**

- **New Initiatives:** The President's budget allocates \$50 million to support job training projects to prepare workers for careers in renewable energy and energy efficiency. This funding represents a welcome investment in this new sector of the economy. But because the green jobs market is made up primarily of traditionally male-dominated careers, such as construction, it is critically important that enforcement agencies take the steps necessary to ensure equal access for women to jobs in these new sectors of the economy. The budget also proposes \$15 million in funding for a new workforce data quality initiative, which will integrate workforce and education data to improve the quality of performance data on training programs.
- **Workforce Training Programs:** The budget aims to expand the role of community colleges in job training by requesting \$125 million for the Department of Labor Career Pathways Innovation Fund, a 7.4% increase over last year's budget. The budget requests \$115 million, or a 7% increase over last year's budget, for reintegration and job training programs for ex-offenders. In addition, the budget requests \$114 million for the YouthBuild program, a 64% increase over the FY09 enacted level, which is in addition to

the \$50 million in Recovery Act funds that were authorized earlier this year. The YouthBuild program helps disadvantaged youth and recent high school dropouts earn a GED and employable construction skills simultaneously.

- **Women in Nontraditional Occupations:** Funding to provide women apprenticeships in nontraditional occupations through the Department of Labor's Women in Nontraditional Occupations and Apprenticeship grant program remained level at \$1 million. The program provides grants to community-based organizations to conduct innovative projects to improve the recruitment, selection, training and employment of women in nontraditional fields, such as the construction industry.
- **Women's Bureau:** Funding for the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau remained essentially flat, increasing only very slightly from \$10.4 million to \$10.6 million. The Women's Bureau undertakes important initiatives to promote women's opportunities in the workforce.
- **OFCCP Enforcement:** The new budget proposes a 33% percent increase from last year's funding for the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). Charged with enforcing nondiscrimination and affirmative action requirements for federal contractors, the Office's activities can be critical for protecting the rights of women to fair hiring, retention, promotion, and pay practices.
- **EEOC Enforcement:** The new budget gives a critical \$25 million increase from last year's proposed FY09 budget to support the enforcement activities of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

**In sum, President Obama's budget makes significant down payments on expanding opportunities for women in education and employment.**