

# WOMEN'S TRUTH SQUAD ON REAGAN

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
FOR WOMEN

425 Thirteenth Street NW

Washington, DC 20004

202/347-2279

## EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Equal Rights Amendment will establish a national policy and set a legal standard for the elimination of sex discrimination. The ERA is needed more today than when it was first introduced in 1923, because Reagan and conservative policymakers are working to repeal the hard won protections against discrimination that women have finally achieved. The ERA would provide a constitutional foundation against sex discrimination that could not be easily repealed.

- Every Republican National Convention for the last 40 years has included ERA as part of the platform, until 1980, when Ronald Reagan engineered its rejection.
- Reagan has said repeatedly that he is for equal rights for women, but does not support a constitutional amendment. His record shows that he supports neither.
- Reagan has shown that his claim to be for the 'E' and the 'R' but not the 'A' was hollow. He has repudiated his own "statute" by "statute" approach to eliminating sex discrimination by refusing to support legislation now before Congress that would outlaw the legal sex discrimination in insurance that now costs women millions of dollars each year. He has also indicated no interest in supporting the Economic Equity Act.
- Reagan is so insensitive to women's rights that he recently offered a group of Republican women his silence on the ERA in exchange for their support of a constitutional amendment banning abortion.



## EMPLOYMENT

Women's income is the sole support for more than 8.2 million families. Women are still paid only 59¢ for every dollar paid to men, and each year women comprise a larger percentage of the poor. Reagan's insensitivity to the problems employed women face is clearly demonstrated by his statement at a press conference last year that "part of the unemployment is not as much recession as it is the great increase in the people going into the job market, and ladies, I'm not picking on anyone, but because of the increase in women who are working today and two-worker families and so forth..." Reagan's programs are accelerating the feminization of poverty by decreasing protections against discrimination for employed women, eliminating women's jobs in the public sector, and cutting back job training programs that assist the poor.

- Reagan has proposed new affirmative action regulations that would effectively reverse 20 years of progress for women. The impact will be devastating. The regulations, drastically reducing the scope and effectiveness of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, would eliminate written affirmative action requirements for most federal contractors, weaken existing requirements that promote jobs for women in construction, and reduce back pay awards to victims of discrimination.
- Despite a promise in his 1983 State of the Union address that "We will not tolerate wage discrimination based on sex," Reagan has persistently failed to enforce existing equal employment opportunity regulations. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has become considerably less effective since Reagan's appointees took over. The average length of time to process a charge has nearly doubled. Litigation to enforce equal employment opportunity laws has dropped sharply. In the first three quarters of 1982, only 72 cases were filed, 73.9% fewer than in fiscal year 1981. In fiscal year 1982, only 761 back pay awards were made, totalling \$1,557,736, compared to 4,336 back pay awards totalling \$9,253,861 in fiscal year 1980 under Carter.
- Reagan's constantly increasing defense spending costs women jobs. Employment Research Associates of Lansing, Michigan, has demonstrated that for every \$1 billion increase in military spending, women lost 9,5000 jobs.

EMPLOYMENT -- 2

- Women comprise only 29% of the federal workforce, yet reductions due to budget cuts in the second quarter of 1982 affected women 46% of the time.
- Reagan's proposed 1984 budget shifts job training money from the Job Training Partnership Act, which targets women, to displaced workers. Reagan also proposed to eliminate all funding for the Work Incentive Program, which trains and finds jobs for public assistance recipients, 75% of whom are women.

## POVERTY

Women and their children make up two-thirds of the nation's poverty population. Where the poverty cycle begins is difficult to define precisely, but women still have inferior access to the education and training that could allow them to advance themselves. They are still, because of sex discrimination, locked into the low paying wage ghetto and half of them are concentrated in only 20 of the 440 job classifications listed by the Department of Labor. Disadvantaged in access both to education and to employment, women have been hardest hit by the Reagan cutbacks of vital human service programs designed to aid the unemployed and undereducated.

- In an era of unemployment, poverty has greatly increased. Poverty statistics are startling. Twenty percent of our children (12.5 million children) live in poverty, a rise of 4% in only three years. 12,200,000 women are poor. Ninety-eight percent of AFDC recipients are women and children, and yet Reagan continues to advocate fewer services and money.
- In FY '82, \$1 billion was cut in AFDC.
- In FY '83 Reagan wanted \$2 billion more cut in AFDC. Congress reduced the cut to \$85 million.
- In FY '84 Reagan wants to cut \$1.2 billion more from AFDC.
- Reagan wants to eliminate the WIN (Work Incentive) program, by which persons on AFDC, 75% of whom are female, receive counseling, training, and placement.
- There are 2,500,000 more poor children than there were three years ago.
- There are 2,500,000 more poor women than there were three years ago.
- The poor have benefited little from the Reagan tax cuts, while the wealthy have gained significantly. Reagan personally saved \$91,619 last year alone on his taxes because of the 1981 tax act.

## EDUCATION

For more than a quarter of a century, our country has recognized the relationship between educational inequity and economic disparities between men and women. Because women were keenly aware of the connection, women's rights organizations fought for the passage and implementation of Title IX. In the 11 years of Title IX's existence, women's enrollment in vocational programs leading to a wide range of careers in marketing, technology, and business management has increased by more than 750,000; doctoral degrees awarded to women have doubled; the percentage of women entering medical school has tripled; and the number of sports available to college women has doubled. The scope and effectiveness of Title IX and other major educational equity regulations affecting women have been reduced or eliminated by the administration. Reagan is subverting the intention of Congress by federally financing sex discrimination in education.

- Under the Reagan administration, Title IX has been eroded by terminating guaranteed student loans and shielding student aids and other programs from enforcement.
- In some states, schools assisted only by federal student aids have been freed from Title IX enforcement.
- The Women's Educational Equity Act has had solid bipartisan support since its inception. Reagan, however, has cut its budget by 40% and has tried to eliminate it by including it in a block grant and repeatedly pressing Congress to withhold funding.
- Over 5 million children attend Title I and VII classes, offering compensatory education for disadvantaged children. Proposed budget cuts for 1984 will eliminate one million presently enrolled children from the programs. Without special assistance the future of these children will be dim.
- On the eve of Women's Equality Day 1981, V.P. George Bush announced plans to weaken administrative guidelines governing Title IX. Specific items "raised concern" regarding record-keeping, overall coverage and requirements for comparable spending for both sexes in the school's athletic programs.

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Reagan administration actively promotes policies to deprive women and girls access to adequate family planning services and safe, legal abortions. While rhetorically promoting "getting government off our backs," President Reagan advocates increasing government interference in our bedrooms.

The President supports and is working toward an amendment to the Constitution making abortions illegal. Having been defeated in the legislative process, his closest supporters are declaring that President Reagan must be reelected to office in order to appoint Supreme Court justices who would reverse the Roe v. Wade decision.

- For the third consecutive year, Reagan is proposing cuts in federal support for family planning. Title X, a major source of funds for the Public Health Service, had its budget slashed by more than 25% in fiscal year 1982 to \$125 million. In fiscal year 1983, its appropriation was only \$124.1 million.
- Reagan proposed the "Squeal Rule," which required that health care providers receiving federal funds notify parents when contraceptives are given to minors regardless of the family situation. Since only girls receive prescriptive contraceptives, the double standard of responsibility for sexual behavior and control fell solely on the girls. Almost immediately the federal court ruled that Reagan usurped Congressional authority by going beyond the intent of Congress.

## HEALTH

The feminization of poverty has become pervasive under Reagan. Poverty is five times more likely in a female headed household than in a two-parent household. One in three female-headed households is poor compared to one in eighteen male-headed households. Reagan's budget cuts have created significant problems not only in income but also in health, nutrition, and child care.

Availability of health services to poor people has decreased significantly. The Reagan philosophy evidently does not presume that people have a right to decent health care. Reagan cuts are resulting in poor pre-natal care, lack of access to medical care for poor people of all ages, and even a rise in infant death rates.

- Nearly 480,000 children and women of childbearing age lost access to health services because of budget reductions.
- Two hundred thirty-nine community health centers were closed or had to reduce services -- 28% of the total.
- "Areas of the country suffering some of the sharpest decreases in the availability of public health services are also beginning to report a significant rise in infant mortality." For example, in one Detroit area, the infant death rate was 33 per 1,000 births, while the rate for the state of Michigan is 13.2 per 1,000 births.
- Cuts in Medicaid funding affect women disproportionately, since 61% of the recipients are women. Cuts in FY '82 were almost \$1 billion. In FY '83, Reagan wanted \$2.1 billion cut; \$250,000 was actually cut. In FY '84 Reagan has proposed a cut of \$300 million, with additional cuts totaling \$1.9 billion through FY '86.

## NUTRITION

The WIC Program (Women, Infants, and Children) provides much-needed health care and diet supplements to pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children under five identified as nutritional risks. The average woman recipient receives \$450 throughout her pregnancy. Such nutritional assistance can prevent malnourishment which can cause permanent damage to infants. Such damage is expensive not only in human terms but in economic ones. While saving \$450, Reagan's policy risks a \$40,000 bill for a sick baby in a neonatal unit.

- The increase in infant mortality rates in nine states is projected to be directly related to the increased number of women in poverty and the decrease in benefits, especially WIC.
- For FY '84, Reagan has proposed a freeze in WIC funding. This means cutting another 100,000 children from the program.
- Nationwide, nine million needy women and children are eligible for WIC, but Reagan's budget provides enough money for only a quarter of them, with plans to cut again.



## SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The School Lunch Program, which is vital to the nutritional needs of many children, particularly the poor, has suffered cuts similar to other domestic programs.

- 3.2 million children and 2,700 schools have left the nation's School Lunch Program, primarily because they can't afford to participate under Reagan's new rules.
- More than one-third of the children are from poor families and depend on school lunches for half their daily nutrition.
- A Reagan proposal would have had the program define catsup and relish as vegetable substitutes. The proposal was rapidly withdrawn after being widely ridiculed by the public.
- In typical style, Reagan wants to combine school breakfast, summer feeding and child care feeding programs and cut them 25%.

## CHILD CARE

Availability of federally-funded child care is a major force in the lives of thousands of women. Reagan's budget cuts in child care programs have forced many women to halt their educational pursuits, to go on welfare, or to risk leaving their children at home unsupervised. With the budget cuts, Reagan has effectively destroyed the hopes of these women to ever escape the dehumanizing cycle of poverty.

- Nearly 7 million children under six are in some child care arrangement because of their parents' employment. More and more families need child care as difficult economic times necessitate entry of more people into the workforce. Child care is an economic burden to many families with marginal incomes. Yet Reagan continues to focus his attention only on the limited possibility of potential employer child care. Meanwhile, the existing programs dwindle.
- Six to 7 million children under 13 with working parents have no child care.
- Seventy-five percent of day care centers have had to trim programs due to federal cuts.
- Significant cuts have been made in Title XX child care, which affected 750,000 children, including (in FY '82) moving the program to a block grant, cutting the block grant 21% and eliminating the state-matched funding.
- Although Congress refused further cuts in Title XX proposed by Reagan in FY '83, once again he has proposed significant cuts for FY '84, combining two block grants and cutting Title XX by an additional 11%.
- Child care food programs have been cut by 30% in FY '82, with additional 30% cuts proposed for FY '84. These cuts impact heavily on the allegedly protected Head Start Program.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

President Reagan has tried time and time again to cut benefits for Social Security recipients -- the majority of whom are women who only have Social Security to rely on -- despite his promise during the campaign debate to leave Social Security and its benefits "intact."

- In his fiscal year 1982 budget proposals, President Reagan suggested eliminating the minimum benefit. Three million women receive this benefit of \$122 per month, because the benefit based on their own work history would be too low to live on. Reagan convinced Congress to eliminate the minimum as part of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981. Before the repeal, however, Congress restored the minimum benefit for those currently receiving it. However, the minimum benefit is no longer available to new Social Security recipients.
- Reagan eliminated benefits for college students whose deceased parent had been covered by Social Security. The Reagan plan also covers surviving children only up to age 16 instead of to age 18 as had previously been the case. Again in the Reconciliation Act of 1981, Congress acceded to Reagan's proposal to stop these benefits, which were designed to make the cost of college more affordable to students who had lost a parent. Coupled with the large cuts he asked for and got in the student loan programs, Reagan has made it much harder for widows to send their children to college.
- In April 1981 -- despite these major cuts -- Senior Republicans newsletter proclaimed, "President Reagan Keeps Promise: Social Security Benefits Remain Untouched." Two weeks later, President Reagan suggested the largest Social Security cuts in history. He would have cut benefits \$88 billion over five years, \$210 billion over ten. He would have cut benefits for those retiring at 62 by 55 percent, significantly tightened the already overly restrictive Disability Insurance program, and cut everyone's benefits 10 percent. These cuts were too much even for the Republican Senate, which, on May 20, repudiated them by a vote of 96 to 0.

## WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Reagan has lowered the expectations for recruitment of women in the Army from the Carter administration's target of 100,000 by 1985 to a target of only 82,800 by 1987. One of the practical effects of this limitation is that the military, as a source of income and employment training, is severely limited for women. Not only has the goal been lowered, but 23 job categories have been closed off to women. Most of the jobs are in the engineering field, but the list also includes carpentry and masonry specialists, plumbers and interior electricians.

- One month after Reagan took office, the Army imposed a cap on female recruitment.
- Reagan, though cutting back on women in the military, supports an amendment to the Military Service Act that would give him the authority to call for registration of "every person trained in a health occupation" between the ages of 18 and 46, including women. The plan selectively supports drafting a specialized segment of women but does not make any move toward equal opportunity for allowing all women in the military.
- The opportunity for women to participate in the military with the many benefits of job training and career enrichment has been limited by Reagan's administration. Further, the veteran's benefits for women have continued to be less than those for men, and Reagan's limitations on recruitment of women means that fewer women will ever have access to veteran's benefits.

## LESBIAN/GAY RIGHTS

Reagan has demonstrated a striking lack of concern for the rights and concerns of lesbians and gay men. Even worse, the administration has a posture encouraging renewed oppression of these groups.

- Many of Reagan's appointments have been people with known virulent anti-gay/anti-lesbian attitudes.
- Reagan discounted the seriousness of AIDS by opposing additional funds for AIDS research.
- Reagan supported the McDonald Amendment to prohibit the representation of homosexuals by the Legal Services Corporation.
- Reagan backed a bill ending appeals to the federal courts by foreign lesbians and gay men barred from entering the U.S. by immigration authorities.
- Reagan has reversed previous executive orders that prohibited federal job discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.
- Witch hunts for homosexuals in the military have dramatically increased under President Reagan, particularly among women in the military holding non-traditional jobs.

## CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Commission on Civil Rights was established as the only independent and bipartisan agency monitoring civil rights in this country. Over the years, as part of its mandate to watchdog civil rights protections, the Commission has issued several significant studies analyzing sex discrimination against women. In its 26 year history, almost without exception, both Republican and Democratic presidents have respected the independence of the commission - until Reagan. Just days after saying that he would protect an individual's civil rights with the point of a bayonet, if necessary, the president skewered the only federal agency whose sole purpose is to look out for the nation's minorities.

- Reagan pressured the commission's former chairman to resign last year and twice tried to name new commissioners more in line with his anti-civil rights philosophy.
- Reagan also demanded unsuccessfully that the commission clear all statements and studies with the Office of Management and Budget, and has tried to cut its budget.
- Reagan's firing of three commissioners removes a man and two women, one a black woman and the other the only Hispanic representative on the commission. They are to be replaced by three white males, a move not likely to improve his "perception" problem with minorities and women.

## APPOINTMENTS

Ronald Reagan has appointed fewer women to full-time positions in government than his predecessor. Never before in American history has a President reversed the progress of women in this area. In addition to an inferior record of appointing women, Reagan's appointments have often included anti-feminist women to direct programs for women's equality.

- Reagan has appointed one-third fewer women to full-time positions than President Carter, a decline to 8% from the 12% figure of his predecessor.
- Minority women are virtually excluded from Reagan's appointments.
- Presidential appointments to the Federal Judiciary and to the United States Marshall positions are enlightening. These positions require a sensitivity to civil rights enforcement. Reagan has drastically diminished the achievements of the Carter presidency. Under Reagan 10 women and 103 men have been appointed to the Federal Judiciary. Under Reagan 2 women and 87 men have received appointments as U.S. Attorneys. Under Reagan 1 woman and 72 men have been appointed U.S. Marshalls.

## LEGAL SERVICES

Women are 67% of the population served by the Legal Services Corporation, which provides legal assistance to the poor. Women come to LSC with legal problems affecting their economic status such as housing, health care, marital rights, and custodial rights. Reagan has opposed LSC since he was Governor of California.

- Reagan has twice tried to eliminate all funding from Legal Services Corporation.
- Reagan has appointed directors who will not allow LSC attorneys to file class action suits, the only effective way to redress grievances for large numbers of people simultaneously rather than "one by one."
- Reagan has cut LSC funding by 25%.
- Reagan persists in appointing directors to LSC who have clearly expressed the aim of killing it.
- A significant percentage of LSC attorneys are female.



## SOURCES

- Americans for Democratic Action. ADA Asseses the Reagan Administration. June 3, 1982.
- Coalition on Women and the Budget. Inequality of Sacrifice: The Impact of the Reagan Budget on Women. March 16, 1983.
- National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education. How the Reagan Administration has Failed Women in Education. June, 1983.
- Project on Equal Education Rights. A Clash of Ideologies: The Reagan Administration vs. the W.E.E.A. June 6, 1983.
- United States Commission on Civil Rights. A Growing Crises: Disadvantaged Women and their Children. May, 1983.
- United States Commission on Civil Rights. Civil Rights Enforcement in Education. June 14, 1983.
- United States Commission on Civil Rights. Equal Opportunity in Presidential Appointments. June, 1983.
- Women's Research and Educational Institute for the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues. Budget Alert for FY '84. February 9, 1983.
- Women's Research and Educational Institute for the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues. Impact on Women of the Administration's Proposed Budget. April, 1982.
- Women's Research and Educational Institute for the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues. Employment and Unemployment Issues for Women. January, 1983.