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Presidential Proclamation: Women's Equality Day
AUGUST 25, 2011



POSTED BY: TINA TCHEN

TAKEN FROM: COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/08/26/celebrating-women-s-equality-day>>

As we commemorate Women's Equality Day, the anniversary of the 19th Amendment, it is fitting to celebrate the many strides our Nation has made towards equality over the past 91 years. It is a day to remember those iron-jawed angels, who marched and stood vigil, who fasted and were imprisoned for that basic right—the right to vote. It is a time to recommit ourselves to continuing the struggle for full equality for women—for our mothers, grandmothers, daughters and for ourselves. And for me personally it is a time to reflect on how much I have benefited from this legacy of sacrifice and leadership to enjoy the great honor I have today of serving in the Obama Administration.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak with community organizers, business leaders, faith leaders, and elected officials at Congressman Steny Hoyer's 9th Annual Women's Equality Day Luncheon in Clinton, Maryland. I was proud to highlight that the rights, freedoms, and welfare of women and girls has been a priority of the Obama Administration from day one.

From creating the White House Council on Women and Girls, to appointing a strong team of women leaders to his Cabinet and White House staff, President Obama has ushered in a new era of leadership. He nominated two women to the Supreme Court and nearly half of his confirmed nominees to the lower courts are women—far surpassing the previous high watermark of around 30 percent.

President Obama understands that supporting women translates into stronger families and a stronger economy. That is why over the past two and a half years, the Obama Administration has placed an emphasis on implementing policies that empower women to realize their full economic potential. The Administration has looked at issues from workplace flexibility to wage inequality, and expanded small business lending to women businesses owners through the Small Business Administration.

The Obama Administration has also made strides in women's health. The landmark Affordable Care Act prevents insurers from charging women higher premiums than they charge men, and makes it illegal for insurance companies to deny coverage to women based on pre-existing conditions, such as cancer, being a victim of domestic violence, or pregnancy. For the first time, new insurance plans must cover preventive care for women, including: mammograms, STD/HIV testing and counseling, domestic violence counseling, contraception and gestational diabetes screening with no deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance. Additionally, starting in 2014 all health plans will be required to cover the cost of a pregnancy — a monumental win for women.

This Administration is also working to reduce teen pregnancy, improve medical care for women veterans, and end violence against women through increased funding and innovative programs. Supporting our Nation's families and working to improve their health is also a cornerstone of the First Lady's agenda. From Let's Move!, the initiative that aims to solve the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation, to Joining Forces, the initiative to mobilize all sectors of society to support and honor our service members, veterans, and their families, the First Lady is committed to improving the lives of women and children. The President and the First Lady are deeply committed to ensuring all women and girls can reach their

highest potential, but each of us has a role to play in this fight for equality. So, in honor of Women's Equality Day I hope you will get involved in our efforts by: Learning more about Let's Move!, and what you and your community can do battling childhood obesity. Finding ways to give back to our courageous service members, veterans and their families, and getting involved with Joining Forces. Visiting the Council on Women and Girls web site and staying connected with our efforts.



Women in STEM: An Opportunity To Improve U.S. Competitiveness

POSTED BY: REBECCA BLANK, ACTING SECRETARY AT THE US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

TAKEN FROM: <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/08/04/women-stem-opportunity-improve-us-competitiveness>>

The U.S. Commerce Department's Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA) today issued the second in a series of reports on science, technology, engineering and mathematics – or STEM – jobs and higher education.

As expected, the report, Women in STEM: A Gender Gap to Innovation, finds there are fewer women than men in STEM jobs and attaining degrees in STEM fields. While women make up 48 percent of the U.S. workforce, they hold only 24 percent of STEM jobs. Yet more women attend college than men. More women graduate from college than men. And more women attend post-college programs than men.

As women have steadily caught up and surpassed men in several measures of educational attainment over the past several decades, their underrepresentation in STEM fields has nevertheless remained fairly constant. Interestingly enough, this is all despite the fact that there's greater income parity between genders in STEM fields than there is in the employment market as a whole. In non-STEM jobs, men earn 21 percent more hourly than women, on average; but in STEM jobs, the hourly difference drops to 14 percent. Women with STEM jobs also earn 33 percent more than women in non-STEM jobs – \$31.11 per hour versus \$19.26 per hour – which exceeds the 25 percent earnings premium for men in STEM.

Engineering is the most male-dominated STEM occupational group, but it is also the one with the smallest gender wage gap; female engineers earn just 7 percent less per hour than their male counterparts. But even when women choose STEM degrees, their typical career paths diverge substantially from their male counterparts. About 40 percent of men with STEM college degrees work in STEM jobs, whereas only 26 percent of women with STEM degrees work in STEM jobs. Women with STEM degrees are more likely to work in fields like education or healthcare and are particularly underrepresented in fields like engineering. The results in our report do not allow us to clearly identify why women are so underrepresented in STEM, but we can speculate. STEM jobs may not be as family-friendly and career paths may not be as accommodating to people cycling in and out of the workforce to raise families; there are relatively few female STEM role models; and gender stereotypes may discourage women from pursuing STEM education and STEM jobs.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and we look forward to the discussion that our report generates. Why is this important? STEM jobs pay well. STEM skills are also important for innovation. For America to become more competitive in today's global economy, we need workers with skill sets that help to propel our nation forward. Increasing the number of workers trained in STEM fields will help strengthen some of the most innovative and fastest-growing sectors of our economy. Increasing the number of women who enter and stay in STEM professions is an obvious way to deepen this pool of important labor in our economy. By encouraging and supporting women to take part in STEM – in the research and innovation that's so vital for our economic well-being – we all stand to benefit.

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