



Wisconsin Women's Council

State of Wisconsin

1999-2001 Biennial Report

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Introduction

The Wisconsin Women's Council, an independent state agency created in 1983, consists of fifteen appointed members: the Governor's designee; six public members appointed by the Governor; two public members appointed by the President of the Senate; two public members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly; two members of the Senate and two members of the Assembly. Members serve two-year terms, and are not compensated for their service. The Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, which existed from 1964 to 1979, precedes the Wisconsin Women's Council.

The Council members, who vary by background, age, occupation and interests, represent women from throughout Wisconsin. Mary Jo Baas of Madison serves as Council Chair.

1999 – 2001 Biennium

Over the last two years, the Wisconsin Women's Council has focused on improving financial education for Wisconsin women. This issue affects everyone – young and old, single or married, student or CEO -- in every part of the state. Wise money management can help us achieve our goals, but the lack of these skills can prevent us from realizing our dreams. The Wisconsin Women's Council is proud to be a leader in efforts to enhance this critical life skill necessary for a prosperous Wisconsin.

In addition to financial education, we have focused on building our clearinghouse activities. In 2001 the Wisconsin Women's Council published its first resource directory in seven years, and maintains a database to enable faster publication of future editions. In addition, we've added new information to our website, making it a better resource than before.

The Wisconsin Women's Council is poised to continue strengthening its educational and outreach efforts while we lay the groundwork for future statewide initiatives aimed at helping Wisconsin women improve their lives.

Message From the Chair: Mary Jo Baas

I'd like to start by recognizing Lieutenant Governor Margaret Farrow's many years of outstanding service to the Wisconsin Women's Council and thank her for her efforts. As Chair, she initiated many of the programs, such as the Glass Ceiling Commission and the Council's World Wide Web site, that define the Council's role today. Though she stepped down as chair upon taking the office of Lt. Governor, we are pleased that the Senator has agreed to remain a member of the Council.

As the current chair of the Wisconsin Women's Council I am proud of the many projects undertaken by the Council, along with our very capable Executive Director Katie Mnuk. I am most proud, however, of the non-partisan, educational direction the Council has taken in focusing on financial information services for women. Our ability to provide financially for our families and ourselves affects our ability to clothe and feed, to house, to educate and to live comfortably in our later years. With appropriate planning all women can improve their quality of life now and for the years to come.

As part of the financial education project, the Women's Council has increased its efforts to work with other state agencies, private and public organizations and experts throughout Wisconsin. We are working with the best in every field to provide a "blueprint" of information that groups interested in women's issues can use to educate their members and others in their communities. We have used this strategy in many of our projects, from Wardrobes for Working Women to the marital property resource guide.

Another strategy worthy of note has been our use of technology to improve communication with women across the state. Our website is constantly being updated to include our blueprints, contact information, upcoming events and women's resources. We are able to include a more geographically diverse council by allowing members from northern Wisconsin to participate via electronic means when necessary, and we can gather input from across the state and the country through the worldwide web, email and links to other organizations.

These are some of the advancements that are allowing the Wisconsin Women's Council to provide information and real life solutions to women throughout our state. I believe that we will continue to improve our communications and effectiveness as our strategy is fully developed in the next biennium.

Sincerely,
Mary Jo K. Baas, Chair
Wisconsin Women's Council

Executive Director's Message: Katie Mnuk

Several thoughts come to mind as I reflect back over this biennium. I am pleased that this Council operates in a manner that plays to its strengths by focusing on projects and issues that benefit all Wisconsin women. We don't duplicate the efforts of organizations or programs that are capably addressing specific women's issues. Instead, we are complementing their activities in many ways. First, we're focusing on our role as a statewide informational clearinghouse. We have made much progress in our ability to provide information and link Wisconsin women to resources on a number of issues. We have distributed hundreds of copies of Wisconsin Women's Resources 2001, a directory that includes resources throughout Wisconsin. And, we continue to add new information to our website, assisting women in finding new ideas and resources through cyberspace.

In addition, we have worked with others to develop unique projects to meet the needs of Wisconsin women. Our most recent example of these cooperative efforts is development of the Council's Financial Education Blueprint. Strong financial skills are critically important for us all, but most especially for women because we tend to live longer and will need more savings to support ourselves in later years. With help from educators, advocates, financial professionals and others, we've created an adaptable set of materials that local organizations can use to help improve the financial skills of women within their communities. The Council is also a member of the Wisconsin Jump\$tart Coalition, promoting financial and economic literacy to Wisconsin youth.

I look forward to further developing these and similar initiatives over the next biennium so that the Wisconsin Women's Council can continue to serve as a resource and a catalyst for women.

I also want to recognize a major transition that occurred during this biennium. In September of 2000, Chair Margaret Farrow passed the gavel on to long-time member Mary Jo Baas of Madison, who now ably leads the Council. I thank Margaret Farrow for her many years of hard work and dedication to women's advancement in Wisconsin, her tenure as the Council's longest-serving Chair, and the role she continues to play as a Women's Council member. In early 2001, I was proud to see Margaret Farrow appointed as Wisconsin's Lt. Governor – only one step removed from the most powerful position in state government. May she continue to lead by example, as a role model for us all, by shattering artificial barriers like the glass ceiling.

Sincerely,
Katie Mnuk
Executive Director

Wisconsin Women's Council Members

Public Members Appointed by the Governor:

Mary Jo Baas, Chair, 6 Bea Circle, Madison, WI 53716; 608/224-0231. Baas is a homemaker. Her term expires June 30, 2002.

Jill Averill, 1212 Hewett Street, Neillsville, WI 54456; 715/743-4461. Averill is a Child Support Specialist for Clark County. Her term expires June 30, 2003.

Margaret Farrow, Room 19 East, State Capitol, P.O. Box 2043, Madison, WI 53701-2043; 608/266-3516; Fax 608/267-3571. Farrow is the Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin. Her term expires June 30, 2002.

Celeste Hoze, 5264 N. 83rd Street, Milwaukee, WI 53218; 414/263-8519. Hoze is a Business Team Supervisor for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in Milwaukee. Her term expires June 30, 2002.

2 Vacancies

Governor's Designee:

Ave Bie, Wisconsin Public Service Commission Chair, 610 N. Whitney Way, Madison, WI 53702; 608/267-7898. Bie is a Public Service Commissioner responsible for regulating state utilities. Her term expires June 30, 2003.

Public Members Appointed by the Assembly Speaker:

E. Vanessa Jones, 4429 North Frederick Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53211; 414/962-3731. Jones is an attorney specializing in employment law. Her term expires June 30, 2002.

Deb Jordahl, 5 Raskin Circle, Madison, WI 53719; 608/827-0947. Jordahl is a homemaker and part-time consultant. Her term expires June 30, 2001.

Legislators Appointed by the Assembly Speaker:

Representative Judy Krawczyk, Room 9 South, State Capitol, P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708-8952; 608/266-0485. Krawczyk is a State Representative representing the 88th Assembly District. Her term expires January, 2003.

Representative Terri McCormick, Room 115 West, State Capitol, P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708-8953; 608/266-7500. McCormick is a State Representative representing the 56th Assembly District. Her term expires January, 2003.

Public Members Appointed by the Senate President:

Carol Brooks, 1109 Woodland Way, Madison, WI 53711; 608/274-8472. Brooks is responsible for health plan development for an organization offering health and welfare benefits to public employees in Wisconsin. Her term expires June 30, 2002.

Vacancy

Legislators Appointed by the Senate Majority Leader:

Senator Gwen Moore, Room 409 South, State Capitol, P.O.Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707; 608/266-5810. Moore is a state legislator representing the 4th Senate District. Her term expires June 30, 2002.

Senator Kim Plache, Room 415 South, State Capitol, P.O.Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707; 608/266-1832. Plache is a state legislator representing the 21st Senate District. Her term expires June 30, 2001.

Wisconsin Women's Council staff:

Katie Mnuk: Executive Director:

Jessica Anderson: Program Assistant

Agency Budget:

Fiscal Year 2000: \$87,300

Fiscal Year 2001: \$87,300

Contact Information:

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Required by Wisconsin Statutes s.230.215(4): Report on flexible-time work schedules, additional permanent part-time positions and other alternative work patterns: Executive staff may use a flexible-time work schedule when meetings or speeches occur in the evening or on weekends.

Strategic Plan

The Council's strategic plan is designed to outline goals and define issues to shape its activities in the coming years. The plan incorporates perspective on the Council's past accomplishments, builds a basis for teamwork and consensual decision-making amongst members, and assists members in planning future Council activities.

The strategic plan is expansive and the issue areas identified by members are comprehensive. It identifies and communicates the Wisconsin Women's Council's mission, guiding principles, goals and priority issues for action over the coming years. The Council will prioritize its activities to address issues as time and resources allow.

In addition, new and emerging issues may require that the Council undertake some additional activities; these activities will be determined by Council members and initiated on an ad hoc basis.

Mission Statement:

*The mission of the Wisconsin Women's Council is to enhance the ability of all Wisconsin women to participate fully in all aspects of life.**

** as defined by S. 16.01 of the Wisconsin statutes*

The Wisconsin Women's Council fulfills its mission through three key goals and objectives:

- Promoting public and private sector initiatives at all levels that empower women through education and opportunity;
- Providing a clearinghouse for information relating to women's issues and working cooperatively with related groups and organizations; and
- Promoting unique opportunities for partnerships and involvement to address issues impacting women.

Guiding principles

The Wisconsin Women's Council is a unique entity with an expansive charge. It is a statutory body intended to promote equity and address issues affecting women throughout the state of Wisconsin. Council members are public members or legislators, appointed to serve two-year terms. Because of the Council's unique charge and membership, no positions taken in any previous two-year period are interpreted as the position of the members of a subsequent Council.

The following Guiding Principles identify the concepts that govern Council activities and interactions with each other and the citizens we represent and serve.

- The Wisconsin Women's Council works as a team in an environment of mutual respect and recognition.
- The Wisconsin Women's Council strives to develop consensus when determining appropriate actions, utilizing innovative and effective tools and methods to conduct business.
- The Wisconsin Women's Council makes decisions based on facts and data, and promotes positive change.

Priority Issues

Through strategic planning, several comprehensive issues have been identified by Council members for action over the coming years. The Council will review these issue areas and may designate committees for more concentrated review and work. Committees will develop and fulfill their action plans according to the priority placed on specific issues by Council members.

The Council determined priority issue areas during strategic planning. In the coming years, the Council will focus its efforts on the issues and the subcategories included under these topics. Time and staff limitations may mean that not all areas listed can be equally pursued within each two-year period. Further, new and emerging issues may require that the Council undertake some additional activities; these activities will be determined by Council members and initiated on an ad hoc basis.

Economics

This topic broadly focuses on issues with financial impact on women. Specific topics identified under this issue include:

- Tax policy
- Stay-at-home spouse barriers
- Financial planning

Health Issues

This topic broadly encompasses various health care issues including, but not limited to:

- Long term care
- Mental health insurance
- Low income health care
- Domestic abuse

Workplace Issues

Workplace issues are generally defined as those issues impacting women working outside the home. Identified issues under this category include:

- Workplace communication
- Non-traditional employment
- Rural women's issues
- Glass ceiling
- Service in leadership roles
- Employer child care issues

Work/Family Balance

Work/family balance refers to the unique challenges faced by parents of children today. These include:

- Child care
- Parenting
- Barriers faced by caregiving spouses

Education

This area encompasses a variety of education issues, including primary, secondary and post-secondary topics:

- K-12 education
- School-to-Work programs
- Women's access to apprenticeships
- Retraining to improve women's economic standing

Administrative Activities

Directory of Organization and Services

The Council has published a new version of the Directory, Wisconsin Women's Resources 2001. With contact information for over 450 organizations throughout Wisconsin, the directory lists resources ranging from child, adolescent and parent services to employment, training and workplace organizations.

In addition to publication of this printed resource, the Council has created and maintains a database of organizations, to facilitate editing and creation of future editions of this publication.

Copies of Wisconsin Women's Resources 2001 are available by calling the Wisconsin Women's Council at (608) 266-2219 or sending an email to: info@wwc.state.wi.us. The Council has distributed hundreds of copies of this publication thus far.

World Wide Web Site

The Wisconsin Women's Council continues to provide Wisconsin women with accurate and timely information through its World Wide Web site. The site increases Council visibility; provides access to information about the Council through a 'self-serve' venue available at all hours of the day; posts useful information and current events, thereby reducing the need for direct contact with Council staff; and reduces printing, production and mailing costs by making Council publications available on the web.

The web page also helps fulfill a key Council goal of providing a clearinghouse on information for women by linking to various other world wide web sites and providing a number of resources of use to women throughout the state, including:

- **Council history**, including a list of Council members and information on how they can be reached.
- **Strategic Plan**. The strategic plan outlines general goals for the Council and staff, guidelines for conduct of the Council, and summarizes issues that members may wish to pursue in the coming years.
- **Tips on getting appointed**. In an effort to increase the number of women and minorities who participate in the public policy process, this section contains tips and guidelines to follow when seeking state-level appointments.

Much of the information is useful for those pursuing local appointments, as well. Seeking these appointments is encouraged because they can provide the experience needed to move up to the next level -- a seat on private Boards.

- **Upcoming events.** The web page contains a list of upcoming events occurring throughout Wisconsin, including conferences, speeches, classes and other activities based on information submitted by organizations throughout the state.
- **A link to the State Legislature's home page** so that users can easily look up the status of state legislation of interest.
- **Distinguished women in Wisconsin's history.** In 1998, the Wisconsin State Assembly passed Assembly Joint Resolution 94 to honor several Wisconsin women who accomplished significant "firsts" in history. The complete text of the resolution passed by the State Assembly is included on the site, with links providing additional background on the life of each woman. While it's impossible to highlight every distinguished Wisconsin woman in this space, the individuals listed on the site serve as shining examples of our ability to achieve success throughout our lives.
- **Items of interest.** This section contains links to dozens of other websites yielding a variety of information including women's health and employment issues, girl's issues, sports, and family and parenting issues.
- **Information on how to conduct a used clothing drive.** The Women's Council, with significant contributions from members of Wisconsin Women in Government, Inc., assembled a helpful list of tips, options and best practices to aid local civic, professional and community-based groups conducting used clothing drives. This effort captures and shares knowledge gained over the course of several statewide efforts by Wisconsin Women in Government, Inc., and can be used to organize efforts designed to benefit local women.
- **Resource information on Wisconsin's Marital Property Law.** The website lists some excellent resources for solid written information on Wisconsin's Marital Property Law, which affects anyone who is married, has been married or is contemplating marriage.

Programmatic Activities

The Council has worked on programmatic activities related to its mission, and issues defined through strategic planning. These include:

Financial Education

Women can capably manage financial matters, but many simply have not had the opportunity to gain all of the skills they need. The Wisconsin Women's Council has made enhancing women's financial skills a high priority in this biennium.

The Wisconsin Women's Council, assisted by the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, the Family Resource Center of Eau Claire, the Eau Claire Leader Telegram and the Wisconsin AARP, brought a series of financial education seminars to the women of Eau Claire in March of 2000. This successful series was preceded by a similar series held in Madison in 1999 and included three free seminars covering the topics: Personal Finance, Credit, and Investment Basics. Each session was held at the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire.

Like Madison women, Eau Claire women responded positively to these sessions and the Council reviewed its experience in order to continue its efforts. After thorough evaluation of its two initial efforts, Council members came to two very important conclusions: first, the women living in the area are the best judge of the kinds of programming needed within their community; and second, the Council's modest budget and staff mean that we can't get to as many communities as we would like. In reaching these two conclusions, the Council's financial education efforts turned in a new direction.

Based on the experience gained through the financial education initiatives in Madison and Eau Claire, the Council determined to best utilize its resources through development of materials that would allow community groups to produce financial education sessions at the local level. The Council's goal is to provide good, basic financial information to women throughout Wisconsin, without sales pressure or obligation -- a critical feature that women had told us was important to them. In sharing the knowledge gained, the Council created materials that are flexible enough to be used in a variety of ways with different audiences throughout Wisconsin.

The result is the Council's current effort, the **Financial Education Blueprint**. Aided by several volunteers including women's advocates, educators, financial professionals, students and parents, the Council has developed its Blueprint as a guide for local organizations to follow to produce financial education sessions for women within their community.

The Financial Education Blueprint focuses on topics in three key areas: Personal Finance, Credit and Saving/Investing. It contains guidelines with important 'how-to' information covering organizational details such as: which topics to cover, how to recruit effective presenters, how to develop local partnerships and how to effectively present the information. In addition, the Blueprint provides sample presentations, and corresponding presenter's notes and audience handouts, that can be used to develop a presentation covering topics chosen by audience need. Finally, the Blueprint includes supporting publications that sponsors can share with attendees to help reinforce and build skills after the sessions.

Several things make the Financial Education Blueprint unique. First, it provides good, basic information on the subject of financial skills with no sales pitch or obligation. It's also flexible – sponsors may present a single session focused on one topic, multiple sessions utilizing all three subjects, or any combination necessary in order to meet the needs of the local audience. In addition, the materials are written with a motivational focus to inspire women to take charge of their finances, rather than letting finances control their lives. Finally, the materials include the message that parents serve as role models for their children in money management, making the need to utilize good financial skills, and pass them on to your children, more critical than ever.

After the Blueprint materials were reviewed and by experts in the field, staff concentrated on production. With the help of a generous \$3,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, the Council is printing copies of the Financial Education Blueprint for distribution to organizations throughout Wisconsin. In addition, the Blueprint materials will be included on the Women's Council's website so that users can access these materials via Internet.

The Financial Education Blueprints will be available in late 2001. In addition to public announcements, the Council will make the materials available to over 1,000 advocates, educators, financial professionals, women's groups and community groups, and stand ready to advise local groups as they develop financial education opportunities within their community.

Financial and Economic Education Task Force

At the urging of the national group Americans for Consumer Education and Competition, the Wisconsin Legislature adopted Senate Joint Resolution 31, encouraging schools to improve the money management skills of high school students, and calling for a task force on financial education in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Women's Council actively supported adoption of this resolution and hopes to be represented on a task force appointed by Governor Scott McCallum late in 2001.

Marital Property Information

Wisconsin's marital property law affects a significant number of women in Wisconsin, but because of its complexity it remains a source of confusion to many. In conjunction with development of the Council's Financial Education Blueprint, staff worked with University of Wisconsin Law School Professor Emerita June Weisberger, to clarify the impacts of Wisconsin's marital property law. As part of this effort, Professor Weisberger developed a brown bag seminar to provide information to state employees about the key points of Wisconsin's marital property law. In addition, Professor Weisberger evaluated a number of informational resources on the law, and recommended several resources that provide good, basic information to answer most questions about the law.

The Council has published basic information, and a list of helpful resources, on its website.

Girls Programming

In cooperating with the Blackhawk Council of Girl Scouts, the Wisconsin Women's Council surveyed Wisconsin state agencies to develop a list of programming targeted at girls under age 18. Based on responses the Council has compiled a list of over a dozen state agencies administering programs aimed at Wisconsin girls, as well as a list of agency statistics available.

A complete listing of girls' programs provided by state agencies in 2001 is available by contacting the Wisconsin Women's Council.

Conferences, Special Events and Activities

In addition to speeches and presentations to a variety of organizations ranging from the Wisconsin Women Entrepreneurs to the Wisconsin Bankers Association, Executive Director Katie Mnuik participates in a variety of activities on behalf of the Council, including:

Wisconsin Glass Ceiling Commission

Serves as a liaison to the Wisconsin Glass Ceiling Commission aimed at advancing women and minority individuals to top-level positions in private companies, and increasing the number of women and minority individuals serving on boards of directors.

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiatives Corporation

Serves on the South-Central Wisconsin Advisory Team, responsible for area oversight of lending and educational programs aimed at assisting women and low-income individuals to succeed at running their own small business.

Wisconsin Jump\$tart Coalition

Joins a group of educators, financial professionals, entrepreneurial advisors, financial administrators and other experts serving on this coalition to increase the financial and economic skills of Wisconsin's youth.

Meeting with Sonya Gill, Secretary of the Mumbai Committee of the All India Democratic Women's Association

Met with Ms. Sonya Gill of the All India Democratic Women's Association to discuss Wisconsin Women's Council activities, outreach efforts, and public policy and programs in Wisconsin aimed at women. The All India Democratic Women's Organization addresses the problems of women from a perspective of gender, citizenship and class and engages in a host of activities, conducts research and issues quarterly publications.

Community Connections Ukraine Visit

Traveled to Lutsk, Ukraine as a guest of Northcentral Technical College's Community Connections program. Community Connections is a program sponsored by the U. S. Department of State aimed at strengthening links between the United States and Ukraine by establishing partnerships for future collaboration. Based on meetings and discussion with women's groups, families and individuals in Ukraine, developed a needs analysis and proposals aimed at enhancing women's status in Ukrainian society, for future collaboration through Community Connections and Northcentral Technical College.

Summit Meetings: Racine County Women's Commission and Kenosha Commission on Women's Issues

Attended meetings between the Racine County Women's Commission and the Kenosha Commission on Women's Issues to provide feedback on joint community projects proposed by the two groups, and liaise with both groups on Wisconsin Women's Council projects.

National Association of Homebuilders – Women's Council

Met with local members of this national trade association committee of women working in the shelter industry, to establish links between the organizations and promote Women's Council activities.

Transportation Alliance for New Solutions (TrANS) Advisory Committee

Serves on this committee advising state and local staff of the TrANS program, providing screening, training, counseling and employment placement for women and minorities starting careers in non-traditional road construction occupations.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Child Support Guidelines Advisory Committee

Serves on an advisory panel reviewing Wisconsin's Percentage of Income Standard guidelines used for establishing child support payment orders. Federal law requires that states establish guidelines for determining child support obligations, and requires review of those guidelines every four years to ensure that their application results in the determination of appropriate child support amounts.

Displaced Homemaker Advisory Committee

Serves on advisory committee charged with identifying and addressing issues specific to Wisconsin's displaced homemakers, including review of existing programming and developing priorities for future program consideration. Displaced homemakers are individuals who have worked in the home for a number of years, have not been gainfully employed outside the home, and have or would have difficulty in securing employment or who have been dependent upon income from another family member or public assistance but no longer receive that income or assistance.

Wisconsin Reading Summit

Represented the Wisconsin Women's Council at the Wisconsin Reading Summit, aimed at brainstorming to develop innovative ways to help children learn to read faster, enjoy reading more, and improve the literacy rates in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Think Tank Project for Economic Growth

Represented the Wisconsin Women's Council in this project aimed at proposing new ways to continue Wisconsin's economic growth, sustain our economy, and keep the state's best and brightest workers from leaving Wisconsin to pursue employment elsewhere.

Take Your Child to Work Day

The Women's Council supports efforts to educate all children about the workplace and the roles women play in it, both as employees and supervisors.

AARP Financial Fitness Day

The Women's Council provides information and exhibits at the AARP's annual Financial Fitness Day, designed to provide adults with the tools and knowledge they need to successfully manage their finances.

Chair, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Pregnancy Services Board

Mnuk serves as Chair of the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Pregnancy Services Board, which provides grants to local organizations offering programs aimed at reducing the number of adolescent pregnancies in Wisconsin.