



## Some Facts about the Pennsylvania Agenda For Women's Health

Inspired by New York State's Women's Equality Agenda and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi's Economic Agenda for Women and Families, the Pennsylvania Agenda for Women's Health, a comprehensive legislative initiative of the pro-choice Women's Health Caucus, connects the dots between worker rights, economic and reproductive justice, poverty, physical safety and women's health. These bills seek to level the playing field for women and broadly redefine the meaning of women's health. Follow the Agenda's progress at **PennsylvaniaNOW.org**.

Agenda Bills Include:

**Workplace Accommodations for Pregnant Women** – HB TBA; SB 40. This bill would provide for common sense workplace changes that are temporary, for instance, allowing a pregnant worker to sit down occasionally, to carry a water bottle, and to get help lifting heavy objects.

**Sanitary Conditions for Nursing Mothers** – HB 1100; SB TBA. Breastfeeding is good for babies. It builds their immunity and it's protective of the mother's health as well. Employers should provide a private, clean space for mothers to express breast milk.

**Equal Pay** – HB 1160; SB 303. Despite a law on the books since 1959, equal pay for equal work is still not a reality for women. Bills in the Agenda would add teeth to the existing law by updating legal standards for lawsuits, providing for stiffer penalties for wage discrimination, and ending pay secrecy, the practice of prohibiting employees from sharing how much they make.

**Raising the Minimum Wage** – HB 250; SB 195/196. Several bills would lift the minimum hourly wage in PA from \$7.25/hour to \$10.10, and also raise the tipped wage.

**Cellphone Contract Termination** – HB 1108. Removes penalties for early contract termination for victims of domestic violence.

**Early Lease Termination** – HB 1051. Would remove penalties for early lease termination for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Would also require landlords to change locks within three days of request at tenant's expense.

**Ensuring Safe Access to Healthcare Facilities** – Bill TBA. Prohibits the use of physical force, obstruction or the threat of harm to interfere with any person obtaining reproductive health services.

**Patient Trust Act** – This would prohibit politicians from intruding upon the doctor-patient relationship by prohibiting legislation that is not medically accurate, and that interferes with delivery of medical care.

**Closing Gaps in Care for Our Women Veterans** – This would establish a Task Force to look into the health issues effecting Pennsylvania's 80,000 female veterans.

**Fighting Poverty** – Bills TBA. Many women and their families struggle week to week to make ends meet. One out of every five Pennsylvania child lives in poverty. Yet benefit levels for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) have not increased in 25 years, and the state has steadily been decreasing the number of families getting aid. Several bills would address issues of poverty for Pennsylvania families.

**Fair Pensions for Widows of State and Municipal Employees** – This bill would require spousal approval for any changes to a public employee's pension plan that impacts spousal benefits.

**Extending Sexual Harassment Protections to All Pennsylvania Workplaces** – This would extend the existing law to cover all employers in the state.

**Uniform Reporting of Campus Crimes** – SB 202. Would amend the Uniform Crime Reporting Act to require campuses to adopt policies and programs to make students, staff and officials aware of the risk of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Requires annual reports from campuses.

**Agenda Bills Passed in 2014:**

**Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence** – Act 200. If a victim of domestic violence calls 911 too often, she can be evicted due to local “nuisance” laws. This bill would ban such laws.

**Resolution to Study the “Cliff Effect”** - where minor increases in income mean low-income families suddenly don't qualify for assistance or child care.

**Stop Intimate Partner Harassment** – Act 115. This law bans publishing photos or video of another person without their consent, who is naked or engaging in a sexual act.

### **TIPS FOR LOBBYING**

- **Focus on persuadable votes first.** Don't waste time on politicians who have built a reputation opposing everything you're fighting for. However, there is a lot of power in finding common ground with a lawmaker who is normally an opponent. Many lawmakers are eager to build bridges and pass good legislation. Don't count them out.
- **Do your homework.** Find out where your legislator stands on the issue you wish to discuss. Look up their voting record (in PA, PennsylvaniaVotes.org). What committees are they on? What caucuses are they in? What district do they represent?
- **Be polite.** Be on time. Be respectful, even if you disagree. Be brief and to the point. You might end up talking with an aide, but just remember that aide will report your meeting. The goal is to persuade; sometimes that will take multiple visits. It's good to build relationships with staffers.
- **Write up Talking Points.** Make it easy for your legislator to quickly understand your argument and your ask. Use statistics sparingly. Too many can be overwhelming and dilute the point. **Try to keep it to one sheet.** Add contact information for further research. This can do double duty for tabling opportunities and on your site to direct members to.
- **Include your contact information.** Make it easy for the legislator's office to get in touch with you. Above all, **tell the truth.**
- **It's OK not to know.** If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it. Offer to follow up with additional information.
- **Be clear about your ask.** Do you just want to begin a dialogue with someone you know stands opposed to your issue? Do you want your legislator to introduce legislation or sign onto a bill?
- **Make it personal.** How does this legislation or issue effect this lawmaker and his/her district?
- **Tell a story.** Stories that illustrate the point you are trying to make in human terms are much more persuasive than statistics.
- **Bring a constituent.** One constituent in hand is worth 20 “clicktivists.”
- **LISTEN.** You can learn a lot about what motivates a legislator by giving him/her or a staffer lots of room to talk.
- **Ask for leads.** A legislator may be willing and able to help you troubleshoot a committee vote, for instance.
- **Say thank you.** Say thanks when you leave, then follow up with an email.