



AP(Eye) on The Hill

NAPAWF's monthly policy newsletter

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www.napawf.org

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *AP(Eye) on The Hill*, NAPAWF's new policy newsletter! In an effort to help our members stay abreast of timely policy issues that have an impact on Asian and Pacific Islander women, we hope you find these monthly publications useful and informative. For chapter updates, announcements from the national office, feature articles and more, keep reading *The Fierce Advocate*, which will be released on a quarterly basis.

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From Capitol Hill

Anti-Choice and Anti-Immigrant Enforcement Threats in Economic Stimulus

On January 29, the House of Representatives passed its version of the economic stimulus package, the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. The bill would provide \$819 billion in tax relief and government spending on a range of services and infrastructure, including major improvements to food stamps and unemployment insurance, state aid to prevent cuts in Medicaid, education, and other services, help for low-income students and poor people with disabilities, and investments in public housing and low-income communities.

While intended to help jumpstart the economy, the stimulus bill also included a requirement that would mandate the use of a flawed electronic worker verification program known as "[E-Verify](#)" as a condition for receiving stimulus funds. E-verify has a number of well-documented failings which include unacceptably high error rates that misidentify U.S. citizen and lawful immigrant workers and can lead to unlawful firings of immigrant employees. The program is prone to employer misuse and will impose additional burdens on small businesses.

The stimulus bill was also subject to a [reproductive justice set-back](#) when Obama struck a provision that would have allowed states to extend eligibility for family planning services to certain low-income individuals under Medicaid prior to consideration of the bill.

The Senate is considering its version of the bill (S. 1) which is already under [threat from anti-choice legislators](#) who want to strip the package of \$400 million proposed for HIV and STD screening and prevention. **Help us prevent this from happening; take action now!**

ACTION ALERT!

Call your Senator today through the Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121)

Tell you Senator to maintain STD/HIV screening dollars and oppose anti-immigrant enforcement measures in Economic Stimulus!

Say: "Please vote for an economic recovery bill that strengthens our public health infrastructure through STD and HIV prevention programs, and excludes discriminatory employment verification practices."

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House and Senate Pass Children's Health Bill; Includes Restoration of Coverage for Eligible Immigrant Children and Pregnant Women

On January 14, the House of Representatives passed a bill that will reauthorize the *State Children's Health Insurance Program* (SCHIP). The SCHIP program has provided needed health care coverage for 6.6 million low-income children who would otherwise be uninsured and will extend coverage for 4 million more. In the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, the percentage of children without insurance has dropped from 18 to 8 percent in 2004 under SCHIP.

The bill also includes an important provision that would serve as a critical first step at removing the 5-year waiting period for lawfully-residing immigrant children and pregnant women to become eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP. Also known as the [Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act](#) (ICHIA), the measure gives states the option to remove the 5-year bar and restore access to publically funded health care for thousands of low-income immigrant children and expectant mothers. NAPAWF, as a co-convenor of the National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights, led a [sign-on effort](#) to encourage Senators to vote for a children's health bill that included ICHIA.

A similar bill passed the Senate on January 29, surviving anti-immigrant attempts to undermine ICHIA. SCHIP also withstood anti-choice attacks by members seeking to advance "fetal rights" and restrict minor's access to care. The House is expected to vote on the Senate version of the bill and be on the President's desk for signature this week.

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Congress Reauthorizes Strong Anti-Trafficking Bill; Bush Signs into Law

On December 11, International Migrants Day, the Senate and the House unanimously passed the [William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2008](#) (TVPRA of 2008). President Bush signed the bill into law on December 23. This important piece of legislation reauthorizes the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and provides great advances in aiding,

protecting and preventing the exploitation of thousands of human trafficking survivors, many of whom come from Asia and the Pacific.

[API women and girls represent the largest group of persons trafficked into the U.S.](#) and are trafficked into domestic servitude, sweatshop work and other forms of forced labor. The TVPRA of 2008 contains new provisions that begin to close some of the gaps in services and increase protections for this vulnerable group of workers, including mandatory "know your rights" interviews with consular officers for foreign domestic workers prior to entering the U.S.; contract requirements between diplomats and domestic workers that contain key employment terms and conditions; new standards for how unaccompanied child trafficking victims will be treated in custody, and more services, including mental health services; greater protections for eligible family members of adult trafficking survivors; and increased transparency in federal anti-trafficking grants.

NAPAWF advocated for the inclusion of many of these key provisions, and is pleased that Congress passed a reauthorization bill that expands prevention efforts and protections for trafficking survivors. To learn more about how API women are impacted by human trafficking in the U.S., please read [Rights to Mobility and Survival: An Anti-Trafficking Activist's Agenda](#).

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NAPAWF Convenes Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act Strategy Meeting

NAPAWF, along with Generations Ahead and SisterSong organized a convening on December 8, 2008 to bring leaders from diverse organizations together to build a movement and develop a policy strategy against the [Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act](#). Introduced last September by Rep. Trent Franks (AZ), the bill purports to combat sexism and racism by banning abortions based on race and sex. This convening was a follow-up to a sign-on [statement](#) issued last fall. There was no Committee action on the bill in the last session, however the bill is expected to be reintroduced this session.

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Administration Watch

NAPAWF Spearheads Efforts to Remove Immigrant HPV Vaccination Mandate

In July 2008, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) added [five](#)

[new vaccinations](#) to the list of required immunizations for immigrants seeking legal permanent residency in the U.S. or applying for immigrant visas. The list included a vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV), a viral infection that is transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact and is the leading cause of cervical cancer. Following a recommendation by the CDC's Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices to administer the vaccine for girls and young women ages 11-26, the recommendation became an automatic requirement for prospective immigrants and naturalized citizens when the government updated its list of vaccines in July.

NAPAWF is leading a working group of immigrant rights, reproductive justice and public health advocates to reverse the mandate. In January, NAPAWF spearheaded an [organizational sign-on letter](#), as well as a [petition](#) for individuals, urging the CDC to remove the HPV vaccination mandate on immigrants. As co-chair of the National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights (NCIWR), NAPAWF also helped draft an NCIWR [statement](#) opposing the mandate. It is NAPAWF's and NCIWR's position that the new requirement violates a woman's basic right to self-determination, creates additional barriers for immigrant women and families seeking entry or adjustment of status, and unfairly forces immigrant women to subject their bodies to a new medical technology with unknown efficacy rates.

ACTION ALERT!

Reproductive justice for immigrant women and girls is at stake! Tell the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reverse the Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination mandate for immigrant women and girls. **Please sign the [petition](#).**

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Obama Signs Fair Pay Act into Law

On January 29, President Obama signed the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#). In making pay equity the first bill he signed into law, President Obama took an essential first step at restoring protections eroded by the harmful U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear*. The new law ensures that individuals subjected to unlawful pay discrimination based on sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion or disability are able to assert their rights in court. NAPAWF attended the historic signing, and applauds President Obama and the new Congress for demonstrating a commitment to advancing

fair pay for all workers, particularly women of color. Ledbetter is an important victory, but it is only the first step toward eliminating the gender and racial pay gap. Congress must act quickly to pass the [Paycheck Fairness Act](#) to make fair pay a reality.

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HHS "Provider Conscience" Regulations Made Final Despite Large Opposition; Lawsuit Pending

In September 2008, HHS asked for public comments in response to their "Provider Conscience" regulations, which would give health care providers, workers and institutions the right to refuse to perform a medical treatment if the treatment is contrary to the providers' religious or moral beliefs. NAPAWF submitted [joint comments](#) along with the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and the Center for Reproductive Rights in opposition to the proposed regulations. Despite receiving an unprecedented 200,000 comments in opposition to the proposed regulations, HHS made the regulations final in December 2008. The regulations went into effect January 20, 2009.

In response, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) filed a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of the millions of women whose health care has been put in jeopardy by these regulations. PPFA is asking the federal court to invalidate the HHS regulation and protect patients' rights to access complete and accurate health information and services.

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NAPAWF Meets with Obama-Biden Transition Committee on Women's Health, Immigration and API Issues

Soon after the elections, NAPAWF met with members of the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team to discuss a range of issues that impact Asian American and Pacific Islander women. We participated in a number of meetings, beginning with one that focused on the needs and priorities of API communities. As part of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), NAPAWF helped draft a set of top priorities for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the [NCAPA Platform](#), many of which were adopted in [Barack Obama's Blueprint for the Change We Need for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](#).

NAPAWF also met with Transition Team members on a range of women's health and reproductive justice issues. At one meeting, we spoke about

some of the [first 100 day priorities](#) for advancing reproductive health, rights and justice, including repealing the global gag rule, and eliminating abortion funding restrictions like the Hyde Amendment. At another, we shared specific ideas for [improving current Department of Health and Human Services policies](#), including rescinding the HPV vaccine requirement for immigrants and increasing data collection and reproductive health research on API women.

In addition, as co-chair of the National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights, we met with the immigration policy working group to discuss a range of immigration issues, including comprehensive immigration reform. NCIWR submitted our [request for equitable immigration policy](#) for all immigrants, particularly women and families, which included a just path to permanent residency and citizenship, humane enforcement standards, access to quality health care, and restoration of public economic and health benefits.

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NAPAWF is the country's only progressive, multi-issue organization for Asian & Pacific Islander women and girls that is building a movement to advance social justice and human rights. [Join us!](#) Visit www.napawf.org to get connected.