



NYS ASSEMBLY

## Task Force on Women's Issues 2011 Update

Sheldon Silver, Speaker | Ellen Jaffee, Chair

### Message from the Chair



Dear Friends,

It has been a great honor to serve as Chair of the Assembly Task Force on Women's Issues.

Since my appointment, the Task Force has worked with Assembly committees, subcommittees, and task forces on a number of matters, including: workforce training for women, protective treatment for victims of sexual assault, homelessness among women veterans, pay equity for women, and strengthening treatment for women struggling with substance abuse.

This collaboration has resulted in much legislation, including A1078, which was signed into law by the Governor during the 2011 session.

This newsletter provides more details about the proceedings and legislation; if you would like more information, please contact my Albany office at 518-455-5118.

I look forward to hearing from you!

*Ellen C. Jaffee*  
Ellen Jaffee, Chair

### Governor Signs Assemblywoman Jaffee's Bill to Improve Access to Treatment for Women with Alcohol and Drug Addiction

The increase in high-profile, frequently fatal accidents at the hands of intoxicated drivers have raised awareness about alcohol and drug abuse among women. In response, Assemblymembers Felix Ortiz and Ellen Jaffee co-hosted an Assembly roundtable in Orangeburg at the Nathan

Kline Institute in October 2009 to discuss how the state could improve access to treatment for women who abuse alcohol and drugs. Mr. Ortiz was then chair of the Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse.

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## Jaffee Continues to Press for Treatment of Victims of Sexual Assault

In 2008, Assemblywoman Jaffee introduced a bill to remove obstacles preventing sexual assault victims from getting preventive HIV/AIDS treatment, known as Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). The bill passed both houses unanimously but was vetoed by Governor Paterson due to concern over cost. Ms. Jaffee then scheduled an Assembly roundtable attended by Assembly Health



Committee Chair Richard Gottfried and Assembly Women's Health Subcommittee Chair Aileen Gunther. Roundtable panelists included experts from the Rockland Family Shelter, Downstate Medical Group, New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault and

Dr. Antonio Urbino, who is known for his breakthrough work in rapid HIV testing. As a result of the testimony and input from this roundtable, Ms. Jaffee redrafted the bill, now A669. The Senate version, S3200, is being carried by Senator Kemp Hannon.

Ms. Jaffee points out that preventing only one case of HIV-AIDS annually, as a result of her legislation, could save the state hundreds of thousands of dollars over the survivor's lifetime, a total that would exceed the cost of providing treatment for everyone who would be covered annually under A669/S3200.

## Jaffee Holds Hearing on Homeless Women Veterans in New York State

Assemblywoman Jaffee joined with Senator Adriano Espaillat, former Chair of the Assembly Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, chair of the Subcommittee on Women Veterans, to hear from a distinguished panel about the difficulties facing servicewomen readjusting to civilian life when it comes to finding employment, health care, child care and housing. "It's a national shame that, all too often, our state's bravest become the most in need," said Jaffee.



## Dozens Attend Women's Business Forum Hosted by Ellen Jaffee

Over 50 women gathered at Suffern Library for an informational session on programs available from the state for women-owned businesses. "The only way New York can recover from this economic downturn is by supporting local business owners," said Assemblywoman Jaffee. The event was co-sponsored by the Rockland Economic Development Corporation. It covered local counseling services, certification for women-owned businesses, financial assistance, and tips on securing government contracts.



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Panelist Sarah Allen Benton, author of *Understanding the High Functioning Alcoholic: Professional Views and Personal Insights*, testified that more affluent women escape diagnosis because they have the resources to hide their addiction. Participants offered suggestions on how to attract more clients to services. Of the eight roundtable panelists, three were from Rockland County: Dr. Mary Jane Alexander, a senior research scientist at the Nathan Kline Institute; Maureen Hyatt, LCSW, Director of Recovery Services at the Mental Health Association of Rockland; and Emily Feiner, LCSW, who treats a range of disorders, including substance abuse.

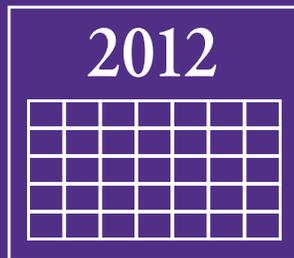
Assembly legislation, A1078, arose from the recommendations of the roundtable; its primary purpose is to better train physicians in identifying substance abuse. Carried by Senator Ruth Hassell-

Thompson in the Senate (S3279), it was signed into law by Governor Cuomo this summer. The law calls for better training for doctors to diagnose addiction along with ways to let women know that treatment is not a social stigma. This law will improve the chances that women who are suffering from addiction to alcohol and drug abuse get the proper care.

“Substance abuse among women is on the rise,” Jaffee stated. “We must provide preventive services for women with addiction disorders, so they don’t endanger their families, society, and themselves. Unfortunately some treatment models do not recognize gender differences. I am hopeful the law will correct that.”

Ortiz concluded, “In tough economic times, addiction problems tend to grow. We must do what is right, even if it’s not popular.”

## Looking Ahead to 2012



With the 2012 session about to begin, Assemblywoman Jaffee has several priorities for the Task Force on Women’s Issues. Please don’t hesitate to email her legislative office with additional topics you would like to see on the Task Force to-do list: [jaffee@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:jaffee@assembly.state.ny.us).

1. **Childcare:** In addition to carrying over A6545 and A5843, Assemblywoman Jaffee will be introducing a bill to protect families and ensure quality childcare.
2. **Pay Equity:** As this newsletter goes to press, Ms. Jaffee is preparing for the upcoming Assembly hearing on Pay Equity, Dec. 12th. Ms. Jaffee will also be reintroducing A6448, which makes it discriminatory for public employers to pay men and women unequally for the same work.
3. **Women’s Health:** Ms. Jaffee’s bill, A7774, requires that women with dense breast tissue be notified of their condition and given access to more precise cancer detection methods.
4. **Teen Pregnancy Prevention:** Ellen Jaffee and her colleague, Assemblywoman Michele Titus, attended a national conference on preventing teen pregnancy. They will be developing legislative initiatives to keep teen pregnancy rates as low as possible.
5. **Treating Sexual Assault Victims:** As covered in this newsletter, Ms. Jaffee will reintroduce and press for the passage of A669, to ensure that victims of sexual assault get the treatment they require to prevent HIV/AIDS.



## Roundtable Analyzes Workforce Training Opportunities for Women

*Are women receiving the same job training opportunities as men?*

That question prompted an Oct. 11, 2011 roundtable at Rockland Community College, which was co-chaired by the Task Force on Women's Issues, the Assembly Labor Committee and the Legislative Commission on Skills Development and Career Education.

The panel's participants came from a wide range of areas, including education institutions, business associations, workforce programs and the Department of Labor.

Assemblemembers Jaffee and Benedetto officiated and were honored by the participation of New York State Labor Commissioner Colleen Gardner.

Commissioner Gardner stated, "I was pleased to participate in this roundtable to discuss strategies to improve employment and training opportunities for women in New York State. I commend the Assembly for their strong commitment to reducing barriers for women in the workplace. Working together, we will improve the employment prospects and earning potential for women across New York State."

The goal of this roundtable was to assess how well the workforce development system, education system and employers are providing opportunities for unemployed, not-yet-employed or underemployed women to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to qualify for higher paying careers. Identifying barriers to women trying to improve their employment opportunities was an important part of the goal of this event.

More than 1 million households in New York are headed by women who are responsible for the economic security of their families; 26 percent of these households live below the poverty level. In two-parent households, over 60 percent of working mothers earn more than a quarter of their families' income. However, on average, a full-time working woman in New York is paid \$40,584 annually, while a full-time working man is paid \$49,174.

Assemblywoman Jaffee said, "I am concerned because the economic status of women is limited by the lower earning potential for employed and unemployed women. I am proud that the Assembly Majority has long sponsored legislation to address pay discrimination and inequity by employers. A potential solution to this problem is to train women for jobs that have higher wages. These are often characterized as male jobs."

Assemblyman Benedetto said, "We have a responsibility to ensure women are afforded every opportunity to join the work force and provide for their families. This hearing, and the legislation that will come from it, are critical steps towards ensuring New York women are not prohibited from entering any field and achieving their full earning potential."

Based on the conclusions of the roundtable, Ms. Jaffee introduced legislation to amend Section 10-c of the Labor Law to improve services and training for women to qualify for higher paying jobs, including those that traditionally hire predominantly men.

At the time of press, there is no bill number. Please call Ms. Jaffee's Albany office (518-455-5118) after December 1st for the number.

**Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee, Chair**

**New York State Assembly Task Force on Women's Issues**

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