



# NYS Assembly Task Force on Women's Issues

## 2012 Update

Sheldon Silver, Speaker | Ellen Jaffee, Chair

### Message from the Chair

*It is quite an 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: preventing breast cancer, 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 significant legislation, including A.9586D, providing notification to women with dense breast tissue, Chapter 265 of the Laws of 2012 and A.669C, HIV prevention treatment for victims of sexual assault, Chapter 39 of the Laws of 2012.*

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

*For updates from my office, email me at: [jaffee@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:jaffee@assembly.state.ny.us)*



*I look forward to hearing from you!*

*Ellen C. Jaffee*  
Ellen Jaffee, Chair

## JAFFEE'S LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP 2011/2012

### Women

#### Jaffee Supports Victims of Sexual Assault: PEP Treatment to Help Prevent HIV/AIDS Gets Signed Into Law

Assemblywoman Jaffee's legislation (A.669-C/S.3200-B), which provides sexual assault victims with better access to medication, and will help prevent HIV/AIDS transmission while reducing treatment costs, was signed into law in May of this year (Chapter 39).

In 2009, in conjunction with the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, Richard Gottfried, Jaffee hosted a roundtable that resulted in legislation that broadens victims' access to medical treatment, increases the dosage of medication given to the victim, and provides for follow-up. According to New York State Department of Health guidelines, to be effective, PEP treatment should begin no later than 36-72 hours after possible exposure.

The law increases the PEP medication provided from a three- to a seven-day starter pack to be given to victims of sexual assault who may be at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS as indicated by a forensic rape exam. The increased starter pack will ensure the victim has enough medication to

avoid a break in treatment, which compromises its effectiveness. In the past, the three-day starter pack did not provide the victim with a sufficient amount of medication to last until a follow-up appointment was scheduled.

Before the victim leaves the emergency room, and with the victim's consent, emergency room personnel will also schedule a follow-up appointment to ensure victims receive the balance of PEP and complete the recommended treatment. Timely access to PEP treatment and alleviating some of the financial burden will help ensure more victims begin and complete treatment, reducing the number of HIV/AIDS cases. Preventative care will not only improve the quality of care for sexual assault victims, but also save New York State millions of dollars in treatment costs.

*"No victim of sexual assault should be denied access to PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) treatment that can prevent HIV/AIDS."*

— Assemblywoman Jaffee

# JAFFEE'S LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP 2011/2012

2011-2012 Marks the Passage of Landmark Bills to Protect Our Families, Our Health, Our Jobs

## Women Get Lifesaving Information: Jaffee Bill to Improve Breast Cancer Detection is Law

Assemblywoman Jaffee and Senator John Flanagan introduced legislation, signed by Governor Cuomo in July of this year (Chapter 265), which will potentially save many women's lives by helping to detect breast cancer in its early, more treatable stages.

A.9586-D/S.6769-B requires mammography service providers to inform women who've had a mammogram if significant dense tissue was found. Dense breast tissue makes detection of cancer more difficult because it is opaque and may hide tumors or masses.

The dense tissue notification that would be included in a woman's summary mammogram report is based on model language developed by the American College of Radiology (ACR). It will provide information about: the effect of dense tissue on the mammogram; the effect on the patient's risk of breast cancer; and, a recommendation that the patient consult with her physician about follow-up screening.



Ellen Jaffee with Breast Density Advocate JoAnn Pushkin and husband Art Pushkin.

"We lose far too many lives to breast cancer that should have been detected," Jaffee said. "This legislation will provide women with lifesaving information that will help them fully understand the risks posed by dense breast tissue."

Dense breast tissue is known to be one of the leading risk factors for breast cancer, but in the past, despite the dense tissue finding a summary mammogram report often read "normal" or "negative" meaning no problems found. Although the density information was sent to the patient's physician, patients were not likely to be informed of that information, leading many women, like JoAnn Pushkin, a breast cancer survivor and advocate for the legislation, to believe they were cancer-free despite the fact a tumor hidden by dense tissue was growing in their breast.

To learn more about Dense Breast Tissue and JoAnn Pushkin, Executive Director, Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc. visit: <https://areyoudenseadvocacy.org>



Breast density press conference with Senate co-sponsor, John Flanagan, and the dense breast advocacy community.

"I thank Governor Cuomo, Senator Flanagan, JoAnn Pushkin, and all the courageous advocates who worked so tirelessly to ensure this lifesaving legislation was passed," Jaffee said. "Now women with dense breast tissue will get the information they need to determine, along with their physicians, whether further screening is recommended."

## The New York State Bipartisan Pro-Choice Legislative Caucus: Ensuring Women's Reproductive Health

Earlier this session, Assemblywoman Jaffee was elected to be one of four chairpersons for the New York Bipartisan Pro-Choice Legislative Caucus, which is comprised of members of both the New York State Assembly and Senate. The mission of the BPCLC is to protect reproductive rights across the state and to provide a voice for pro-choice state legislators in policy debates at both the state and national level.

Specifically, the BPCLC works to protect access to quality reproductive health services, remove barriers to these services, ensure access to education about reproductive choices, and respond to any potential infringement upon the legal right to reproductive health care in our state.

The BPCLC held its 2nd Annual Legislative Conference on May 31st, 2012 featuring a roundtable discussion on the Reproductive Health Act. The roundtable was well attended and featured pro-choice experts who discussed the importance of modernizing New York State's reproductive health laws and passing the legislation, which would guarantee a woman's right to make personal, private decisions about her health care, and protect the right to choose or refuse abortion



Ellen Jaffee speaking at the annual BPCLC legislative conference.

and contraception. Other states across the country continue to chip away at these rights. As the first state in the nation to protect women's reproductive health, it is imperative that we work to strengthen New York's laws for the safety and well-being of all our women.

## Working Families:

Do women receive the same job training opportunities as men?

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

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

The goal of the roundtable was to assess how effectively the workforce development system, the 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 jobs. Identifying specific barriers that prevent women from improving their employment opportunities was an additional aspect of the event.

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

## Tuesday, April 17, 2012: marked Equal Pay Day

This day symbolizes the day of the year women reach pay equity with men for the prior year. In other words, a woman would need to work all of 2011 and then through to April 17, 2012 to equal what a man earned in 2011 alone. This day was originated by the National Committee on Pay Equity in 1996 as a public awareness event to illustrate the gap between men's and women's wages. Assemblywoman Jaffee was instrumental in commemorating this day before the Legislature.

Nationally, women earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.

"The facts are startling. This pay disparity affects women across all levels of education as well as vocation. Over a lifetime, the average lost wages for a working woman can range from \$700,000 to \$2 million," said Jaffee. "In addition to lost income, there is a significant negative impact on Social Security and pension benefits that penalizes women well past their working years."

Assemblywoman Jaffee presented a package of bills before the Assembly to address this issue. This marked the 15th consecutive year that the Assembly took up and passed such legislation.

The following bills were passed:

**A.1780-A** - Sponsored by Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal  
*Implements a policy of compensating employees in state service equally for work of comparable value.*

**A.6130-A** - Sponsored by Assemblyman Keith Wright  
*Enacts the New York State Fair Pay Act.*

Roundtable analyzes workforce training opportunities for women and produces legislation passed by both houses of the legislature

The Institute for Women's Policy Research, which was represented on the panel, has raised concerns that the services provided through the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and administered in New York by the NYS Department of Labor, are not training women for higher paying careers.

Based on the conclusions of the roundtable, Ms. Jaffee introduced A.9020-B/S.6429-A 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. The Governor signed the bill into law in August.

Assemblywoman Jaffee said, "Income inequality isn't just a case of economic unfairness, it's a matter of economic injustice, and it's holding back far too many of our working families. This legislation is vital to ensuring that women are aware of all the economic opportunities available to them, regardless of how many women or men work in a given field. Equipping women job seekers with this knowledge will help them reach their full earning potential, and I am thankful that the Governor signed this bill into law."



Jaffee addressing the American Association of University Women (AAUW) about the Equal Pay Act.

**A.6448-A** - Sponsored by Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee  
*Implements a policy of fair and equal pay for equivalent value of work for local government employees.*

**A.9623** - Sponsored by Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton  
*Directs the Civil Service Commission to study and publish a report evaluating wage disparities among public employers.*

In addition to presenting this package of bills to commemorate National Equal Pay Day, Assemblywoman Jaffee was invited to address members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in Albany. AAUW is a nationwide network composed of more than 100,000 members and donors, 1,000 branches, and 600 college/university institution partners. For 130 years, AAUW members have examined and taken positions on the fundamental issues of the day for the purposes of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

Almost 50 years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act and the Civil Rights Act, women, especially minority women, continue to suffer the consequences of unequal pay.

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*Workforce Training Press Conference, August 2012: Melanie FitzGerald (YWCA's of the Northeast Regional Manager), Julia Nesbitt (Director of Human Resources at the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester), Christine Sadowski (Executive Director of YWCA of Orange County and Public Policy Committee Chair of the NYS YWCA), Kelli Owens (Government Relations and Public Policy Director YWCA's of the Northeast), Aimee Vargas (Mid-Hudson Regional Director for Empire State Development Corporation), Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee, Beverly Neufeld (President, New York Women's Agenda and Director of Equal Pay Coalition NYC), Willow Maese (RCC student/cybersecurity major), Jennifer DeLeon (Executive Director, Tomorrow's Workplace)*



*Rockland Family Shelter Executive Director Carolyn Fish (center) and staff gather with Jaffee for the Annual NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence Lobby Day.*

## Families and Children

### Jaffee Advances Legislation to Promote Affordable Child Care

The issue of child care is important to Ellen Jaffee. She's advanced two pieces of legislation that make good, quality child care available to those in need.

**A.5843-A** - Would disregard earned income of a dependent child under the age of 18 and income of a dependent 18-20 year-old household member when determining the eligibility of a household for a child care subsidy. A risk arises that the presence of the adult child in the household could harm the family for the purpose of calculating child care subsidy benefits because any income earned by the adult child would be included as part of the family income,

thereby pushing the family into a higher income bracket and making them ineligible.

**A.6545** - Provides that parents and caretakers who are otherwise eligible for a child care subsidy shall receive a subsidy when care is necessary to enable them to sleep because they work a late shift and have a child who is under the age of six and not in school for a full school day; further provides that the authorization for a subsidy shall be sufficient to allow the parent to obtain eight hours of sleep.

We are hopeful that these bills will be signed into law next year.



*Jaffee, Senator Chuck Schumer and members of Hudson Peconic Planned Parenthood meet for Family Planning Advocates Day.*

### Quality Matters:

#### Early Childhood Education Reform

High-quality early care and learning programs are essential for children's success in school. One out of three New York State school children starts kindergarten behind in basic skills. Early care and development programs serve children from infancy to age five in various settings – child care centers, family child care homes, Pre-K and Head Start. In New York State, these programs serve more than 300,000 children every year.

Research has shown that high-quality and intensive early childcare education development programs are essential, particularly for lower income families, and have a lasting positive impact. Children will be better situated for school success, and inclined towards higher graduation rates, lower juvenile crime and a decreased need for special services.

Jaffee is planning to convene a roundtable discussion on how to improve the quality and effectiveness of early learning and development programs in New York.

### Looking Ahead:

**Teen Pregnancy:** Ellen Jaffee and her colleague, Assemblywoman Michele Titus, attended a national conference on preventing teen pregnancy in 2011. As a result, Assemblywoman Jaffee is planning a roundtable discussion to raise awareness of teen pregnancy and how it affects the cycle of poverty. Ms Jaffee is interested in highlighting the current successful activities around the state, such as the Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Program (CAPP).

**Violence Against Women Act:** Assemblywoman Jaffee sponsored a resolution calling on Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) this year. Ms. Jaffee feels that this is critical for the millions of Americans whose lives have been ripped apart by domestic violence. The current federal legislation reauthorizing VAWA goes further than ever since its inception in 1994 in order to address sexual assault. It now includes initiatives to support law enforcement and prosecutors in their work to hold offenders accountable, to assist communities in creating sexual assault response teams, and to provide protections for survivors of sexual assault who live in public housing.

## Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee, Chair

New York State Assembly Task Force on Women's Issues

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