

May, 2025

Zonta USA Caucus

Advocacy Bulletin



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL
USA CAUCUS

The USA Caucus is a place for clubs and districts in the US to align on key issues and provides a platform for coordinated advocacy actions within the US.

Ending Child Marriage

With the hard work of Unchained at Last, Zonta and other partners of the National Coalition to End Child Marriage, more states are moving toward ending this human rights violation. Maine was the only New England state where child marriage was legal, but no longer. Maine has officially enacted a law banning child marriage, which passed without a gubernatorial signature. 14 states, one district and two territories, including the entire northeastern United States, extending to Maryland, have now ended the practice.

Recently, the Missouri House passed legislation to set the marriage age at 18, no exceptions. The Senate passed the House's bill with only one "no" vote, and the bill now goes to Gov. Mike Kehoe's desk. Please urge [Gov. Kehoe](#) to sign the bill—you do not have to be a constituent to write him. In Oregon, the Senate voted nearly unanimously (only one "no" vote) to pass Oregon's bill to end child marriage, which now awaits consideration in the House Judiciary Committee. Oregon residents can ask their legislators to support this legislation [HERE](#). Hawaii's House also passed a bill to end child marriage; with the issue now going to the Senate.

Utah still allows child marriage but at least has lowered the age difference allowed between the two marriage partners to four years rather than seven years. Sadly, the NH House passed HB433, modifying the existing 18, no exceptions bill to make 17 the age of consent for marriage if either party is active duty military. The bill awaits action in the Senate. Any person in the U.S. can contact New Hampshire legislators and tell them not to bring back child marriage [HERE](#).

Unchained at Last has active email campaigns, including some available to everyone. Find email campaigns and other ways to help [HERE](#).

NAIDM

Save the Dates June 20 -22, 2025 for the Zonta North American Inter-District Meeting 2025 in Novi, Michigan. Join other Zontians for fellowship and igniting your passion. In addition to four workshop tracks with four sessions each and the Zonta International board sharing updates on board activities, international projects and more, the NAIDM will also feature two longer sessions on Climate Justice (see below) and programs to end Human Trafficking, a hands-on service project and fun summer camp activities. Find more information and register [HERE](#). And consider becoming a sponsor of the NAIDM—find details [HERE](#). Contact Cindy Vickery or Bonnie McArthur at info@zontanaidm.org with questions.

Equal Pay

On this year's Equal Pay Day, March 25, the Paycheck Fairness Act was reintroduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro and Sen. Patty Murray, with no substantial changes from the previous bill introduced in the last Congress (H.R. 17 / S.728.) The Zonta USA Caucus has signed on to a [letter](#) asking Congress to support the bill, which has also been signed by many other organizations.

June 17 is LGBTQIA+ Equal Pay Awareness Day, reflecting wage inequality based on sexual orientation and gender identity, caused by systemic discrimination, inadequate legal protections, and the persistent undervaluation of their contributions in the workplace. According to [Equal Pay Today](#), "LGBTQ+ women earn about 87 cents for every dollar earned by the typical worker"; "transgender women earn approximately 60 cents, and transgender men and non-binary individuals earn about 70 cents for every dollar earned by the average worker."

Climate Justice

Post-CSW69, the Zonta Says NOW Committee would like to share these videos from the event:

- **"Zonta Says NOW 'Solutions from the Heart'.** has clips from the CSW69 Parallel event presentation from the Zonta USA Caucus and Zonta Says NOW International Workgroup. The title is based upon a women's leadership model called 'Head, Heart, Hands'.
- **'Men and Boys as Agents of Change to Feminism and Tackling Barriers to Solidarity'.** a UN Side event at the Rwanda Mission focused on men and boys engaging to achieve gender equitable climate justice. The presentation was hosted by **The Men Engage Alliance**, an organization of 24,000 men globally working to achieve gender equality.
- **'Health and Climate'**, a presentation hosted by the District 12 Action for Environment and Gender Equality Committee with speaker, Lori Byron, MD, Chair, Montana HPHC. The talk, which addresses how our health is compromised due to severe weather conditions and disasters is riveting.

The Committee also recommends the movie **"Mrs. Robinson"**, the story of Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland who is very active with the UN and Co-Founder of Project Dandelion, a women-led global climate justice movement.

The issue of climate change can feel overwhelming and related data can seem meaningless. How do we express our concerns about climate change amongst all the noise? Through the arts, we can connect with our feelings and emotions and cut through the numbers to better understand the problems and the possible futures we can create. **The Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery**, created for this purpose, launched on Earth Day, April 22, 2025, featuring work by 45 different Zonta artists and representing every continent. Be sure to browse the gallery, and contact **Julie Trone** for ideas on how to promote the project to your club.

If you are attending the NAIDM, don't miss The Climate Justice Committee's presentations on Community Building as a Climate Action and Climate Action as Key to Addressing Violence Against Women.

The next Zonta Says NOW Intercontinental Think Tank will be held on May 11 at 4:00 AM Eastern Time and will be hosted by Zontians from Europe and Africa. (If the time is a bit early for you to get up, watch for the link for the recording on the ZI website.) Register **HERE**.

Want to share the work of the Climate Committee with your club or district members? The Committee offers Zoom presentations on how climate change and gender equality fit together. Contact **Julie Trone** or **Angela Brockman** for more information.

CSW Followup

If you missed the post-Commission discussion on the 2025 UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) watch a recording **HERE**.

Check out recordings of various sessions from CSW that you may have missed.

- US Women's Caucus presentation on Women's Health covering topics such as abortion, black women's mortality and healthcare for indigenous women--will be available on their **website** soon
- **"Where Have All the Girls Gone?"**, a presentation on the STEM gap with speakers including Caucus member, Renée Coppock
- Unchained At Last's presentation, **"No Child Left a Bride: Successes & Setbacks in the Global Effort to End Child Marriage"**

Equal Rights Amendment

On March 25, Equal Pay Day, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), along with Congresswomen Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Sylvia Garcia (D-TX), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), and Jennifer McClellan (D-VA), and Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), reintroduced their bicameral resolution in both the Senate and the House (S.J. Res 38 and H.J.Res.80). The resolution would remove an arbitrary deadline for the passage of the ERA set by Congress in 1972. Please use Zonta's pre-drafted [letters](#) to urge your representative to co-sponsor and support the ratification of the ERA through H.J.Res.80 and S.J. Res 38. If they have already sponsored or co-sponsored the bill, you can send a message of thanks.

The focus is currently on encouraging more co-sponsors for the above legislation in the House, after which the focus will shift to the Senate. A total number of 218 co-sponsors are needed in the House, and the effort is currently targeting House Democrats to co-sponsor HJ Res. 80. Find the list of Democrats across the country who have not yet co-sponsored the new resolution [HERE](#). The Caucus encourages Zontians to contact as many as possible of these Democrat House Members as possible. Please identify yourself as being from ERA NOW to avoid a focus on your state of residence.

Below is a script to use when calling these offices or to cut and paste to send via email. If you call, ask them to leave a message for their legislative team.

Script for House Members:

Hello, my name is _____ calling/emailing from ERA NOW. I am calling/emailing to urge Rep. _____ to co-sponsor House Joint Resolution 80, the ERA-affirming resolution introduced by Rep. Pressley of Massachusetts on March 24. This resolution was supported by every House Democrat in the last Congress. I hope they will co-sponsor without delay.

Women's Right to Vote

On April 10, 2025, the US House passed the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) ACT. The bill's primary aim is to prevent non-citizens from voting, which already is not allowed, but in doing so will also present a barrier for millions of American women who have legally changed their name from exercising their right to vote. This right is at the very foundation of our democracy and the bill puts the voting rights of millions of Americans at risk. If passed through the Senate, the bill will impose registration requirements which would make it extremely difficult for those with a name change to register to vote for the first time or update their voter registration if they move addresses.

The SAVE ACT would:

- Require every voter to register or update their registration **in person**.
- Mandate proof of citizenship with **documents to which many do not have easy access**.
- **Eliminate key registration options** like mail-in, online, and third-party voter registration drives.

Use Zonta's pre-drafted [letters](#) to urge your senators to oppose the SAVE ACT (S. 128). If they have already sponsored or co-sponsored the bill, you can send a message of thanks.

Violence Against Women

Numerous instances of military sexual trauma (MST) go unreported during service each year. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced the bipartisan bill to improve MST survivors' access to health care and benefits and reinforce MST claims processing.

Please urge your representative and senators to co-sponsor and support the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 2025 (S.1245) using these pre-prepared [letters](#).