

August, 2025

Zonta USA Caucus

Advocacy Bulletin



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.

US Women's Caucus

An easy way to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and bring more attention and publicity to your local organization's efforts to advance women's rights, is to ask your local government for an "Official Proclamation" about it. Find more information on what the process entails, and what to include in the proclamation [HERE](#). The goal is to have 100 B+30 proclamations by the end of 2025 from all over the US. Contact [Leslie Wright](#) for questions.

ZI and the Zonta USA Caucus have signed onto an adhoc [letter](#) to the UN Secretary General and others on the UN80 initiative, providing concrete suggestions for a stronger UN gender architecture that can respond to the political realities of this era by supporting women's struggles on the ground to fight gender-based injustices. Clubs and individuals can also sign the letter [HERE](#).

Equal Pay

The Paycheck Fairness Act, which was reintroduced with no substantial changes from the bill introduced in the last Congress (H.R. 17 / S.728.) has made no progress. The Zonta USA Caucus signed on to a [letter](#) asking Congress to support the bill. Please [share](#) with like-minded organizations and request that they also sign on.

August 28 is Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) Women's Equal Pay Day, symbolizing the day in 2025 when NHPI women's earnings catch up to men's earnings from 2024. September 18 is [International Equal Pay Day](#), which represents the longstanding unsuccessful efforts toward the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value, building on the UN's commitment to human rights.

Equal Rights Amendment

The ERA Coalition has a new slogan--"It's our ERA," in its fight for recognition of the ERA as the 28th Amendment. The bicameral resolution, S.J. Res 38 and H.J.Res.80, which would remove an arbitrary deadline for the passage of the ERA set by Congress in 1972, has been reintroduced in the Senate and the House. The ERA Coalition is focused on encouraging more Democratic co-sponsors for this legislation in the House where a total number of 218 co-sponsors are needed. The Coalition also continues to encourage everyone to sign the [Sign-4-ERA Petition](#) which supports affirmation of the ratification of the ERA and removal of any time limit for passage.

[The Disrupt NOW Campaign](#) is a nationwide movement designed to advocate for women's equality and safety, combat extreme misogynist propaganda, and increase feminist education. The campaign addresses critical issues impacting women and girls across the US such as healthcare, the economy and women's safety.

A new attack on women's reproductive care illustrates why the Equal Rights Amendment is more important than ever. The Medical Ethics Defense Act (TN SB0955) allows Tennessee healthcare providers (individuals, institutions, and insurers) to refuse to participate in or pay for medical services that conflict with their personal or religious beliefs. The law does not apply to federally mandated care, such as emergency services. A Tennessee woman now claims that she was [denied prenatal care](#) by her physician under this law because she is unmarried. The ERA would raise the legal bar for discriminatory laws such as this. Read more in this [article](#) in Ms. Magazine.

Climate Justice

You won't want to miss the next Zonta Says NOW Intercontinental Think Tank, "Toxic Truths: Plastics, Pollution and Health" on Sunday, Sept 14 at 2pm ET. Plastics are everywhere, from the products we use to the food we eat. They are polluting our oceans, land and air, but did you know that they are also affecting our health? From toxic chemicals in packaging to microplastics in our bodies, plastics are putting women's health at risk--and harming wildlife and ecosystems. Join us as we delve into the toxic truths about plastics and explore ways to address them. Share the graphic below with others, but be aware that the registration link may not work for all. Register [HERE](#).



Catch up on presentations by the Zonta Says NOW to Climate Justice USA Committee. View two presentations the committee made at NAIDM: [Zonta Says NOW to Gender-Equal Climate Action](#), and [How Gender-Balanced Decision Making Protects the Environment](#) and two documents that are to be used with the workshop activity: [Zonta Says NOW Workshop Activity NAIDM 2025](#) and [Zonta Says NOW Frameworks for Action 2025](#). And watch the [recap](#) of the Committee's CSW69 Zonta Says NOW Parallel event presentation, "Solutions from the Heart."

The [Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery](#) features work by 45 different Zonta artists representing every continent. The gallery is meant to help us connect with our feelings about climate justice. Submissions are being accepted now for launch of the next round of art work in 2026. Browse the gallery, and contact [Julie Trone](#) for ways to promote it to your club.

Ending Child Marriage

Missouri has ended child marriage meaning that the practice has been banned in a third of US states, but there are still 34 states to go! Host a postcard party asking legislators to end child marriage in your state if they haven't already. Good bills in Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina and Hawaii did not pass but will carry over to 2026. Unchained at Last is working to form state coalitions in MD, CA, HI, KY, OH, WI and CO. If you have connections to organizations in any of these states or want to help with anything below contact [Becca Powell](#) at Unchained, [Therese Hartwell](#) or [Katherine Cleland](#).

Texas--the House passed a bill ending child marriage but time ran out before the bill went to the Senate; working on support for 2027 legislative session. **Maryland**--forming a state coalition; **Kentucky**--D5 working with survivor, Donna Pollard, to introduce a bill. **Illinois**--Zonta clubs are working to break through the current impasse. **Colorado**--clubs are creating a dialog with a key group not supportive of 18 no exceptions who are dividing legislators on the issue. **California**--D9 members have identified State Assembly reps as possible sponsors of a bill in 2026 and are building a California Coalition. Send CA connections to [Becca Powell](#) or [Nicole Miller](#). **Hawaii**--bill being held in committee but Zonta clubs working on it. **Alaska**--D8 seeking bill sponsor; ramping up with Anchorage Club.

Agency Rulemaking

In addition to reaching out to elected officials, Zontians can engage with Federal agencies providing comments on proposed rules and regulations. Federal agencies have been instructed to de-regulate--meaning for each regulation they want to issue, they will need to rescind 10. These rescissions can have a negative impact on women and girls. Most agency rules and rescissions undergo notice and comment rule making with individuals or organizations typically having 30 days to comment. Agencies must respond to the comments and address concerns, otherwise the rule can be thrown out by a judge. Find proposed rules [HERE](#) and an in-depth guide to the federal rule making process [HERE](#).

Violence Against Women

Share your club's service and advocacy projects, including Zonta Says No, through the Share Your Story [website](#), and find ideas from already posted [stories](#). ZI will host its virtual [Share Your Story Festival](#) on August 26 at 4:00 pm ET with six selected clubs presenting their stories.

Human trafficking remains one of the most pressing human rights crises of our time—generating billions in illegal profits each year through the abuse and commodification of innocent lives. Exponentially more females than males are trafficked within nations and across borders. Help bring attention to this issue on July 30, [World Day Against Trafficking in Persons](#). The End Banking for Human Traffickers Act of 2025 (H.R. 3629) targets the financial infrastructure that traffickers rely on to operate, dismantles these networks and delivers justice for victims. The legislation would sever human traffickers' access to the global financial system and strengthen the ability of law enforcement and financial institutions to identify, track and disrupt illicit activity tied to human exploitation. Use Zonta's pre-drafted [letter](#) to urge your reps to co-sponsor and support the bill.

If you are sometimes skeptical about getting legislation benefitting women passed, take heart. Texas recently passed House Bill 3073, now known as "the Summer Willis Act," overhauling its consent laws, largely due to the advocacy of the young woman whose name the bill contains. Summer Willis, a former University of Texas student-athlete, was drugged and sexually assaulted at a fraternity party in 2014, at which time her case could not be prosecuted due to gaps in the legal framework on sexual assault, particularly in situations involving intoxication or impairment. The legislation was introduced to address these gaps. The bipartisan measure, passed the TX House 135-2 and the Senate 31-0 before going to the governor. Learn more [HERE](#).

Likewise, a new TN law took effect Jan. 1, 2025, which mandates that all alcohol servers licensed with the TN Alcoholic Beverage Commission must receive training on the role of alcohol and drugs in sexual assault and best strategies to prevent drugging in establishments. Much of the training will come through TN's [Safe Bar Program](#). Check to see if your city has such a program.

Missouri Zontians have been working not only to end child marriage but also to end the state's prohibition on divorce during pregnancy. Missouri, Texas, Arizona, Arkansas, and California have laws that allow couples to file for divorce while one partner is expecting a baby but require them to wait until the baby is born for it to be finalized. In Alabama, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming, while the law does not require it, judges generally delay divorce until after a baby's birth. While these laws and practices have some rationale in relation to child support, child custody and paternity issues, they put pregnant women who are experiencing reproductive coercion or domestic violence at increased risk.

In the worst case scenario, a pregnant woman who can't divorce may die. Researchers from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health have found that homicide is the leading cause of death for pregnant women in America, ahead of deaths from hypertensive disorders, hemorrhage, or sepsis! They note that laws restricting women's access to reproductive care and options can also place women at increased risk, since control over a woman's reproductive choices often plays a role in intimate partner violence. Learn more [HERE](#). The ability to divorce while pregnant and safe access to reproductive health care go hand in hand in protecting women's health and safety.

Women and Tech

While the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) promises numerous advantages to society, there is a growing public concern around AI's impact on the stigmatization and marginalization of women on a global scale. A joint webinar of the ZI Advocacy and Council of Europe Committees on Sept. 29 at 1:00 pm ET will address "How is AI Impacting Gender Equality – Causes and Consequences." The webinar will address how algorithmic biases and discrimination are inherent to AI; solutions for dealing with this issue and ways AI can instead be used to reduce gender inequities; how the Council of Europe is tackling the unchecked development of AI; and a young person's perspective on navigating the use of AI. Register for this important webinar [HERE](#).