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Report: Status of US Women Still Unequal to Men

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The status of women in society is an issue all over the world, including in the United States, where a new report details indicators that American women are still not equal to American men.

The Institute of Women's Policy Research Tuesday released its fifth biennial report outlining the current state of American women in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

In presenting the wide-ranging survey, Institute president Heidi Hartmann said researchers looked at women's lives in five broad categories.

"Political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and, since 2000, health and well-being," she said.

Ms. Hartmann said on two main concrete indicators, wages and political representation, women in the United States are still behind men. She said on average, women make 76 cents for every dollar men make. She added that women hold only about 15 percent of the seats in both houses of the U.S. Congress.

"Overall, we have calculated that at the rate things are changing, it will be 50 years before women's paychecks equal men's. And it will be nearly a century before women take an equal share of seats in the U.S. Congress," she added.

Ms. Hartmann said for the first time, the report broke out information by race and ethnicity within each state and found that minority women fare even worse than white women in the United States.

"In eight states and the District of Columbia, for example, Hispanic women earn less than half of what white men earn for full-time, year-round work. To achieve earnings equality with men, it will take African-American women 75 years, not 50, and Asian-American women 135 years, if the rate of progress remains the same, as it has been since 1989," she said. "With respect to political representation, Asian and Native American women have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress at all."

She said she hopes the second Bush administration will raise the U.S. minimum wage, which is currently \$5.15 per hour.

Alma Morales Riojas, president of a Hispanic organization called MANA and C. Nicole Mason, of the National Women's Alliance, raised healthcare concerns.

"Health is at the top of the list," said Ms. Riojas. "The incidence of diabetes amongst the Latinos is extremely high and not enough is being done to take care of it."

"I just wanted to emphasize the need for more funding for research, particularly around the health disparities around HIV and AIDS, cancer and other ailments, with a particular attention towards understanding the needs and concerns of women and girls of color [minority women]," said Ms. Mason.

Improving women's access to education and to affordable housing were also high on the women's agenda.

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The hallways of Northeast High School in Kansas City are typical of most urban high schools: crowded, noisy and packed with just about every imaginable kind of teenager. They are tall and short?slim, medium and stout? black, white and Asian. Near a red-haired, skinny kid with an attempt at a beard, there's a group of dark-eyed girls wearing Muslim headscarves. But it's the medley of languages that identifies Northeast as a ...



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