

Obama Administration Record for Women and Girls

“I didn’t run for President so that the dreams of our daughters could be deferred or denied. I didn’t run for President to see inequality and injustice persist in our time. I ran for President to put the same rights, the same opportunities, and the same dreams within the reach for our daughters and our sons alike. I ran for President to put the American Dream within the reach of all of our people, no matter what their gender, or race, or faith, or station.”

-President Obama, March 8, 2010

In recent decades, women’s participation in the workforce has transformed the American economy. Today, nearly half of all primary breadwinners are women, and since 1970, women’s labor has contributed \$13,000 to the median family income and expanded the economy by \$2 trillion dollars. Young women today are also more likely than young men to graduate college, and just as likely to earn advanced degrees. Yet, despite these gains, women still earn just 77 cents for every dollar men earn, and women of color earn even less making it more difficult to provide for their families and secure the promise of the American dream. Women also experience unacceptably high levels of violence, from domestic abuse to sexual assault, and gender disparities persist in health care access and workplace policies.

From his earliest days in office, President Obama has worked to address these issues by combatting discrimination, expanding access to health care, supporting women-owned businesses and taking action to keep women safe from violence at home and in school. In addition, from creating the White House Council on Women and Girls to appointing two women to the Supreme Court and a strong team of women leaders to his Cabinet and White House staff, President Obama has taken concrete steps to ensure that women are involved in shaping every level of our government and that their voices are heard throughout society and all around the world.

Building on this commitment to supporting and fighting for women and working families, the President has made 2014 a Year of Action, focused on expanding opportunity for all Americans. A key part of this agenda is pursuing policies that help women succeed, recognizing the critical and growing contributions they make to our economy and its continued recovery. We know that when women succeed, American succeeds and the President will continue to use all of the tools at his disposal – working with members of Congress where they are willing, acting on his own where they aren’t, and partnering with business leaders, governors, mayors and other stakeholders – to take action on behalf of women, girls and their families.

The Obama Administration’s record of supporting women and girls includes:

- **Implementing Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women:**
 - **Establishing the White House Council on Women and Girls:** On March 11, 2009, President Obama signed an [Executive Order](#) creating the White House Council on Women and Girls (CWG). CWG is comprised of representatives from

each Federal agency, as well as the White House offices, and coordinates efforts across Federal agencies and departments to ensure that the needs of women and girls are taken into account in all programs, policies, and legislation. To aid in implementation of the CWG's mission, the President has created a number of positions, such as the first-ever White House Advisor on Violence Against Women and a Director for Human Rights and Gender at the White House National Security Council.

- **Creating an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues:** In 2013 President Obama signed a [Presidential Memorandum](#) that will help ensure that advancing the rights of women and girls remains central to U.S. diplomacy and development around the world - and that these efforts will continue to be led by public servants at the highest levels of the United States government. After appointing the United States' first-ever Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the beginning of his Administration, the Presidential Memorandum ensures that an Ambassador-at-Large reporting directly to the Secretary heads the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues.
- **Supporting Working Women and Families:**
 - **Promoting a Comprehensive Working Families Agenda:** On June 23rd, 2014, the White House partnered with the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Center for American Progress (CAP) to host the historic White House Summit on Working Families, which built on the President's plan to ensure a better bargain for hardworking Americans by elevating the ongoing national conversation about making today's workplace work for everyone. In preparation for the Summit, the White House Council on Women and Girls held discussions around the country with working families, employers, business and labor leaders, economists, and advocates to seek out new ideas for ensuring fair pay, encouraging more family-friendly workplaces, and improving and strengthening our businesses and our economy as a whole.
- **Fighting Pay Discrimination:**
 - In 2014, President Obama signed an Executive Order prohibiting federal contractors from retaliating against employees who choose to discuss their compensation. He also signed a Presidential Memorandum instructing the Secretary of Labor to establish new regulations requiring federal contractors to submit summary data on compensation paid to their employees to the Department of Labor, including data broken down by sex and race.
 - In 2010, the President created the National Equal Pay Task Force, which brings together the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, and the Office of Personnel Management to identify and rectify challenges to gender pay disparities. Since the creation of the Equal Pay Task Force, the EEOC has obtained more than \$91.5

million in monetary relief through administrative enforcement for victims of sex-based wage discrimination. The President continues to advocate for the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act, legislation that gives women additional tools to fight pay discrimination, and of course, the first piece of legislation President Obama signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which restored basic protections against pay discrimination.

- **Giving Working Families a Raise.** In 2014, President Obama signed an Executive Order raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 for workers on new federal contracts. He also called on Congress to raise the minimum wage for all workers to \$10.10 by 2016, and index this wage to the cost of living. The President's plan would benefit around 28 million workers. More than half of all workers who would benefit from increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 are women. Since the President called on Congress to act in his 2013 State of the Union address, 13 states and the District of Columbia have increased their own minimum wages.
- **Expanding Workplace Protections to More Families:** President Obama signed legislation that made it possible for flight attendants and crewmembers to access FMLA and expanded coverage for military families, and in June of 2014, the DOL announced a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to amend the definition of a "spouse" under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) so that eligible employees in legal same-sex marriages will be able to take FMLA leave to care for their spouse or family member, regardless of where they live.
- **Making Historic Investments to Expand Access to High-Quality Child Care and Early Education:** The President has prioritized continuous improvement of the Head Start program, which serves nearly one million children from birth to 5 each year. Through the Recovery Act, the President and Congress took important steps to expand Head Start and Early Head Start by adding more than 64,000 slots for these programs. ARRA investments in the Child Care and Development Fund also increased access to child care for an additional 300,000 children and families. In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama called on Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool for every child in America, and established a comprehensive early education agenda with a series of new investments to establish a continuum of high-quality early learning for a child—beginning at birth and continuing to age 5. In 2014, the Department of Health and Human Services began this work with a \$500 million competitive grant opportunity to support the expansion of Early Head Start and the creation of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and the Department of Education announced a \$250 million Preschool Development Grants competition to enhance state preschool programs and expand access to high-quality preschool for four-year-olds in high-need communities to model the President's Preschool for All vision.
- **Promoting Access to Child Care for Workers in Job Training Programs.** DOL will make funds available for technical skill training grants to provide low-wage individuals opportunities to advance in their careers in in-

demand industries, with \$25 million of the competition focused on addressing barriers to training faced by those with childcare responsibilities. These funds will give more working families a path to secure, higher wage jobs by addressing the significant barriers related to finding and acquiring affordable, high quality child care—including emergency care—while attending skills training programs.

- **Supporting State Paid Leave Programs:** Every one of President Obama’s budgets has included a State Paid Leave Fund (\$105m in FY15) that would help States with the start-up costs of creating their own paid leave programs. In June of 2014, DOL targeted funds for Paid Leave Analysis Grants to fund up to five states to conduct research and feasibility studies that could support the development or implementation of state paid leave programs.
- **Ensuring Minimum Wage and Overtime Protections for Home and Personal Care Workers:** In September 2013, the Administration released a final rule to provide minimum wage and overtime protections for workers who are employed providing in-home care services for the elderly, the ill and individuals with disabilities. This rule will help ensure that the nearly two million workers in this industry—roughly 90% of whom are women, and a large portion of them women of color—earn fair wages for a hard day’s work.
- **Attracting and Retaining Women and Girls in STEM:** Building a pathway to high-paying, high-skilled jobs for women and girls, the Administration has featured competitive preference for inspiring and engaging girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through the President’s \$4.35 billion Race to the Top program, the 2013 Youth Career Connect grants to redesign high schools so that students complete prepared for college and career, and additional education reform programs. Federal agencies have deployed their STEM workforce and have partnered with the private sector to increase mentorship of girls and women in STEM, for example, by DOE forming new partnerships with 100kin10 and US2020 to reach classrooms and mentors, respectively, with their Women @ Energy series profiling women in STEM careers to inspire the next generation of energy scientists and engineers. Supporting and retaining America’s female scientists and engineers was a focus of the June 2014 White House Summit on Working Families at which NSF announced implementation nearly a year ahead of schedule of cost allowance policies for childcare at professional conferences that lessened the challenges for working families and NIH released a comprehensive summary of research on barriers and opportunities to attract and retain women in biomedical science careers and is using that evidence base to guide Administration policies to broaden participation and success of women in STEM fields.
- **Tax Credits for Working Families.** Early in his Administration, President Obama pushed for significant improvements to tax credits for working families, which Congress extended on a bipartisan basis through 2017. These improvements include expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and

Child Tax Credit, which strengthen work incentives and help parents afford the costs of raising a family, and the creation of the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which helps working and middle-class families pay for college. Together, these improvements provide about \$25 billion in tax relief to 26 million families every year.

- **The Federal Government as a Model Employer:** To strengthen the government's position as a model employer for working families, in 2014 President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum to support executive departments and agencies in their efforts to better utilize existing and develop new workplace flexibilities and work-life programs, including making Federal employees aware of their right to request work schedule flexibilities. Additionally, in 2010 President Obama signed the Telework Enhancement Act which requires Federal agencies to promote the use of telework. Furthermore, in 2010 the President signed legislation establishing an Office of Minority and Women Inclusion in the Department of Treasury, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), each of the Federal Reserve Banks, the Federal Reserve Board, the National Credit Union Administration, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Each office is responsible for all matters of its agency related to diversity in management, employment and business activities.
- **Supporting Mothers Who Choose to Breastfeed:** As a result of the Affordable Care Act that President Obama signed into law, many women will now be provided reasonable break times and space at work to express breast milk, up until a child's first birthday. The U.S. Surgeon General also launched a nationwide effort to support mothers who are breastfeeding. In addition, USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program has provided nutrition assistance and breastfeeding support to more than two million low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, as well as to their children.
- **Expanding Women's Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care:**
 - **Preventing Insurance Companies from Denying Coverage or Raising Premiums Based on Gender or Pre-Existing Conditions, Including Pregnancy:** The Affordable Care Act (ACA) ensures that every American can access high-quality, affordable coverage, providing health insurance to millions of Americans. More than 4.3 million women and girls enrolled in coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace in the first historic open enrollment period, and many more gained coverage through Medicaid. In addition, as of 2012, 1.1 million women between the ages of 19 and 25 who would have been uninsured currently receive health coverage under a parent's health insurance plan or through an individually purchased health insurance plan.

- **Making Women’s Preventive Health Care Affordable, Including Contraception:** Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, most insurance plans must cover preventive services including contraception, mammograms, HIV testing and counseling, domestic violence counseling, and testing for gestational diabetes with no deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance. As of June 2014, due to the Affordable Care Act, 29.7 million women are estimated to have access to expanded preventive services coverage in private insurance plans.
- **Protecting Women’s Access to Reproductive Health Services.** President Obama has consistently supported and defended Title X family planning clinics, proposing funding increases for these clinics above prior year levels in each year of his Administration. For many women, a family planning clinic is their entry point into the health care system and is their primary source of care. These services are highly cost-effective, saving \$4 for every \$1 spent.
- **Preventing Teen Pregnancy and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students.** As part of his FY 2015 Budget, the President included \$105 million to support community efforts to reduce teen pregnancy. Additionally, \$7 million in Public Health Service Act evaluation funding is included for the evaluation of teen pregnancy prevention activities. Teen pregnancy funding will be used for replicating programs that have proven effective through rigorous evaluation to reduce teenage pregnancy; for research and demonstration grants to develop, replicate, refine and test additional models and innovative strategies; and for training, technical assistance, and outreach. In addition, in June 2013, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights issued a Dear Colleague Letter and Pamphlet on “Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972” (June 25, 2013) to help support pregnant and parenting students.
- **Improving Maternal and Child Health Outcomes:** The Administration launched the Maternal Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, which supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs for at-risk families during pregnancy and children’s early years of life in over 700 communities and in all 50 states. In March 2014, Congress allocated \$400 million through the Protecting Access to Medicare Act, to provide grants to support states that encourage positive parenting, help prevent child abuse and neglect, and promote child development and school readiness..
- **Expanding Opportunities for Women-Owned Businesses:**
 - **Increasing Access to Credit for Women Business Owners:** The President has expanded Small Business Administration (SBA) loans, which are three to five times more likely to be made to minority- and women-owned businesses than conventional small business loans made by banks. Between January 2009 and December 2013, SBA made 57,831 loans worth \$17.2 billion to women-owned

businesses. In 2013 alone, SBA made \$3.8 billion in capital available to women, a 31% increase since 2009.

- **Expanding Access to Federal Contracting for Women Business Owners:** The Obama Administration has implemented the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program, which helps level the playing field for women-owned small businesses in over 300 industries where women are underrepresented by giving them greater access to Federal contracting opportunities. In FY 2012, SBA awarded \$16.2 billion of federal small business eligible contracting dollars to WOSBs. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 removed the caps on the contracts that were eligible for this program, and in 2013 SBA worked quickly to implement the cap removal, allowing contracting officers to set aside contracts with higher dollar amounts.
- **Protecting Women From Violence:**
 - **Combating Sexual Assault on College Campuses:** On January 22, 2014 the President signed a Presidential Memorandum establishing a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. On April 29, 2014, the Task Force released its first 90-days report with recommendations and actions focused on helping schools identify the extent of sexual assault on their campuses through climate surveys, developing evidence-based prevention strategies to prevent sexual assault, helping schools to respond effectively when a student is sexually assaulted, providing training for school officials, and improving and making more transparent federal enforcement efforts. The Office on Civil Rights at the Department of Education has ramped up enforcement of federal civil rights laws and raised the visibility of federal investigations at colleges and universities. The Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has provided critical grants, training and support to help schools develop comprehensive sexual assault prevention and response programs. DOJ's Civil Rights Division has vigorously enforced civil rights laws prohibiting sex discrimination on campus and in communities, including sexual assault and harassment, resulting in landmark agreements over the last two years that provided robust and comprehensive protections for students from sexual assault and gender biased policing.
 - **Improving the Response to Rape and Sexual assault.** The Obama Administration has developed an unprecedented response to rape and sexual assault. In 2011, the National Institute of Justice developed pilot projects to address the backlog of rape kits in targeted cities. In 2012, the Department of Justice modernized the FBI's Uniform Crime Report definition of rape, which will lead to a more comprehensive statistical reporting of rape nationwide. For the first time, rapes of men and boys will be included in our national crime statistics. The old definition- which only covers rape of women by force- did not capture the true impact of this crime. President Obama's 2015 budget proposes additional funds to further improve the response to rape and sexual assault by testing more

rape kits, developing cold case units to investigate these crimes, and developing trauma-informed law enforcement practices.

- **The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).** Authored by then-Senator Biden in 1994, VAWA provides resources for states and local communities to improve the criminal justice response to violence against women and to support victim services. On March 7, 2013, President Obama signed the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 2013, which includes provisions that support the sovereignty of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and hold perpetrators accountable – a necessary step to reducing violence against Native women. The reauthorization of VAWA also ensures that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survivors have access to the services they need and deserve; protecting victims in publicly subsidized housing from evictions or denials of housing because of the violence they have experienced; and adds protections for college students. Altogether, VAWA authorizes nearly \$500 million each year, administered by the Office on Violence Against Women, to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Addressing the Intersection of Violence and HIV/AIDS.** In 2012, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum creating the Federal Working Group on HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women, and Gender-related Health Disparities. Women make up a quarter of the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic, with Black and Latina women accounting for over three quarters of the new HIV infections annually. Studies show that more than half of all HIV-positive women have experienced violence in their lifetime. In 2013, the interagency federal working group developed a 56-point action plan, with a focus on women of color, to improve screening for intimate partner violence (IPV) and HIV, address violence and trauma among HIV positive women in care, expand HIV and IPV outreach, education, and prevention, and promote increased research around HIV and women/girls.
- **Leading by Example in the Federal Workplace.** Many victims of domestic violence report being harassed at work, and the CDC estimates that domestic violence costs our national economy more than 8 billion dollars a year in lost productivity and health care costs alone. Employers can make a difference by supporting victims and ensuring safe workplaces. To lead by example, President Obama announced new efforts to help combat and prevent domestic violence in the federal workplace. In April 2012, the President directed federal agencies to develop policies to address the effects of domestic violence and provide assistance for employees who may be experiencing domestic violence. These policies will also serve as a model for private sector employers.
- **Preventing Teen Dating Violence.** In 2011, Vice President Biden created the *1 is 2 Many Campaign* to raise awareness about teen dating violence and sexual assault. That same year, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) at the Justice Department provided funding for the National Dating Abuse Helpline to

use the latest technology to be available around the clock by text, online chat, or phone so that teens and young adults can reach out in the way they feel most comfortable. OVW also provided grants to help middle and high schools address dating violence by training school administrators, faculty, and staff; developing school-wide policies; providing support services; creating effective prevention strategies; and collaborating with local victim service providers. In 2013, the Department of Education sent an important Dear Colleague letter to school districts around the country urging them to address gender-based violence and providing training materials that can help.

- **Funding Culturally Specific Programs:** Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Department of Justice funds grants to provide culturally specific services in underserved communities. Through these grants, community-based providers partner with domestic violence and sexual assault programs to develop services that are relevant and driven by community needs. Over the past five years, the Department has provided \$43 million in grants to develop these services. In 2012, the Department created a priority focus on underserved African American communities, and the Department funds national training and technical assistance efforts through the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault and the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community. The Department of Health and Human Services also funds the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community and the National Latin@ Network to advance effective, culturally specific remedies for domestic violence.
- **Combating Human Trafficking at Home and Abroad:** In March 2012, President Obama directed his Cabinet to redouble the Administration's efforts to eliminate human trafficking, which afflicts people around the world and here at home, including millions of women and girls. Building from the strong record of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and its member agencies, the Administration has announced a series of new commitments to combat human trafficking at home and abroad. These commitments stem from a strategic framework focused on raising public awareness; educating first responders and law enforcement; increased prosecution of traffickers; protecting survivors through comprehensive social services; and partnering with civil society, state and local government, the private sector, and faith-based organizations to maximize resources and outcomes. Key Administration initiatives include Executive Order (EO) 13627, which strengthens protections against human trafficking in federal government contracts; the first ever Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States, to ensure that all victims of human trafficking in the United States are identified and have access to the services they need to recover and to rebuild their lives; and the report of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships entitled, "Building Partnerships to Eradicate Modern-Day Slavery," demonstrating the commitment of a distinguished set of civic and religious leaders to strengthen and expand partnerships with government to prevent and combat trafficking.

- **Ensuring Justice for Women and Girls:**

- **Protecting the Rights of Young Women of Color:** The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division has been re-invigorated over the past five years, and much of its work has protected the constitutional and statutory rights of women, often young women of color. Among a significant body of work, the Division has used the Fair Housing Act to protect women from severe and pervasive sexual harassment by landlords. These victims are typically low-income women with few housing options who are subjected to repeated sexual advances and/or sexual assault. The Division has also worked to help combat violence against women. For example, after investigating the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), the Division found that NOPD was failing to properly investigate violence against women. The Division expressed similar concerns about the Puerto Rico Police Department and Maricopa County (AZ) Sheriff's Office.
- The Division has also entered into groundbreaking settlements with school districts and police departments to disrupt the school to prison pipeline by addressing racial discrimination in school discipline after finding that black students received far harsher consequences than white students for comparable misbehavior. We know this work has a significant impact on girls of color, because the Department of Education's most recent Civil Rights Data Collection found that nationwide, black girls are suspended at higher rates (12%) than girls of any other race or ethnicity and most boys; American Indian and Native-Alaskan girls (7%) are suspended at higher rates than white boys (6%) or girls (2%).
- **Improving the Juvenile Justice System's Response to Girls:** The number of girls arrested has grown by 50 percent since 1980; and Native American girls are four times more likely, and African American girls are three times more likely, to be incarcerated than white girls. To help address this disparity, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) supported multiple projects to better meet the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. Projects include an effort to improve services for system-involved girls and develop gender-responsive, trauma-informed policies and practices, as well as a study to better understand the impact of juvenile justice system involvement on adolescent maturation, trajectories of delinquency, and young adult adjustment among females. OJJDP will also evaluate the Young Women Leaders Program, a one-on-one and group-based mentoring program to prevent delinquency and related outcomes in at-risk girls.
- **Addressing Racial Disparities in School Discipline Policies:** Schools should provide pathways to opportunity, yet African American, American Indian and Native Alaskan girls receive out-of-school suspension at higher rates than other girls and most boys, increasing the likelihood that they will become involved in the juvenile justice system. In 2014, the Department of Justice and the

Department of Education launched the Supportive School Discipline Initiative to disrupt the “school-to-prison pipeline” and ensure that no child’s future is diverted or derailed by school discipline policies.

- **Providing Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care:** In May 2014, as part of National Foster Care Month, The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services released a letter emphasizing the role Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) play in partnership with child welfare to increase educational stability for children in the foster care system. In any given year, there are approximately 400,000 children in foster care, approximately half of whom are girls. Youth in foster care face unique and compounded challenges, especially when it comes to education—they’re at high-risk of dropping out of school and are unlikely to attend or graduate from college. Ensuring educational stability is a crucial step in helping the most vulnerable among us.
- **Supporting Women in the Military and Women Veterans:**
 - **Expanded Health Care and Outreach for Women Veterans and Service Members:** With 2.2 million women Veterans in America, VA is working to provide comprehensive health care for women Veterans, including 141 full-time Women Veterans Program Managers at every VA health care system.
 - **Women Veterans Hotline:** In FY 2013, VA expanded its outreach to women Veterans through a new hotline (1-855-VA-WOMEN) to respond to questions from Veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans. This hotline enhanced an outbound-only call center, improving responsiveness to women Veterans’ needs. The service began accepting calls in April 2013 and, as of the end of FY 2013, more than 20,000 women Veterans’ calls were received.
 - **Women Veterans Program:** In September 2012, VA launched a new Department-wide Women Veterans Program (WVP) to better coordinate and enhance access to, and delivery of, VA benefits and services for women Veterans. In the first year, this new WVP structure has improved collaboration and consistency in Department-wide operational activity, as well as engagement with, and communication to, women Veterans. Further, through the WVP, VA deployed innovative and evidence-based employee training that has improved understanding of women’s military contributions and raised awareness of the importance of cultural competency in providing quality services to Veterans.
 - **Supporting Women in the Military and Women Veterans by Opening Ground Combat Positions to Women.** In February 2012, the Department of Defense announced its intention to eliminate the “co-location exclusion” barring women U.S. military service members from being co-located with ground combat units, a change that opened over 13,000 new positions to women soldiers. In January 2013, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced rescission of the

1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule prohibiting assignment of women to direct ground combat units below the brigade level, and directed the opening of all remaining closed units and positions consistent with the Joint Chiefs' Guiding Principles by January 1, 2016. The decision opens up about 237,000 positions to women -- 184,000 in combat arms professions and 53,000 assignments that were closed based on unit type.

- **Eliminating Military Sexual Assault:** In May 2013, the President directed the Department of Defense to exponentially step up its game in addressing the rates of sexual assault in the military. Since that time, the Secretary of Defense announced 26 executive actions, including the implementation of the Special Victim's Counsel program which provides legal representation to victims of sexual assault. The Administration worked with Congress to reform the military justice system to improve victim's rights and hold offenders appropriately accountable. To determine what progress has been made and where to focus future efforts, the in December 2013, the President directed the DOD to provide him a report assessing their progress towards eliminating sexual assault in the military.
- **Supporting Women and Girls Worldwide:**
 - **Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment:** The United States is leading new efforts in a range of multilateral forums to advance women's economic empowerment and help spur economic growth worldwide, from brokering new commitments to increase female labor force participation in the G20 to increasing women's entrepreneurship in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The Administration has launched several signature regional programs to drive reforms and investments, including the [APEC Women and the Economy initiative](#), the [Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas](#) (WEAmericas) initiative, and the [African Women's Entrepreneurship Program](#) (AWEP). In 2009, the Administration launched the [Feed the Future initiative](#) to advance food security worldwide, with a priority focus on women agricultural producers as critical drivers of economic growth.
 - **Promoting the Health of Women and Families.** President Obama has placed women, girls, and gender equality at the heart of his global health agenda, including through the [Global Health Initiative](#) (GHI). The [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief](#) (PEPFAR) has ensured a comprehensive approach to gender issues in HIV prevention, treatment, and care, including working to provide access to life-long anti-retroviral treatment for both mothers and their children. In January 2009, President Obama rescinded the Mexico City Policy which denied federal funds to health care and aid organizations that used non-U.S. government funding to perform or offer information about abortion services. USAID advances and supports voluntary family planning programs in more than 45 countries across the globe. In FY 2013 for example, USAID's family planning programs reached more than 84 million women and averted 21 million unintended

pregnancies, preventing 15,000 maternal deaths and saving the lives of more than 230,000 infants. The U.S. Government has also restored funding to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), providing over \$200 million in funding since 2009 to the largest multilateral provider of family planning and reproductive health information and services with programs in 150 countries.

- **Empowering Women as Equal Partners in Preventing Conflict and Building Peace:** On December 19, 2011, the Obama Administration released Executive Order 13595 and the [U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security](#) to support women's voices and perspectives in decision-making in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity. Policies and programs work to strengthen prospects for peace and security through the empowerment and protection from violence of women and girls in countries affected by crisis, insecurity, and political transition. As part of this effort, the U.S. launched the [Safe from the Start](#) initiative in 2013 to better address the needs of women and girls and other groups at risk of GBV in emergencies.
- **Addressing Gender-based Violence:** On August 10, 2012, President Obama issued [Executive Order 13623](#) directing departments and agencies to implement the first ever [United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally](#). The Department of State and USAID have led the United States' work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence by ensuring that this issue is integrated in diplomacy and development efforts.
- **Creating a New Multilateral Partnership on Women's Political and Economic Participation.** The Administration launched the [Equal Futures Partnership](#) in September 2012, which brings together partner countries from around the world to break down barriers to women's political and economic empowerment in their countries through legal, regulatory and policy reforms. U.S. commitments to the partnership have focused on supporting women entrepreneurs and civic education and leadership development for women and girls.

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