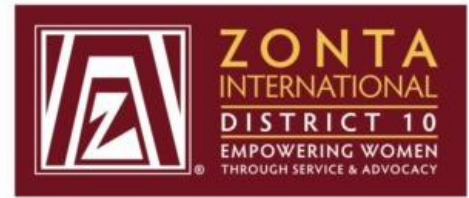


September, 2023

Zonta District 10 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.

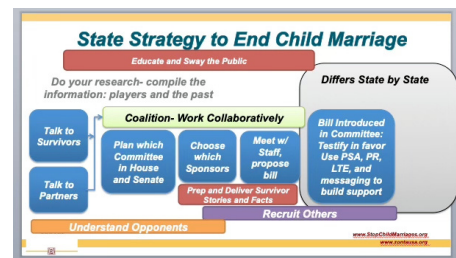
Ending Child Marriage

Two more states have ended child marriage! In June, Connecticut Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz signed a bill into law increasing the legal age to be married from 16 to 18, making Connecticut the ninth state to end child marriage. In July, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed part of a legislative package, and the legislature has passed the remaining bills to complete the package to end child marriage. The latter bills await signature by Governor Whitmer, at which time Michigan will officially become the tenth state to completely end the practice.

Zonta clubs are helping organize state coalitions to end child marriage in **California** and **Washington**. If you have contacts with organizations in these states that might be interested in joining the coalitions, contact **Katherine Cleland**. Zonta clubs in Southern California will hold a press event October 5 at noon at Burbank City Hall, as part of the D9 Conference. Speakers will include the Mayor of Burbank and state legislators. The Zonta Club of North Puget Sound (aka Zonta Club of Everett) is planning a webinar on child marriage on November 18.

While state law dictates the minimum age for marriage, Unchained at Last has identified ten provisions in federal law that provide incentives for child marriage. The National Coalition to End Child Marriage is working on wording for a bill to change these federal laws and is trying to identify a bi-partisan, bi-cameral group of legislators to sponsor such a bill. Watch this space for updates!

Looking for an easy way to educate your club members and others about child marriage? Consider a watch party to view Journalist Elizabeth Vargas' two-hour documentary special airing on Hulu titled **"I Was A Child Bride: The Untold Story."** It includes an interview with Unchained's founder, Fraidy Reiss, discussing forced and child marriage in the US, as well as the heartbreaking stories of four US child marriage survivors. If your state hasn't ended child marriage, find detailed information on how to help end the practice in your state on the Zonta **website**.



Period Poverty

If you are interested in a tangible and direct way to help women impacted by the recent devastating wildfires in Lāhaina, Maui, consider supporting the efforts of the Ma'i Movement, which has heavy involvement from Zontians in Hawaii, to get menstrual products to victims of the fire in shelters and evacuation centers. As Ma'i states, "Periods don't stop for disasters and menstrual products are one of the most overlooked items when disaster hits." You can purchase items from the Ma'i **Amazon wishlist**. Or consider a donation to the **Maui Strong Fund by Hawai'i Community Foundation**.

Equal Rights Amendment

The Seneca Falls ERA Convention in NY, July 21–23 commemorated the 100th anniversary of the original Seneca Falls Convention, one of the most important events in the women's suffrage movement. The focus of THIS convention was to engage a younger generation of women, to take on the challenge of getting the ERA recognized as the 28th Amendment. The event was sponsored by **Generation Ratify**, a youth-led movement to ratify the ERA and advance gender equality in the US. Their mission is to build a coalition of young people across the country that empowers and advocates for the full equality of young women.

Tickets to the event were free for anyone under 25, and the Zonta USA Caucus offered additional financial assistance to any Zontian or Golden Z member under 25 attending the event. Two young members, Olivia Dyer, ZC of Upper Hudson Valley and Kyoko Miyake, Golden ZC Oswego NY took advantage of this opportunity and were accompanied by “seasoned” Zonta members, Dinzey Dyre (Olivia’s grandmother) and Blanche Anderson.

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley has filed a discharge petition to bring HJ Res 25, the resolution to affirm the ERA and remove the time limit, to the House floor for a vote. The petition needs signatures from 218 House members but currently has only 182. **Ask your member of the House** to sign the discharge petition if he/she has not already done so. And ask your **state** legislature to pass a state bill affirming the ERA as the 28th Amendment, as have **California, Colorado, Minnesota**, Michigan, Hawaii and Illinois.

On August 26, the White House issued a **Proclamation on Women’s Equality Day** stating that it is past time to “definitively enshrine the principle of gender equality in the Constitution,” but going no farther.

Read about the connection between ocean conservation and gender equality in this **article** from the ERA Coalition.

Climate Action

ZI International Director, Renee Coppock, recently gave the Caucus an update on a landmark Montana court case in which **the judge found** that the state’s policy for evaluating requests for fossil fuel permits, which does not allow agencies to consider the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, violates the state constitution. Further, the judge determined that Montana’s fossil fuel emissions contributed to harm suffered by the 16 young environmental activist plaintiffs, including not only physical ailments but also “mental health injuries stemming from the effects of climate change on Montana’s environment, feelings like loss, despair, and anxiety.”

The ruling rested on a somewhat unique provision in the Montana constitution that guarantees residents “the right to a clean and healthful environment,” and holds the state responsible. However, the court’s ruling has potential implications for other lawsuits, due to the extensive information in the record on climate science and projections from experts that can be cited in future cases, as well as its finding that climate change harms children.

The Climate Committee has planned three more Think Tanks: November 5 focusing on cold weather preparedness; January or February on financial preparedness; and April/May on heat, fire, hurricane and flood preparedness. The Committee is also planning 10 Days of Activism, March 1–10. Watch for information packets in February.

The bipartisan and bicameral Conservation and Innovative Climate Partnership Act of 2023 (S. 900 and H.R. 2719) would bridge the divide between the innovative research taking place at land-grant institutions and those who farm for a living by helping family farms adopt climate-friendly strategies like planting cover crops and using no-till practices. Urge your legislators to co-sponsor and support these bills with Zonta’s pre-prepared **letters**.

Gender-Based Violence

ZI launched an initiative for the [2023 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) with two online meetings with ZI President Ute and other ZI dignitaries. If you missed the sessions, you can watch the recordings [HERE](#) (passcode nAZ3++Y-) and [HERE](#) (PC B2i#g48B) and find the slides for the presentation [HERE](#). ZI is especially urging clubs to make their activities for the campaign visible so that more people learn about Zonta and to share their stories on this easy-to-use [form](#). Check out ZI's [Public Relations Tools for 16 Days](#) including logos, images and banners. Watch for additional resources as they are added.

D10 is adopting the assembly of [Beloved Bundles](#) and related advocacy activities around sexual assault as a district-wide 16 Days service/advocacy project. [Project Beloved](#), a non-profit organization founded by Tracy Matheson, in response to the rape and murder of her daughter, provides the bundles to sexual assault survivors who have a forensic exam (or rape kit), allowing them to leave the exam with dignity and the knowledge that someone cares. Bundles include simple clothing, undergarments, travel size hygiene products and stress-relieving items. PB funds the bundle items, and volunteers organize and assemble items and deliver the bundles locally.

The project will involve locating a sexual assault center, hospital or other location that does Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exams or accompanies survivors to exams, that do not currently have but want bundles, and assembling them for the groups. It's a perfect volunteer project, as no money donations are required (although always welcome), and volunteers get the satisfaction of knowing they are directly benefitting sexual assault survivors. Learn more about [the assembly process](#) and check the PB [website](#) to see what location(s) near you already have bundles.

The project will also include a strong advocacy component. PB Founder, Tracy Matheson will give a virtual talk on October 3 at 7:00 pm Central time to discuss her story, what she has learned about sexual assault, and the laws she has helped get passed in Texas to assist in prosecution of rapists so that they are unable to offend again. All Zontians are invited to join D10 on the [Zoom talk](#), which will also be recorded for those who can't attend and available to share with your club. You may also want to share "Dateline's" interesting [episode](#) about Tracy's daughter's case focused on the serial nature of rape and the need for law enforcement agencies to communicate with each other.

In addition, D10 is working on a toolkit that will provide educational materials about sexual assault and suggestions for ways to address it at federal, state and local levels. Watch the D10 [website](#) for the toolkit coming soon. Your club's president should have received a letter detailing the project along with a list of possible locations for bundle donation near each club. If you have questions or need help with any aspect of the project contact [Therese Hartwell](#).

Thousands of men, women and children are trafficked in the US each year. According to the American Psychological Association, 7 in 10 human trafficking victims are women and girls. The impact of human trafficking is serious and can cause a loss of basic human rights, loss of one's childhood, disruption in families and devastating mental health consequences. S. 670 and H.R. 1405, the bipartisan and bicameral IMPACT Human Trafficking Act, will enhance the Dept of Homeland Security's ability to combat human trafficking, allowing survivors to receive improved support and providing law enforcement with more resources to combat these crimes. Urge your legislators to co-sponsor and support these bills using Zonta's [pre-prepared letters](#).

Health and Other Challenges of Motherhood

While motherhood can be one of the most rewarding of experiences, mothers in the US face a myriad of challenges, including those related to physical and mental health. Check out this [article](#) about the stresses and struggles for American mothers and how the ERA helps address those challenges.

In August, the Zonta USA Caucus issued a [statement](#) for Mother's Equal Pay Day, August 15, 2023, the day this year until which mothers working full-time must work to match the previous year's earnings of non-Hispanic white men. Factors such as barriers to good-paying jobs, disproportionate care-giving responsibilities, and lack of affordable childcare and paid family and medical leave contribute to women having difficulty joining or staying in the workforce. The pay gap over time results not only in women having less personal buying power but also in their decreased economic security.

Despite advances in modern medicine, the US has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the developed world and, according to a [study](#) by the Center for Disease Control, these rates continue to rise! A maternal death is defined by the WHO as "the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy..." The study found that in 2021, 1,205 women died of maternal causes in the US compared with 861 in 2020 and 754 in 2019. The maternal mortality rate for 2021 was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared with a rate of 23.8 in 2020 and 20.1 in 2019.

Significant racial and ethnic disparities also continue to exist. In 2021, the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic Black women was 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, **2.6 times** the rate for non-Hispanic White women (26.6), with rates for Black women being significantly higher than rates for White and Hispanic women. The increases from 2020 to 2021 for all race and Hispanic-origin groups were significant.

One leading cause of maternal death relates to high blood pressure or hypertension, which is often preventable. Minor problems with blood pressure can be amplified by the extra stress pregnancy puts on a woman's body, or problems can start during pregnancy. But too often hypertension is diagnosed late because either the mother or the medical provider doesn't see it as a big risk. In addition, in the US, medical concerns of women of color are more likely to go unheard, and they are more likely to be mistreated, leading to hypertension-related complications going undetected until they become a crisis. Further, other inequities rooted in historical and structural racism, such as lack of access to healthy food, can increase the incidence of high blood pressure in women of color. Learn more [HERE](#).

The bipartisan Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act of 2023 (S. 2415 and H.R. 3838) would reauthorize federal support for state-based maternal committees to review pregnancy-related deaths to identify causes and make recommendations to prevent future mortalities. The legislation would also require the CDC to help disseminate best practices to prevent maternal mortality to hospitals and other health care providers. Use [Zonta's pre-drafted letters](#) to urge your legislators to co-sponsor and support these bills or thank them for already doing so.

Women in the late stages of pregnancy and the months post-partum, may also suffer from post-partum depression. In August, the U.S. [FDA approved Zurzuva](#) (zuranolone), the first oral medication to treat the condition in adults. Until now, treatment for PPD was only available as an IV injection given in certain health care facilities.

On a bright note for mothers, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act gives major new rights to pregnant, postpartum, and pumping workers! Share this [checklist](#) with covered individuals you know and watch to be sure your place of employment is implementing these measures.