



Republican Women Offer Real Solutions for Empowering Women in Need

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Many of today's young families do not remember the 1970s—its wrap-around-the-block gas lines or spirit-crushing inflation. But they are beginning to understand why it is considered one of the low points in the American economic psyche: because history is coming close to repeating itself. Today, the cost of food at home is up 13.1%. Groceries have not been this expensive in 40 years. Even with recent declines at the pump, the national average for gas is more than 55 cents higher than a year ago.

These are not academic statistics. These are literally the bread and butter of a family budget. In fact, a loaf of bread costs \$3.08 on average now, 39 cents more than it was just one year ago. Butter costs 27% more. And a pound of chicken breast has gone up 25% in the past year, costing a family an average of \$4.10.

This is the cost of feeding your children; of making sure your children do not go to bed hungry. One in 10 families is struggling to do that right now. There is a lot of talk about empowering the young, struggling mothers who lead many of these families, often as single parents. But the time has passed for talk. Republicans have proposed real solutions, and now that they will control the House of Representatives, it is time to take action on them.

Real solutions to empower these women are policies that make child care more affordable and accessible. For instance, small, family-based child care providers typically cost 25% less than center-based providers, but—in part due to costly and excessive regulations—the number of family providers plummeted 52% between 2005 and 2017.

Rep. Michelle Fischbach, R-Minn., has introduced the Child Care Choices Act, which makes it easier for young mothers to find home-based, family-based, and faith-based options for child care. Rep. Ashley Hinson, R-Iowa, has proposed the Child CARE Act, which would examine state and local regulatory burdens that make child care more expensive, such as the requirement in Washington, D.C., that all child care workers have college educations.

Additionally, the Republican Study Committee's Family Policy Agenda includes a proposal to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to treat employer-provided child care benefits like health care and retirement benefits. The RSC agenda would expand options for low-income families by allowing them to use Head Start funds (roughly \$10,000 per child) at providers of their choice.

Real solutions to empower women are policies that improve workplace flexibility. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa, has introduced the Workflex for the 21st Century Act, which gives companies the ability to offer qualified flexible workplace arrangements to their employees, including telework, job sharing, flexible scheduling, and compressed or biweekly work schedules.

And Rep. Mary Miller, R-Ill., has proposed the Working Families Flexibility Act, which would give private sector workers the same options that federal workers have had since 1978 to accrue paid time off in lieu of overtime pay.

Real solutions to empower women are policies that uplift these young women with job training and education. Reps. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., and Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., introduced the REAL Reform Act, which includes provisions that open up federal Pell Grants to skills-based training programs that can lead to good-paying jobs. A college degree and graduate degrees are not the right path for everyone.

Apprenticeships can also be a way for people to gain education and experience for great careers while getting paid instead of paying tuition, but the government's Registered Apprenticeship Programs are limited to legacy trades and male-dominated careers. And the Biden administration just outlawed a thriving new apprenticeship system that had been rapidly expanding options for women, such as in nursing. The Developing America's Workforce Act and Training America's Workforce Act would revive industry-recognized apprenticeship programs.

Moreover, as the Biden administration is trying to make it harder for people—including many women who are balancing work and caring for children or family members—to work independently as contractors or freelancers, Republican lawmakers have introduced bills like the Employee Rights Act that would protect workers' freedoms.

True empowerment comes in providing a woman with the support she needs when she lacks hope, when she feels alone, and when her circumstances make it difficult to see a pathway forward for her and her children. True empowerment is about providing her with the options that help her build a better life for herself and her family—a life that stands on a solid foundation of her own sense of dignity and worth.

The women that need our help right now are often without job training or education. They may have fled an abusive relationship or be without family support. They are among the more than 60% of American living paycheck to paycheck. Republican women have been crafting real solutions to uplift these women. As the gavel passes to them in the House, we have an opportunity to act on their vision.