

**Indiana Commission for Women  
Hoosier INsight  
Bloomington Public Listening Session Report  
Ivy Tech Community College - Bloomington  
Monday, April 18, 2011  
5:00-7:00 pm**

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## Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a public listening session on Monday, April 18, 2011, on the campus of Ivy Tech Community College in Bloomington, Indiana. The time of the session was 5:00pm – 7:00pm in order to better accommodate individuals work schedules. The session started a few minutes late to allow for people who were coming from work and other prior commitments.

As a group, the participants identified twenty (20) issues facing women in Indiana. By consensus, the group voted and determined that the top issues facing women that should be addressed during the listening session were: 1) Comprehensive reproductive issues; and 2) More women in elected legislative positions. An in-depth discussion of these priorities was completed in small groups. Each group was asked to answer specific questions regarding their issue and to start developing a plan of action for addressing the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussions are detailed later in this report.

## Participants

The Bloomington public listening session was sponsored by Cathi Crabtree, Chair of the Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women, Regina Moore, Bloomington City Clerk and the Area 10 Agency on Aging Rural Transit. They provided support by publicizing the session, getting information out to the community and providing refreshments for the participants. The session was promoted in a variety of ways. The sponsoring groups sent it out to their members and also contacted many groups and individuals in the community. A press release for the session was also sent out and resulted in being picked up by multiple local news outlets. It was sent out on the ICW listserv and previous Torchbearers and ICW Advisory Board Members were invited.

ICW utilized EventBrite to register participants. Three (3) participants took advantage of the online service; however a total of six (6) women attended the listening session.

## Issues Identified

The participants of the listening session identified issues they believed were barriers to women's full participation in society. These issues were then voted on to determine the top two issues facing women in Indiana. Each participant was given three (3) votes that she could use to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to the issue represent the number of votes that issue received from the participants.

*Comprehensive Reproductive Issues (7)*

*More (progressive) women needed in elected legislative positions (4)*

Affordable low-income housing (1)

Wage equity (1)

Fair labor – career opportunities

Women-owned businesses – lack of support

Affordable child care (3)

All-day kindergarten (1)

~ Head Start

~ Early education

Prenatal health care

Domestic violence issues – comprehensive community response  
Family education on parenting  
Health care – affordable and quality (1) / multi-phase  
Continuing skills-based training, education and retention  
Lack of girls in STEMM careers (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine)  
Non-traditional jobs  
Needs of older women (1)

- ~ Marginalization
- ~ lack of support after death of spouse
- ~ children not living near

More financial literacy  
Advocacy at time of divorce  
Comprehensive sex education  
Self-esteem and empowerment of young girls

## **Top Issues & Discussion**

The top issues that were identified by the participants were:

1. Comprehensive reproductive issues
2. More women needed in elected legislative positions

Once these issues were identified, the participants broke up into two groups of three people to continue the discussion on the components of each issue. Participants were asked to consider a series of questions regarding these issues in order to start developing a plan of action for how we should work to overcome these challenges in Indiana. The questions were divided into five categories and are listed below.

Frame It

1. What are the critical components of this issue?
2. What should be addressed first?

What's in Place Now?

3. Are there any existing programs in place to help solve this issue?
4. Are there any agencies or organizations who currently deal with this issue?

Who should be involved?

5. Who are the people/organizations that should be involved in this issue?
6. Who should be responsible for strategizing ideas and implementing solutions for this issue?

Community/State Actions

7. How can the community work on solving this issue?
8. Is this an issue that should be addressed statewide? How?

Next Steps

9. What resources are needed to work on this issue?
10. What are the next steps that should be taken to address this issue?

## Issue #1: Comprehensive reproductive issues

Comprehensive reproductive issues were one of the top priorities for the participants of this listening session. There were seven (7) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

### *Frame It*

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- “These are assaults on women’s decision-making”
- “There is a dissemination of inaccurate information that complicates the issue?”
- Lack of awareness of current events – what’s going on
- Lack of information about threats to rights
- What’s happening legislatively?
- Laws that are taking women backwards
- Education is restricted
- Women are viewed as incapable of making their own decisions about their care
- Takes away confidence of women
  - ~ Disempowerment
  - ~ Controls women’s lives
  - ~ Patriarchy
- Proposed changes (legislation) not always based on fact or science, but instead on ideology
- Dominance of men controlling outcomes
- Must be accurate and fact based
- Women should have freedom of personal choice
- Threatening environment for women to have access to reproductive healthcare
- Lack of community education on what reproductive healthcare means – not just abortion
- Intimidation of Planned Parenthood patients – (they) should feel safe and have confidentiality intact
- If **strong** education and prevention exists then abortion would not be necessary
- Psychological attacks on women
- Lack of insurance for preventative care and treatment – birth control, preventative exams, etc.
- Nurses training – protect life at all costs – refuse to treat and participate in discussions
- Lack of consistent information in schools for sex education
- Abortion services not accessible in hospitals

### *What’s in place now?*

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services.

- Planned Parenthood
- Local clinics
  - ~ Help with prenatal care, mammograms
  - ~ Limited information and access
  - ~ Backlogs
- Futures Family Clinic
- Volunteers in Medicine (VIM)

### *Who should be involved?*

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation that exists around this issue.

- Educators
- Women superintendents in Indiana
- Schools
- Doctors and other medical professionals (nurses, nurse practitioners, etc.)
  - ~ Should stand up for medically accurate information
- Collaboration between medical professionals (doctors) and schools
- Legislators
- Faith communities
- National organization for legal support (NARAL, etc.)

### *Community / State Action*

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.

- Organize with women throughout state to demand equal respect for education and access
- ICW take a leadership role by connecting people to information, legislative summaries of issues affecting women
  - ~ Put it in layman terms - What does it actually say?
  - ~ Take positions on issues with reasoning to back it
  - ~ Weekly basis
  - ~ Non-partisan
  - ~ Fact-based, not just what we agree with
- Women's policy research
  - ~ More fact-based information
  - ~ Based on information for Indiana
- PR Campaign
  - ~ Fact book
  - ~ Widely dispersed
  - ~ Use local commissions (Monroe County and Bloomington)

### *Next steps*

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Assembling facts and information
  - ~ Need more research
  - ~ Make sure fact based
  - ~ Hard for average person to follow
  - ~ Complicated and difficult to understand how current environment/proposals affect me
  - ~ Break it down for demographic groups
    - Young women
    - Families
    - Single moms, etc.
- Information is not easily sourced – have to do a lot of research to find out information

- Educate on facts and focus on prevention
- Try to engage medical community
- Address legal issues – what does the law allow today and what it should allow
- What is available in your community (hospitals, etc)
- Get other community organizations involved that are not Planned Parenthood or another service provider
- PR campaign to disseminate information to segments of the population (all age groups)
- Build credibility for source – getting information out

## **Issue #2: More women in elected legislative position**

Getting more women into legislative and other elected leadership positions was identified as a top priority during this listening session. There were four (4) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

### *Frame it:*

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- Men try to control women candidates
- Outspoken women encouraged to be “softer”
- Women are devalued as leaders
- Women see themselves as being incapable of “doing it all”
  - ~ Mothers
  - ~ Leaving job to go to Senate or House, etc.
- Hard for women to make the choice to run – pressure for women to care for family
- Lack of women supporting women – women shouldn’t be making decisions; “leave it to men”
- Women judged differently than men – how they dress, appearance, etc.
- Women are not encouraged to run by political parties
  - ~ Not sought out
  - ~ Women are looked at last and often for the hardest races
- Women don’t think they are prepared – need to have comprehensive understanding with all the details filled in
- Protect themselves from attack – try to have it all figured out before running
- Lack of support
- Not knowing where to go or what to do
- Women don’t think they can run
- Lack of role models
- Fear of live being ripped open – politics are nasty
- Persistent at all levels – college and up

### *What’s in place now?*

The participants identified the following programs/organizations currently exist that are addressing this issue.

- Democratic Women’s Caucus – several around the State of Indiana
- Emily’s List
- Lugar Series
- Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women
- League of Women Voters
- Girl Scouts – women’s equality day

- AAUW Indiana
- The White House Project
- Hoosier Girls State

*Who should be involved?*

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve this issue are:

- Current women elected officials
- Becky Skillman and Vi Simpson (top women leaders)
- Political Parties
- Public Schools

*Community / State Action*

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the components of this issue:

- Create a program like Emily’s List or the White House Project on a statewide level
- Educate young girls (elementary to high school) of possibility of holding these positions – leadership training
- Promote through Girls, Inc., Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs

*Next steps*

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Ask women to be involved in taking a leadership role to encourage women to run
- Create taskforce to address issues and challenges to better identify barriers to overcome and best practices
- Develop programs for girls and women to have them understand what it’s like to be an elected official (what is it like)
  - ~ mock programs
  - ~ Women in Government
  - ~ Girl Scouts in government
- Promote more awareness of possibility

**Conclusions**

There are many barriers that create challenges to women in Indiana. The Hoosier INsight: Women’s Issues Listening Sessions project is the first step in starting conversations to help to address the challenges that women still face in our state. The results of all of the sessions held around the state will contribute to a report that will help to identify the top 3-5 issues that present major barriers to women in Indiana. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.

The Hoosier INsight project will help ICW continue to voice the needs, concerns, challenges, and viewpoints of women in Indiana. By better understanding the specific needs and desires of women, the commission will be able to better identify the ways in which they can help to remove barriers that hinder their participation in all areas of society.

A statewide event will occur once the results of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women’s issue survey, are compiled. ICW will facilitate a statewide debriefing effort that will guide key community partners and stakeholder to synthesize the results



into a shared statewide action plan. It will be ICW's opportunity to inform the community on the primary issues affecting women regionally and statewide that were identified during the listening sessions; to expand coalitions and build capacity to work across networks and to improve outreach efforts on multiple issues.

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**\* Summary Report Disclaimer**

This summary report was prepared as an account of key issues, challenges, and suggested solutions described during a public discussion sponsored by the Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) and supported by local partnering organizations in conjunction with its *Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions* initiative. The compilation of this summary report is provided as a courtesy and should not be considered in any way as an endorsement or promotion by the Indiana Commission for Women, by the State of Indiana or by ICW's partners and supporters. Opinions expressed are strictly those of session participants and not necessarily those of the Indiana Commission for Women, of the State of Indiana or of its partners and supporters. Recommendations from this meeting, together with inputs received from other sources, may inform the creation of a final report and potential plan of action to address the issues and challenges discussed as well as potential future ICW initiatives, programs and services. Furthermore, ICW may use information obtained from this meeting and from the results of this initiative to offer suggestions to other agencies, organizations or entities better suited to address particular issues and/or challenges uncovered during this initiative in order to facilitate maximum cooperation and collaboration between ICW and other entities. The Indiana Commission for Women and those associated with the agency do not assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any comment made or of any third party's use or results of such use of any information contained in this summary report.