



## 2009 WPG Legislative Priorities

*Improve Access to Health Care...Fight Cuts to Health and Social Services...  
Stop Child Prostitution...Support Policies that Support Self-Sufficiency*

### *Improve Access to Healthcare for Women and Girls*

Consumer health care advocates are increasingly concerned that proposed reforms to the health care system will shift costs to patients and leave more people underinsured, while yielding little increase in the numbers of uninsured people who gain coverage. The fear is that proposals will trade group coverage for individual policies that are inadequate. This will move health policy even farther away from reducing cost and increasing access to coverage by spreading risk widely. **WPG has been the leading advocacy organization monitoring healthcare transformation's impact on women, who remain the leading consumers of medical services and health insurance.** A special focus of this work is protecting the hard won consumer protections that directly impact women, such as coverage for **pap smears, mammograms and contraceptives.**

### *Fight Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors*

Hundreds of children are commercially sexually exploited in Georgia every month and Atlanta has been recognized as a national hub for child prostitution. **Georgia's current laws and practices permit the criminal prosecution of sexually exploited children, the majority of whom are girls.** Federal law provides that commercially sexually exploited children must be treated as *victims* who are entitled to treatment and rehabilitative services, rather than prosecution and detention. **WPG will seek to amend Georgia law so that exploited minors will not be criminally prosecuted.** WPG has been a leader on this issue since the 1990's and as a result, Georgia is one of a handful of states working to emphasize prevention, compassionate treatment of these children, and vigorous prosecution of the pimps who prey on commercially sexually exploited children. Our focus will continue to be to **increase resources to prevent child prostitution, rescue these girls from sexual exploitation, and address their need for services.**

### *Protect Funding for Health and Social Services*

The State of Georgia is facing a revenue crisis. Experts project a \$1.6 to \$3 billion shortfall that has already begun to impact the state's spending, and will be a major focus of the 2009 legislative session. The Governor has ordered hiring and program freezes and cuts to state agencies that may soon grow to 10%. **Many of these cuts and others that are proposed disproportionately impact women and children** including: drastic reduction of **family planning services** to low income women and girls; cuts to **pre-natal care** and other forms of health department services; reductions in **childcare subsidies and work supports** that allow low income women to work; rollbacks in **meals to seniors** and other essential programs that allow people to remain in the community and out of nursing homes; enormous loss in funding for **family violence shelters and sexual assault centers**; cuts to **child support enforcement**, and key services that serve families and **people with disabilities**.

### *Increase Economic Strength and Self-Sufficiency Strategies*

**Women and their families are hardest hit by the current economic crisis across the U.S. and in Georgia.** WPG has been a leader throughout its history in supporting measures that help women get the education, job training, quality childcare, and on-the-job policies and protections that support work that pays a living wage and strengthens families. We will work to help Georgia follow the national lead to **raise the state minimum wage**, to increase access to **unemployment insurance for women who work part time**, and address the need for **leave from work to attend school conferences and take children and parents to medical visits**. WPG will also support legislation to **stem the tide of foreclosures** that are causing hard working families to lose their homes, protect innocent renters if the building they live in is foreclosed upon, impose reasonable requirements on owners to maintain properties following foreclosure, and **prohibit lenders from making loans without regard to the borrower's ability to pay**.

*Please join us and contact the Governor and your Senator and Representative to express your support for these initiatives.*

*Sign up to receive the Women's Policy Group weekly policy alert during the legislative session at [www.womenspolicygroup.org](http://www.womenspolicygroup.org)*

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