



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

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PHILADELPHIA AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS: A UNA-GP FACT SHEET

Facts on women in the workplace in Philadelphia and in the United States:

- In 1976 women occupied approximately 5 percent of Fortune 500 board seats. In 2011, the number grew to 16 percent.
- However, in 2015, women continue to earn 78 cents for each dollar earned by their male colleagues.
- And despite representing 52.8 percent of the city's population, women occupy only 11 percent of corporate board seats in Philadelphia, and women of color represent less than 1 percent.
- The United States is one of only a few countries in the world (including Iran and Somalia) and the only industrialized nation that has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) treaty. In November 2010, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on "Women's Rights Are Human Rights: U.S. Ratification of CEDAW." These hearings were the first in the Senate on CEDAW since 2002, and the first ever conducted by the Judiciary Committee on a human rights treaty. Since then, the CEDAW ratification process has not progressed any further.

To remedy these injustices on a local level, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown recently proposed establishing a Commission for Women in Philadelphia, and Mayor Michael Nutter signed the ordinance authorizing a ballot question concerning the creation of such a Commission in the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter. The Commission would be chaired by an Executive Director, and have 27 members: 10 members appointed by the mayor, and the remaining members appointed by a member of city council.

In the May 2015 Philadelphia mayoral primary election, 74% of voters voted YES for the establishment of a Commission for Women.

What does this mean for the future of Philadelphia's women?

As Councilwoman Brown has argued, a Commission for Women has the potential to:

- Offer women and girls a seat at the table of city government;
- Promote civic, educational and economic policies for women;
- Provide advice and recommendations to the mayor and City Council on policies that would push equal rights and opportunities for women.

And as Mayor Nutter stated in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "A Commission for Women would provide guidance about how we as a city can address structural inequities that leave women, and therefore their families, at a socioeconomic disadvantage that continues to threaten this city's potential."

What are the Pros and Cons of establishing such a Commission?

- **PROS:**
 - Adding Philadelphia to the growing list of U.S. cities that have expressed commitment to ensuring women’s rights;
 - Putting Philadelphia on the right track toward acknowledging instances of inequality in our city, including pay disparities in the workplace and representations of women in city government;
 - Highlighting some of the challenges faced by women and girls seeking advancement in education and in their careers;
 - Creating an institution through which more research can be conducted and policies can be enacted to further women’s rights in the region.
- **CONS:**
 - Such a Commission may be too conservative and not far-reaching enough;
 - The Commission could be underfunded or could be given inadequate funding to achieve its objectives (e.g. skeleton staffing);
 - Other Philadelphia agencies and organizations—not just one Commission—should also be diligent in ensuring equality and involved in correcting injustices against women.

Are there additional, complementary steps to creating a Commission for Women that Philadelphia can undertake? And can Philadelphia look to the initiatives of other U.S. cities as models?

- Joining the nationwide **Cities for CEDAW** movement and supporting the CEDAW treaty by enacting a local Philadelphia Cities for CEDAW ordinance, as Los Angeles, CA and Louisville, KY have done. According to the movement’s sponsoring group, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York, adopting CEDAW as local law has been proven to effectively address significant issues that reduce the quality of life and equity of opportunity for women and girls (<http://citiesforcedaw.org/about>);
- Encourage Philadelphians to support CEDAW ratification and to vote for politicians who will support the CEDAW ratification process in Congress;
- Creating a permanent city department devoted to the rights, equality, and advancement of girls and women in the city, such as the City of Boston’s Office of Women’s Advancement or San Francisco’s Department on the Status of Women;
- Conduct research studies to gather more data and understand ways in which the status of women and girls in Philadelphia can be improved, like the **Los Angeles Gender Study and Plan** for implementation of the L.A. CEDAW ordinance (a five-part study that will assess and benchmark goals toward gender equality on two levels: for women who work in the City government and for women and girls who reside in Los Angeles).

For more information on the UNA-GP, CEDAW, and Women’s Rights,

visit: <http://una-gp.org/category/legal/>.