



ADVANCING WOMEN
POWERING THE ECONOMY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2017

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Change The Story VT Releases New Report: Vermont Women and Leadership.

Progressed is Mixed, Vermont Frontrunner on Some Measures

Montpelier, VT - Change The Story VT (<http://changethestoryvt.org/>) unveiled its new status report, "Vermont Women and Leadership," today as part of an Equal Pay Day press event at the Vermont State House. The new report, relying on primary research from multiple sources and contributors, focuses specifically on recent Vermont data that paints a very mixed picture of gender parity in leadership positions in our state. By some measures, Vermont is a national pacesetter in its share of women in key leadership positions. By others, women's leadership status lags behind other states. Overall, Vermont women have yet to achieve equal representation as leaders in any but a few political, civic or professional realms.

This is the fourth in a series of reports (<http://changethestoryvt.org/reports/>) published by Change The Story on topics related to women's economic status. There are a number of important connections between women's leadership in political, civic and professional spheres and women's economic security. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that leadership positions are generally rewarded with higher pay and better benefits. Beyond individual finances, research clearly demonstrates that gender balance in leadership— and indeed diversity in its many forms—contributes to better decision-making, increased innovation, and improvements in the overall bottom line.

"We've done well in some areas," said Tiffany Bluemle, Director of Change The Story, "but in so many spheres women are still significantly underrepresented. And we need to ask ourselves 'why?' We are used to cheering when we have achieved 30% but that is nowhere near gender parity. And, in terms of gender parity in political representation, VT has fallen from 7th in the nation in 1993 to 33rd in 2017."

While leadership can be broadly defined, this report focuses on elected or appointed public servants at state and municipal levels, on leaders of critical community institutions, and on leaders of organizations in the private and non-profit sectors. Among the report's findings:

By some measures, Vermont is a national pacesetter in its share of women in public leadership:

- * Women are 39.4% of those serving in Vermont's General Assembly,
- * 60% of the state's Supreme Court Justices,
- * 43% of Executive Cabinet members and
- * 50% of its public university and college presidents.

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However, Vermont's progress in achieving gender parity in leadership arenas has been uneven, slow-going or in some cases nonexistent:

Just one of Vermont's six statewide officials is a woman, trailing the national average by 7 percentage points. Indeed, of the 296 individuals ever elected to statewide office, only 11 have been women.

Vermont and Mississippi are the only two states that have never sent a woman to Congress.

While women's participation in Vermont's General Assembly is the second highest in the country, the pace of change has essentially leveled off since 1993; in 24 years, women's share of legislative seats has increased by just four percentage points.

When only 8% of Vermont's highest grossing companies and 2 of its 15 hospitals are led by women, we can be certain that we are not making full use of all our state's talent.

The report was timed to be released on Equal Pay Day which fell this year on April 4th. Equal Pay Day was organized by the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) as a public awareness event to illustrate the gap between men's and women's wages. This date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. Members of the Women's Caucus of the Legislature, the League of Women Voters of VT, Vermont Commission on Women, VT Federation of Business and Professional Women and other pay equity advocates were present, wearing red to symbolize how many women were still "in the red" due to the wage gap.

Featured speakers at the noon press event included:

- * Speaker of the House Mitzi Johnson,
- * State Treasurer Beth Pearce,
- * Melody Walker Brook of the Abenaki Women's Council and VT Commission on Native American Affairs,
- * Vermont Technical College President Pat Moulton,
- * Joe Fusco of UVM's Grossman School of Business and VP at Casella Waste Systems,
- * Jen Kimmich Co-founder/Owner of The Alchemist, and
- * VCW Executive Director Cary Brown.

"Currently, women working full-time in Vermont are paid on average 84 cents for every dollar paid to men," said Cary Brown, Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women. "If women's wages were raised up to where men's are, that would be about \$5,565 extra dollars for every woman in Vermont, about a billion dollars in total to Vermont's economy, which is around 3.3% of the state's GDP."

Jen Kimmich, co-founder and co-owner of The Alchemist, and founder of The Alchemist Foundation stated, "It's not acceptable that women working full time - who are breadwinners for their families and investing in their communities - have to work for an entire quarter of a year to have their wages 'catch up' with their male counterparts."

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Earlier in the day, the General Assembly passed a resolution that designated April 4th as Equal Pay Day in Vermont. The resolution noted that “women’s salaries are essential to the economic wellbeing of Vermont families. Women contribute 40% of income in one-third of all family households, and more than 20,000 households are headed by single women.” It also highlighted the fact that “occupational segregation, the uneven distribution of labor across and within sectors by gender, perpetuates the wage gap.”

Additionally, Governor Phil Scott signed an Equal Pay Day Proclamation recognizing that “closing the gender wage gap would reduce the poverty rate in Vermont by 57% and add one billion dollars to the state’s economy” and that “equity in leadership in both the public and private sectors is a key strategy to end the wage gap.”

Brown and Bluemle applauded the Governor on his commitment to a gender diverse administration. To date, Governor Scott has appointed a record 43% women to both top Administrative leadership and Executive Cabinet posts. The Governor stated, “I’m humbled to learn what an impact our administration is making in terms of setting an example for equal representation. My goal as Governor is to have a stronger, more diverse, and more talented workforce, and that means giving women the pathway to succeed. I’m committed to this issue in practice, in policy, and together we’ll continue to make progress in this very important area.”

Change The Story is an initiative of the Vermont Commission on Women (VCW) (<http://women.vermont.gov/>), the Vermont Women’s Fund (<http://www.vermontcf.org/TheVermontWomensFund/Home.aspx>), and Vermont Works for Women (<http://www.vtworksforwomen.org/>) designed to fast-track women’s economic status in our state.