

NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON TRADESWOMEN'S ISSUES

Towards Women's Equitable Access to and Retention in High-Wage, High-Skilled Apprenticeship, Training, and Trades Employment Policy Platform

The **National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues** is a coalition uniting the expertise and actions of local, regional and national organizations, advocates, allies and individual tradeswomen to support women in achieving access, opportunity, and equity in the construction industry, and other nontraditional occupations.

The Taskforce works to promote public policies and advocacy initiatives at the national, state and local levels to improve, enforce, fund, and promote best practices towards equity in apprenticeship, training, workforce development, career and technical education, nontraditional employment, and the job site experience.

Public policy impacts tradeswomen and the work they do every day – from the local level, to state and federal rules, regulations, and laws. The Taskforce offers a strong public policy platform that will make access, opportunity and equity in skilled trades apprenticeship training and employment a reality for women and girls.

Nearly a quarter of a million women work in the construction trades and earn wages offering economic security. Over the course of her lifetime, a woman working as an electrician will make more than \$1 million more than her counterpart working in a traditionally female-dominated job, such as a childcare worker or service worker.¹ Poverty rates for women remain at historically high levels, one in seven, substantially higher than poverty rates for men. Access to high-wage careers is critical for women's economic advancement.

Women who are given access to high-wage, blue-collar and other nontraditional occupations through quality pre-apprenticeship training, information, and support services, flourish in these careers. However, registered apprenticeship, a primary pathway into high-skilled blue-collar jobs, is not serving women. Nationally, women represent only 3% of construction apprenticeships, and only 7% in all registered apprenticeship programs. Several programs and localities around the country have proven that these low numbers are not inevitable when policy and programmatic approaches, as outlined below, are applied.

Research has shown that women, and particularly women of color, face discrimination in hiring and long-term employment and experience high rates of sexual harassment and gender bias on the job. They are less likely to be retained on core crews, promoted to field leadership positions or to receive the same on-the-job technical training as men, and they do not complete their apprenticeships at the same rates as their male counterparts.²

When tradeswomen have access to sustainable careers, which includes adequate work hours, workplace policies that support work/family balance, comprehensive on-the-job training and freedom from sexual and racial harassment, the industry as a whole benefits greatly from access to this skilled workforce.

¹ Mathematica study on apprenticeship effectiveness and cost/benefit analysis, "[An Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States](#)"

² Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis and Maura Kelly, "[Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon's Current Efforts Working?](#)"

This Policy Platform reflects the voices and experiences of tradeswomen and serves as a blueprint to ensure women's economic empowerment. The National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues urges our industry partners and other stakeholders to **endorse and take action on** the following recommendations to end occupational segregation by gender and race:

- Ensure that federal and state agencies for labor, education, workforce, and industry stakeholders, collaborate to **strengthen the equity pipeline** between the Career and Technical Education (CTE) system and registered apprenticeship, including specific goals for female participation in nontraditional CTE tracks that lead to high-wage, high demand careers.
- Federal and state agencies should include dedicated, specific **funding that directly supports women's access to and retention** in nontraditional job training, supportive services, healthy workplace programs, and employment.
- Project owners, contractors, apprenticeship programs and unions should work to **increase the number of women in trades apprenticeship and occupations to 20% by 2020** by adopting equity initiatives and strengthening enforcement of equal employment opportunity rules through job site monitoring, workforce data reporting, strong contract language, goal setting, and affirmative action to ensure tradeswomen's equitable access and retention (at both apprentice and journey-level), as well as advancement on construction projects.
- Ensure **harassment-free, healthy and respectful workplaces** for all workers. Employers apprenticeship programs and unions should have clear harassment prevention policies in place, provide comprehensive anti-harassment training including bystander intervention, establish clear complaint processes, and train managers on how to handle complaints.³
- Promote and encourage unions and employers to adopt **paid Pregnancy Accommodation, Medical and Family Leave policies** to ensure that no woman is forced to choose between a healthy pregnancy and her paycheck or access to health care, and allow all workers time off to bond with a new child or for a serious medical condition of their own or of another individual related by blood or affinity.⁴
- **Ensure that investments in infrastructure protect job standards** with Davis/Bacon rules, Project Labor and Community Benefit Agreements (which should include hiring goals for women and people of color), so that construction continues to offer economic security and benefits and provide opportunities for women.
- Ensure **equal employment opportunity** for all women, with the recognition that the intersection of gender, race, gender identity, disability, and sexual orientation requires specific attention and intentionality.
- **Make the access to and retention of women in skilled trades and crafts a priority and reality** through national and local **Concrete Floor Commissions**, with robust participation from government, community, labor, and employers, to oversee the implementation of policies and best practices.

Technical assistance is available through the National Center for Women's Equity in Apprenticeship & Employment <http://womensequitycenter.org/> and other Taskforce member organizations.

For more information on the National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues, please visit our website at: www.tradeswomentaskforce.org or contact the Co-Chairs of the Taskforce Policy Committee at:

Meg Vasey, Tradeswomen, Inc. Mvasey@tradeswomen.org or
Jessica Stender, Equal Rights Advocates: jstender@equalrights.org

³ Resources for preventing harassment are available from the EEOC: https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/, the Office of Apprenticeship: <https://www.dol.gov/oa/eeo/>, and the Ironworkers' "Be That One Guy" initiative. p.21 (<http://www.ironworkers.org/news-magazine/ironworker-magazine>.)

⁴ See Ironworkers Paid Maternity leave policy, <http://www.ironworkers.org/news-magazine/news/2017/04/24/iron-workers-and-contractors-announce-paid-maternity-leave-benefit>.