



## AN AGENDA FOR AMERICAN WOMEN

The reality of women's lives in America today is that they still face greater challenge in the workplace and greater responsibilities at home. Women still make only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men and they are 45 percent more likely to live in poverty. More than 20 million adult women lack health insurance. Working women struggle to balance their jobs with the needs of their families. John Edwards believes that we must do more to strengthen families and help women succeed at work to build a larger, more secure middle class. He also supports stronger laws protecting women's rights. [Census Bureau, 2007]

**Guaranteeing Health Care for Every Woman in America:** More than 18 million adult women lack health insurance. Two-thirds of uninsured women fail to get care they need because of its cost. While more than 40,000 women die from breast cancer every year, more than half of uninsured women have not had a mammogram for two years. John Edwards has announced a specific plan to guarantee true universal health care for every man, woman and child in America. His plan requires employers to cover their workers or help pay the cost; expands subsidies for insurance premiums; creates Health Care Markets so families and businesses will have a choice of competing plans, including a public plan; and, once insurance is affordable, requires individuals to buy insurance for themselves and their families. [Census Bureau, 2007; KFF, 2005; ACS, 2007]

**Ending Poverty for Women:** The 37 million Americans living in poverty include 21 million women. More than 4 million of those women are single mothers, heading more than half of all poor American families. John Edwards has called for an end to poverty within 30 years, with policies rooted in the core American values of work, opportunity and responsibility. He has proposed an ambitious set of goals, including new housing policies to promote economic integration, 1 million stepping stone jobs, lower taxes for low-income working families, and other initiatives to promote education, savings, and strong families. [Census Bureau, 2006]

**Helping Women Balance Work and Families:** Two-thirds of mothers are working, most of them full time. Families are working 10 more hours a week than they did a generation ago. There are also 9 million senior citizens who need long-term care. Edwards will expand the Family and Medical Leave Act to let parents take time off from work when they need it. He supports more resources for childcare and after-school programs to give children a safe place to learn while their parents are at work. His health care plan will also strengthen Medicaid's support for long-term care and emphasize home- and community-based care to allow caregivers to keep their parents nearby. [Gerson and Jacobs, 2004; New America Foundation, 2005; KFF, 2006]

**Raising the Minimum Wage:** Women account for 64 percent of minimum-wage workers in the United States. The minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 an hour for almost a decade. A full-time minimum-wage worker earns only about \$10,700 a year, barely more than the poverty line even without any dependents. Since the minimum wage was last changed in 1997, members of

Congress have raised their own pay by more than \$30,000. In 2006, Edwards campaigned for six state ballot initiatives designed to increase the minimum wage, all of which were successful. As president, he will raise the national minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour by 2012, giving at least 8 million women a raise. [BLS 2007, Lovell 2007]

**Fighting Discrimination:** Despite the progress we have made, women still earn only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. Mothers and particularly single mothers do even worse. Edwards supports the Paycheck Fairness Act to strengthen the remedies for sex discrimination and deter wrongdoing. He will expand resources for female entrepreneurs through his new REACH Fund and by prioritizing the needs of women-owned businesses in existing programs.

**Protecting Women's Right to Choose:** The decision about whether to become a parent is one of the most important life decisions that a woman can face. Edwards believes that she should make it with her family, her doctor, and in the context of her religious and ethical values. As president, he will protect and defend the right to choose and reverse the damage that has been done by President Bush's anti-choice agenda. The ban on abortion procedures recent upheld by the Supreme Court without an adequate exception to protect a woman's health is a stark reminder of why Democrats cannot afford to lose the 2008 election. Edwards supports a federal freedom of choice act codifying *Roe v. Wade* into federal law so that the right to choose is protected, no matter what the Supreme Court does, and supports access to family planning services.