



# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

February 2017

## News from the Office on the Status of Women

### Coffee with a Commissioner

Join us every month for an interview with one of the commissioners of the [Iowa Commission on the Status of Women](#) (ICSW) to learn more about how and why they got involved in women's advocacy. Each month we will focus on a different commissioner.



This month, I had the pleasure of interviewing [Phyllis Peters](#), chair of the commission and member of the ICSW's Public Policy committee to talk about herself, her work, and the "why" behind the work that she does with the Commission.

### *Phyllis Peters*

Chair, Iowa Commission on the Status of Women



#### **How long have you served on the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women?**

I was appointed to the Commission in the spring of 2008 to fill the remainder of a term for which there was a vacancy; I then received full-term appointments in 2010 and 2014.

#### **What was one of the things that called you to serve on this specific Commission?**

I knew the Office on the Status of Women and its Commissioners had been catalysts for positive change since the early '70s when it championed ways to eliminate gender inequality which existed in various ways, and which could be addressed through policy changes. While women's roles and status changed dramatically between 1972 and 2008, women today still face obstacles – particularly women who work in low-paying jobs, women of color, and those who are immigrants. The Commission isn't a social service agency, but I think our role is to advocate for those women and ensure that public policies

at our state and local levels and ensure a path to opportunity for all lowan women and girls.

**What is one accomplishment you've been proud of since your start on the Commission?**

In 2009 the Commission championed a bill that was passed in the legislature and signed into law to require gender parity on state and local boards and commissions. This was meant to bring the voices of women and other under-represented lowans into the room and at the table where local citizens make policy decisions. For years, lowans benefited from having women appointed to state boards and commissions – to shape policies and budgets affecting all lowans. Iowa law affirms that we should replicate this with gender parity at the county and city level – and it's an ongoing process to fully achieve the goals of that law. To earn passage in 2009, Commissioners like myself became a small but mighty 'speaker's bureau' and presented our case to groups around the state, and enlisted allies from AAUW, BPW, NAWBO, and many other organizations. The collaboration demonstrated that collectively, we can still remove obstacles and shape a better future for our state and our local communities.

**What is an issue that affects women and girls that you are passionate about?**

Today I am increasingly concerned that too many Iowa women are marginalized. Iowa has the highest percentage of families where all available parents are working. Whether there are two parents or the high number of single-parent households, we see more Iowa women struggling to get ahead – they work at low-paying jobs with no benefits; child care costs are greater than the expense of public college tuition, and instead of moving ahead to a better economic situation, they fall further behind. Collectively, private and public entities need to find real solutions and harness the creativity and productivity of these women who want to improve their lives and provide better futures for their children.

**What do you do in your spare time (if you have any)?**

In the winter months, my spare time is allocated to ISU women's and men's basketball games. We have season tickets and spend a lot of time at Hilton Coliseum. When it's not winter, I enjoy working in my flower gardens (i.e., trying to keep out the rabbits), and also taking long bike rides and walks.

*To connect with the chair of the commission Phyllis Peters, find her on [LinkedIn](#).*

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## **2017 Policy Recommendations**

### **Iowa Commission on the Status of Women**



The Iowa Commission on the Status of Women recently released its 2017 policy recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly, as laid out in Iowa Code 216A.54.

In summary, the ICSW makes the following policy recommendations:

1. Increase the state child care assistance initial income eligibility limit from 145% of the federal poverty level to at least 175%.
2. Support additional protections for pregnant workers under the Iowa Civil Rights Act.
3. Increase the budget for the Iowa Department of Human Rights' Division of [Community Advocacy and Services \(CAS\)](#).

For the full set of recommendations, click [here](#).

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## **Do you know how to connect with your legislators and track legislation?**

### **Are you wondering who your state senator and/or representative is?**

To find your local state legislator, go to the following page: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>, type in your address, and choose your city from the drop down list. The contact information for your local senator and state representative will show on your screen.

### **Are you wondering how to track the legislation going through the Iowa House and Senate during the 2017 legislative session?**

Visit: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation> to look through the various bills going through the legislature. You can also sign up for a Bills and Rules Watch account at: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/portal/subscriptions> and get notifications about the bills you care about.

### **Who are my U.S. (Federal) Senators?**

- [Ernst, Joni](#) - 111 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3254, Contact: [www.ernst.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact](http://www.ernst.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact)
- [Grassley, Chuck](#) - 135 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3744, Contact: [www.grassley.senate.gov/contact](http://www.grassley.senate.gov/contact)

### **Who are my U.S. (Federal) Representatives?**

- District 1: [Blum, Rod](#), 202-225-2911; Committees: Oversight and Government, Small Business
- District 2: [Loebsack, David](#), 202-225-6576; Committees: Energy and Commerce
- District 3: [Young, David](#), 202-225-5476; Committees: Appropriations
- District 4: [King, Steve](#), 202-225-4426; Committees: Agriculture, Small Business, the Judiciary

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## **We need you!**

### **Volunteer your time on the Iowa Task Force for Young Women**

The [Iowa Task Force for Young Women](#) (ITFYW) was formed in 1995, as a subcommittee of the [Juvenile Justice Advisory Council](#) (JJAC). The JJAC serves as Iowa's State Advisory Group for administration of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

The ITFYW serves to address the issue of females and juvenile justice and to advise the JJAC.

The goal of the ITFYW has been, and continues to be, to facilitate a comprehensive fundamental change in the juvenile justice system that will enhance the understanding and utilization of innovative gender-responsive approaches in all programs and services that serve the adolescent female population of Iowa's juvenile justice system.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the ITFYW or attending a meeting, please visit our website: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/females-and-juvenile-justice-0> or contact Kathy Nesteby at 515-281-6915 or [Kathy.Nesteby@iowa.gov](mailto:Kathy.Nesteby@iowa.gov).

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## **Are you a student/teacher in grades 5-12? Compete for a chance to win prizes**

To celebrate Women's History Month in March, the Iowa Department of Human Rights' Office on the Status of Women (with financial support from the [Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women](#)) is hosting its 2nd annual [Women's History Month video contest](#) to celebrate women's history. Entries are open to students in grades 5-12 and schools/organizations that work with students in grades 5-12.



**Video Submission Deadline:** Wednesday, March 1st, 2017

### **Materials:**

1. Click [here](#) for a printable set of 2017 guidelines.
2. [2017 application form](#)
3. [A signed release form for every person appearing in the video \(students/adults\)](#)
4. [A signed copyright transfer agreement \(completed by teacher/school admin/adult\)](#)

### **Questions?**

Contact Kristen Corey at [women@iowa.gov](mailto:women@iowa.gov) or 515-281-4470/800-558-4427 or visit the Iowa Department of Human Rights' Office on the Status of Women's website at: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/icsw>.

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## **In the News: Women and girls in Iowa, the nation & the world**

### **Leadership, Accomplishments & Civic Engagement**

- The Gazette: [For Some Iowa Women, Clinton's Loss Inspires Them to Run for Office](#)
- New York Times: [Study Finds Only Modest Gains by Women and Minorities on Fortune 500 Boards](#)
- The Washington Post: [Growing Number of Women Leading US Police Departments](#)
- BBC: [Behnaz Shafiei: Iran's Trailblazing Female Biker Makes History with Women's Race](#)

## Family Supports at Home and in the Workplace

- New York Times: [How to Close a Gender Gap: Let Employees Control Their Schedules](#)
- Reuters: [Maternity, Paternity Leave Rates in the U.S. Remain Low](#)
- Early Childhood Iowa (ECI): [ECI Releases Annual Report](#)

## Health

- Iowa Public Radio: [Women with Breast Cancer Miss Out on Recommended Genetic Testing](#)
- The Gazette: [Iowa Senate Passes Abortion-Funding Restriction](#)
- CNN: [Fat-Shaming Could Raise Health Risks, Study Says](#)
- New York Times: [Pre-Term Birth May Be Early Warning of Heart Disease in Women](#)
- New York Times: [Repeal of Health Law Could Mean Women Pay More for Less](#)

## Discrimination and Bias

- Iowa Public Radio: [New Evidence Shows There's Still Bias Against Black Natural Hair](#)
- Washington Post: [It Will Take 170 Years for Women to Be Equal to Men - Unless Some Things Change, Study Says](#)
- New York Times: [Dress Like a Woman? What Does that Mean?](#)
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): [EEOC Extends Public Input Period on Proposed Harassment Enforcement Guidance to March 21](#)

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## Upcoming Events/Seminars

- February 1: Black History Month begins
- February 9: [Capitol Girls](#) in Des Moines (Hosted by the Office on the Status of Women and Girl Scouts)
- February 16: [Iowa Women Lead Change Annual Siouxland Conference](#) in Sioux City
- March 1: Women's History Month begins
- March 1: [Women's History Month video contest \(entries due\)](#)
- March 15: [Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Symposium](#)
- March 31: [Ready to Run Workshop - Fundraising for Success & Campaign Messaging and the Media](#) (registration opens Feb. 28)
- April 1: [Iowa Women's Hall of Fame nominations due](#)
- April 26: [Iowa Women Lead Change Annual Eastern Iowa Conference](#) in Cedar Rapids
- April 28: [Ready to Run Workshop - Communicating with Voters & Winning Internet Strategies](#) (registration opens March 31)



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