

**YWCA 2016 ISSUE GUIDE**

**YOUR VOICE.**  
**YOUR VOTE.**  
**YOUR FUTURE.**

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**



## INTRODUCTION

YWCA USA is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families, and strengthen communities. We are one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation, serving over 2 million women, girls, and their families.

YWCA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements for more than 150 years — from voting rights to civil rights, from affordable housing to pay equity, from violence prevention to health care reform. We carry on this long tradition of social action and advocacy to advance our critical mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

Building on YWCA's Mission Impact Framework, this 2016 Election Issue Guide provides a concise overview of YWCA's priority issues in the areas of racial justice and civil rights, empowerment and economic advancement of women and girls, and health and safety of women and girls. While many issues impact our clients and communities, this guide focuses in on current YWCA policy priorities, namely:

- Ending racial profiling
- Girls of color in the education and justice systems
- Paid sick leave
- Paid family leave
- Job-protected safe leave
- Reducing domestic violence--related homicides
- Ending violence against women

This guide also suggests key questions to help you and your community learn more about where the candidates stand on the issues, and ensure that the candidates hear your voice about what matters in this election.

When voters go to the polls in 2016, they will cast their ballots for elected officials who will determine public policy on major issues that impact the lives of women, girls, and people of color. Together, we can make a difference by ensuring our communities and our voices are heard!

## RACIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Increasing the equal protections and equal opportunities of people of color is at the heart of YWCA's mission. We continue our long-standing fight to reduce the incidence of racial and ethnic profiling in communities across the nation, with a particular focus on profiling's impact on women and girls of color. YWCA's commitment to racial justice is one of the common threads that unite local YWCAs across the country. Over 160,000 individuals participate in YWCA racial justice programs annually, addressing systemic barriers in the criminal justice system, housing, health care, and education. Approximately half of our local associations train law enforcement officials, host dialogues, and develop private-public collaborations.

### 1. ENDING RACIAL PROFILING

Racial profiling refers to the practice of a law enforcement agent or agency relying, to any degree, on race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin in selecting which individuals to subject to routine or investigatory activities, such as traffic stops, searches, and seizures. African Americans, Native Americans, Latinxs, and Asians (particularly South and Southeast Asians) have reported being unfairly targeted by police. In many border-states and communities with high immigrant populations, it has been documented that law enforcement agencies use racial profiling as a method of border security and enforcement. This institutional discrimination contributes to disproportionate surveillance, excessive use of force, and the escalation of violence within communities of color.

The intersection of race, gender, and violence is often unexplored in discussions of racial profiling. While many high profile incidents of racial profiling focus on Black men, women of color are also at heightened risk. Formal reports and recent news articles highlight the range of profiling behaviors that women of color experience. For example, [reports](#) issued by the Missouri State Attorney General's Office and the ACLU document that women of color are subject to more stops by police in Ferguson, Missouri, and intrusive searches at U.S. airports, even though white drivers and passengers are more likely to be found with contraband. Sexual misconduct by law enforcement officers who profiled women is a significant enough issue that the International Association of Chiefs of Police issued an executive guide on the subject in June of 2011. An August 2016 [report](#) by the U.S. Department of Justice documented gender-based bias and mistreatment by the Baltimore Police Department, including numerous instances of hostility to victims of sexual assault, callous treatment of female suspects, public strip-searches, and even allegations of sex in exchange for immunity. These examples are the context in which public cases like [the arrest and death of Sandra Bland](#) in Texas after a routine traffic stop, the [violent arrest of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade school teacher Breiaion King](#) in Austin for speeding, the [criminal convictions of Oklahoma City police officer Daniel Holtzclaw](#) for raping 13 Black women, and countless other cases take place.

## YWCA POSITION

YWCA supports legislation that bans the practice of racial profiling at the federal, state, and local levels. We believe that all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, or gender should be ensured justice and protected equally under the law. Passage of police accountability measures will ensure that policing of all communities is done fairly using methods that respect the full humanity and rights of all regardless of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, or citizenship status. The federal government's involvement is vital to ending racial profiling practices by law enforcement in communities of color. We look forward to working with policymakers to correct patterns of systemic racial bias in policing and its negative and often lethal impact on various communities of color.

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

- (1) What is your position on proposals to end racial profiling, such as the End Racial Profiling Act of 2015 (H.R. 1933/S. 1056)?
- (2) What trainings and accountability measures for law enforcement do you support?
- (3) What would you say to a young person of color who feels unsafe interacting with law enforcement?
- (4) What would you do to address the concerns of communities of color who feel unsafe interacting with law enforcement?
- (5) What would you do to build trust between communities of color and law enforcement?

## SAMPLE TWEETS

#Racialprofiling impacts #WOC, their families & their communities. #ERPA will help end racial profiling! #Election2016

Police brutality & racial profiling are serious concerns for #POC & communities. It's time we change this. #vote #Election2016 #OnAMission

Communities of color feel unsafe interacting with police. Let's address police brutality, bias & racism. #vote #OnAMission #Election2016

## 2. GIRLS OF COLOR IN THE JUSTICE AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Girls of color are often overlooked when policymakers address issues of racial inequality, yet they experience significant intersectional disparities related to race, ethnicity, and gender in America's [schools](#) and [justice](#) system.

Though much of the conversation about criminalization and the school-to-prison pipeline centers on boys of color, Black girls face disproportionate challenges in schools and in the justice system. Latina and Native American girls do not trail far behind them. Here are some key statistics that give shape to the problem:

- [Black girls are suspended at higher rates](#) (12%) than girls of any other race or ethnicity, and at higher rates than White boys (6%); American Indian/Alaska Native girls (7%) and Latinas (4%) are also suspended at rates that exceed those of White girls (2%).
- [Recent budget cuts](#) have also resulted in fewer school psychologists, social workers, and counselors who might otherwise provide support to girls struggling with trauma or other unmet needs before their behavior leads to punishable offenses: only two states (VT and WY) have counselor-to-student ratios that meet the recommended caseload standard set by the American Counseling Association.
- A majority of girls who have contact with and are detained in the juvenile justice system pose little or no threat to public safety: 37% of [detained girls were held for status offenses and technical violations](#) (as compared to 25% % of boys), and 21% of girls were detained for simple assault and public order offenses where no weapons were involved (as compared to 12% % of boys). A [recently released video](#), showing a school police officer picking up a 12-year-old Latina and throwing her face down onto the ground, illustrates the experiences of far too many girls of color at school.

The experience of trauma is one that impacts girls of color in both education and justice systems. In schools, girls of color who experience trauma are more likely to be met with excessive discipline for acting out behaviors and less likely to get the trauma-informed care they need. Girls' presence in the juvenile justice system is often caused by the criminalization of survival crimes like running away, acting out behaviors like aggressiveness and truancy, and other behavioral responses to particular types of trauma and violence that are concentrated among girls and young women, including sex trafficking and sexual abuse. Within this broader context, girls of color are disproportionately involved in the juvenile justice system and experience higher levels of detention. They also experience particularly high rates of trauma and sexual violence. The experience of juvenile detention itself can be re-traumatizing, an outcome that seems out of proportion to the nonviolent behavior that brings many girls into the system.

## YWCA POSITION

To address these inequities and disparities, YWCA advocates for the implementation of specific policies and approaches at federal, state, and local levels that better address the needs of girls of color in our education and justice systems. YWCA encourages policymakers to prioritize and support intersectional race and gender research and analysis to better understand and respond to disparities in the imposition of exclusionary discipline (suspensions and expulsions) in schools and with respect to justice system-involved girls of color. Alleviating the school discipline and justice system involvement crises for girls of color requires an intersectional analysis of both the gender and race/ethnicity dimensions of their experiences in these systems, which in turn will enable policymakers to develop more informed approaches to address the distinct needs of girls of color.

YWCA also supports the use of gender- and culturally-responsive, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate approaches in the interactions that occur between girls of color and the adult professionals in the justice and education systems (educators, police officers, judges, etc.). This includes such specific policies as prohibiting the placement of girls who are status offenders or victims of sex trafficking in the juvenile justice system; amending mandatory and pro-arrest policies for domestic violence to ensure those policies are utilized in situations involving intimate partner violence, not in response to youth and intra-family conflict; and ensuring adequate staffing in schools by counselors, social workers, and psychologists, as well as professional development and training for teachers, school resource officers, and other school personnel in the areas of cultural competence, implicit bias, trauma-informed practice, and alternatives to exclusionary discipline.

### CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

- (1) What role do you think race, gender, and implicit bias play in school disciplinary policies? What steps would you propose taking to address these issues?
- (2) What policies would you propose to address the needs of girls of color in our justice and education systems?
- (3) Do you support current efforts to strengthen the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act?
- (4) We know that girls of color are more likely to have experienced trauma. What would you propose to ensure that educators, parents, and students have the support systems necessary to deal with such trauma?
- (5) We know that girls in the juvenile justice system have experienced high rates of sexual abuse and trauma and that the criminalization of trauma disproportionately impacts girls of color, particularly Black, Native American, and Latina girls. How can our justice system better respond to their social and emotional needs as survivors?

### SAMPLE TWEETS

Girls of color face inequality in edu. & justice systems. Ask candidates: how will you change this?  
#Election2016 #OnAMission

This #Election2016, we need to talk about how to address needs of girls of color in our edu. & justice systems! #Election2016 #OnAMission

#Vote for candidates who will ensure our edu. system provides support for girls of color, who face higher rates of trauma. #OnAMission



## EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

YWCA works to increase economic opportunities for women and girls of color. We recognize the importance of addressing the inequities that exist for this historically and contemporarily marginalized group. Women comprise more than half of today's workforce. One in four women are now the sole or primary breadwinners for their families. An overwhelming majority of mothers with children under 18 years of age are working. Women of color are over-represented in low-wage industries that lack basic workplace protections. There is no doubt that women are central to the economic well-being for their families and play a critical role in our nation's economic prosperity. Despite this, 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace policies are out-of-date and do not adequately support women in balancing work-family demands.

### 1. PAID SICK LEAVE

Over 80% of low-wage (\$8.25 or less per hour) workers do not have access to any paid sick days. For these workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color, missing a day (or a few days) of paid work can have significant economic consequences. For a family without paid sick days, on average, 3.1 days of pay lost to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly health care budget, and 3.5 days are equivalent to a month of groceries. A major illness can drive a worker into poverty. In addition to lost wages, workers are often penalized for taking time off for an illness or to care for a sick family member. Domestic violence survivors also face unique challenges due to a lack of paid "safe" days that would allow them to take care of legal, housing, and health needs.

### YWCA POSITION

YWCA supports legislation that creates a national standard for paid sick days, such as the [Healthy Families Act \(H.R. 932/S. 497\)](#) introduced in the 114th Congress. This legislation would ensure that workers in businesses that employ 15 or more employees can earn up to seven paid sick days each year; employees in smaller business would earn unpaid sick leave. Additionally, the Healthy Families Act would ensure that workers can use this time without penalty to recover from their own illnesses; access preventive care; provide care to a sick family member; attend school meetings related to a child's health condition; or seek assistance related to a domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault incident.

### CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

(1) Do you support policy proposals like the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 932 / S. 497) that would ensure that workers have access to job-protected sick leave?

(2) How do you think paid sick leave could help women of color and working families? What suggestions do you have to improve access to paid sick leave for women of color and working families?

(3) We know that sick workers attending work and infecting other employees cost the U.S. economy \$180 billion annually. We also know that if all workers had access to paid sick leave, 1.3 million emergency room visits could be prevented each year at a savings of \$1.1 billion annually, over half of which would accrue to tax-payer funded insurance programs like Medicare. How would you partner with the business community and other stakeholders to address these concerns?

## SAMPLE TWEETS

Everyone gets sick, doesn't everyone deserve time to get better? #Election2016 #OnAMission #HFAnow #paysickdays

#Paysickdays help working #WOC & families. Support #HFAnow! #Election2016 #vote #OnAMission

Millions of moms can't earn #paysickdays when they or their kid gets sick. Ask your candidates: are you ok with this? #vote #OnAMission

## 2. PAID FAMILY LEAVE

For many women and families, missing just a few days of work can mean the difference between a full refrigerator or an empty one. Worse, a major illness can drive a family into poverty. Paid family leave, which would provide partial income for up to 12 weeks when a worker needs leave for their own serious health condition, including pregnancy and childbirth recovery, or to care for a child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner suffering from a serious health condition.

People across the country are working hard to make ends meet, yet currently just 13% of the workforce has paid family leave, and less than 40% has personal medical leave through an employer-provided program. Many women and men are both breadwinners and caregivers, and paid time off for family and medical purposes helps workers – particularly women – stay and succeed in their jobs and receive higher wages over time.

Access to paid family and medical leave would complement other work and family agenda policies, such as paid sick leave and the existing unpaid leave that is available for employees in large companies through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), by providing income stability and additional economic support for workers at critical moments in their lives when they face serious health conditions within their families, or the addition of children to their families. The few state-level family leave insurance programs that exist in California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have each met with favorable results.

## YWCA POSITION

YWCA supports legislation such as the [Family and Medical Insurance Leave \(FAMILY\) Act \(H.R. 1439/S. 786\)](#), which would open access to paid leave for workers who have or are caring for family members who have a serious medical condition. This legislation would ensure that workers in most businesses



could earn up to 12 weeks of partial income when they need leave for their own serious health condition, including pregnancy and childbirth recover, or the condition of a child parent, spouse, or domestic partner. The FAMILY Act would enable workers to earn 66% of their monthly wages up to a capped amount, through small employee and employer payroll contributions. Additionally, this legislation would cover workers in all companies, no matter their size. Younger, part-time, lower-wage, and contingent workers would be eligible for benefits.

## **CANDIDATE QUESTIONS**

- (1) What is your position on proposals like The FAMILY Act (H.R. 1439/S. 786) that would increase access to paid leave for longer-term illness?
- (2) How do you think paid family leave could improve economic security for women of color and working families?
- (3) What suggestions do you have to improve access to paid leave for longer term illness?

## **SAMPLE TWEETS**

#PaidLeave will help close the gender & racial wage gap. Ask your candidates: Will you #LeadonLeave? #Vote #Election2016 #OnAMission

Ask candidates: isn't it time we catch up w/ the rest of the industrialized world & provide #paidleave to our workers? #vote #OnAMission

Workers shouldn't have to choose btw their work & their health or loved ones. #OnAMission #Election2016 #Vote

## **3. JOB-PROTECTED SAFE LEAVE**

Between 94% and 99% of domestic violence survivors have experienced some form of economic abuse, making it a particularly pervasive and crippling form of abuse. Domestic violence victims lose a total of 8 million days of paid work each year, and upwards of 60% of victims lose their jobs due to their abuse –to the perpetrator harassing and/or stalking her at her workplace. Advocating for legislation that would keep women from being penalized in their workplace due to intimate partner violence is critical to supporting their financial empowerment.

“Safe leave” provides survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking with job-protected leave to seek medical care, survivor services, and counseling; to recover from injuries; to participate in safety planning and relocation; and to participate in legal proceedings without fear of losing their job. Safe leave enables survivors to use a range of workplace leave programs (e.g., medical, sick, annual, personal or other leave) for the same purposes. Safe leave also

enables family or household members to assist those they love in seeking the care and protection needed as a result of the violence they have experienced.

Comprehensive safe leave proposals also protect survivors from being discriminated against by employers or losing their jobs because of the violence they have experienced. They also prohibit discrimination by insurance companies and public agencies because of the violence, and open access to unemployment compensation when survivors are separated from employment as a result of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

## YWCA POSITION

YWCA USA supports legislation that would keep women from being penalized in their workplace due to intimate partner violence, such as [The Security and Financial Empowerment \(SAFE\) Act of 2015 \(H.R. 3841/S. 2208\)](#), introduced in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. The legislation would create a new category of "safe leave" for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking to seek medical attention; recover from injury; assist a family or household member in obtaining medical attention, survivor services, behavioral health or counseling services; or participate in safety planning, relocation, or other actions to increase safety. The SAFE Act would also create protections to prohibit employer, public agencies, and insurance companies from discriminating against survivors.

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

- (1) Today, an individual can use the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to care for a sick or injured spouse, but cannot use it to seek protection from an abuser. What is your position on proposals like The SAFE Act that would provide job protected safe leave for survivors of intimate partner violence?
- (2) If elected, what would you do to help ensure job security for survivors of intimate partner violence?

## SAMPLE TWEETS

Today, workers can't use #FMLA to seek protection from an abuser. Unacceptable. We need #SAFEact!  
#vote #Election2016 #OnAMission

We must ensure job security for #DV survivors. Ask your candidates where they stand! #vote  
#Election2016 #OnAMission

## HEALTH AND SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

YWCA is committed to the health and safety of women and girls of color. If women and girls of color do not have access to high quality health and safety resources or support systems, they cannot be empowered. The disproportionately negative health and safety outcomes for women and girls of color is a prime example of the ways institutional racism and sexism work together.

### 1. REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RELATED HOMICIDES

Every month, 46 women are shot to death by a current or former partner, and intimate partner homicides account for nearly half of all women killed each year in the U.S. Perpetrators with access to firearms are five to eight times more likely to kill their partners than those without firearms. In fact, the mere presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide for women by five times. Despite this lethality risk, most states do not adequately comply with federal law that mandates seizure of firearms upon the issuance of a protective order. Implementation of state laws that restrict access to firearms, increase police staffing to address intimate partner violence, and allow warrantless arrests for perpetrators in violation of issued protective orders have proven to be effective in decreasing domestic violence-related homicides with a firearm by 19%, according to a 2010 UC Davis Violence Prevention Research Program study.

### YWCA POSITION

YWCA urges Congress to move forward on passing bipartisan legislation to address the prevalence of firearms-related domestic violence homicides. Passing legislation that closes legal loopholes that currently increase risk for survivors is critical to ensuring the safety of women and families in communities across the nation. Specifically, YWCA supports measures that enhance enforcement of federal laws related to searching for and seizing firearms from individuals charged with sexual and domestic violence offenses on the state level; expand the definition of “intimate partner” to include dating partners; add language to include stalking as a form of domestic violence, which would in turn prohibit convicted stalkers from purchasing or possessing firearms; and putting temporary restraining orders on par with permanent restraining orders, thereby recognizing that the time when a victim of domestic violence first leaves and files for a TRO is one of the most dangerous for her.

### CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

- (1) Every week we read headlines about more shooting deaths in domestic violence situations. What would you do to address this pervasive crisis?
- (2) What is your position on current congressional proposals that would close legal loopholes by expanding the definitions in current laws to also include dating violence and stalking?

(3) We know that the presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of death by 500%. What would you do to protect the safety of women and children in these households? What is your position on removing guns from domestic violence perpetrators when a victim applies for a temporary restraining order?

## **SAMPLE TWEETS**

Ask your candidates: how will you address the epidemic of #DV related shooting deaths in the U.S.? #Election2016 #OnAMission

In #DV situations, a gun increases the risk of death 500%. We need smart solutions! #WorkAgainstViolence #Vote #OnAMission

This #Election2016, we need to talk about the lethal combo of access to guns & #DV. #Election2016 #OnAMission

## **2. THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT**

Violence against women takes many forms, including domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. These crimes impact millions of individuals and families in every community in our nation. In 1994, Congress passed the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), a comprehensive approach to addressing and ending violence against women. VAWA established grants to create and improve law enforcement and prosecution strategies at the state and local levels and provides a framework for collaboration between federal, state, and local governments; direct service providers; law enforcement personnel; prosecutors; and the courts.

VAWA proves that it is possible to combat violence against women. Yet, there is more work to be done to ensure that women, children, and families are safe. This law was updated and reauthorized in 2013, and is due to be reauthorized again in 2018. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act also play key roles in ensuring that survivors are safe.

## **YWCA POSITION**

The YWCA supports anti-violence policies that protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and work to eradicate sexual assault and domestic violence, trafficking of women and girls, and dating violence. Specifically, we support the continuance and full funding for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act, and the Family and Violence Prevention and Services Act. We also support legislation that ensures employment stability and economic security for victims of violence against women.

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

(1) What is your position on the Violence Against Women Act? What role do you think it plays here in our community?

(2) If elected, what would you do to help prevent and end violence against women?

## SAMPLE TWEETS

Ask your candidates: how will you work end violence against women! #endVAW #vote #Election2016 #WorkAgainstViolence

#VAWA is critical for providing services and support for survivors! #WorkAgainstViolence #vote #Election2016 #OnAMission