

**CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS**

**THE SHRIVER REPORT:  
A WOMAN'S NATION CHANGES EVERYTHING**

**INTRODUCTIONS AND KEYNOTE**

**INTRODUCTION/MODERATOR:  
SARAH ROSEN WARTELL,  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,  
CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS**

**SPEAKERS:  
SECRETARY HILDA SOLIS,  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2009  
9:00 A.M.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

*Transcript by  
Federal News Service  
Washington, D.C.*

SARAH ROSEN WARTELL: Good morning, everyone. Good morning. So happy to see everyone here. Good morning. I am Sarah Rosen Wartell. I'm the executive vice president of the Center of American Progress. Good morning, Madame Secretary. And it is my great pleasure to welcome you all here for our conference on the publication of the "Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything," a joint project between the Center for American Progress and our inspiring partner, the first lady of California, Maria Shriver. And this is available at bookstores near you.

In this report, we explore what it means that women will soon make up half of the workforce for the first time. Many, many of our families now have a woman, not only as either the sole breadwinner or as an essential co-owner of support for the family's economics. These facts have far-reaching consequences for all American institutions, business, government, education, media, places of worship and the men and women themselves.

Yet, we, as a society, have not adapted to these changes on the ground. This conversation began on Friday, when Time Magazine published on its cover, a poll that CAP developed as part of this project with an essential support of our partner, the Rockefeller Foundation. We're pleased to have them here with us today. I saw Janice – (chuckles) – just a moment ago, thank you. And we really are grateful for their support. This poll helps us to give us a good grounding in what it means for women and families and their attitudes on these issues.

Then on Sunday, on "Meet the Press," Maria and John Podesta joined presidential advisor Valerie Jarrett for a discussion of these issues. They spoke together of the importance of these issues to America's families' economic security. They reminded the American public that we have much work to do than ensure that Americans have access to workplace flexibility and to paid sick days.

NBC will be doing special features across all of its outlets on these topics this week. Maria and John are not with us this morning. They are in New York City because they are doing a wide range of media interviews to get this conversation going. I know that both of them would like to have been here also. We couldn't be in both places at once and we'll talk a little bit more about both of them and their role in this report in a moment.

Here in Washington, it's our job to start to discuss the findings and how policy, government and all of our institutions must change to reflect them. The report differs from the usual Washington fare in that it incorporates essays from a wide range of cultural leaders, not just the policy ones. And by bringing those two perspectives together, it's what I think helps to make this really, a unique document.

That's one of the many ways in which our project leader, Maria Shriver, the first lady of California, led this effort. She went around the country to talk to real people about these changes and how it was affecting them on the ground. We are grateful to Maria. If you know her or have

a chance to see her, you know that she is inspirational in how she brings, you know, a human perspective to talk about the important policy issues that we're debating here.

She brought inspirational, philosophical and intellectual leadership to the project. Her dedication and spirit, particularly in midst of some significant family changes was really admirable. And we're lucky to have been able to partner with her extremely talented team, Karen Skelton, Leslie Miller and Olivia Morgan, who worked with us so closely. Leslie is here today in Maria's stead and we are grateful to her for her continued partnership and friendship with us.

In 2004, as CAP was developing its first policy agenda, we began a process that identified key issues that John Podesta and the staff saw as defining the future direction of the country, health-care reform at a time when no one thought we could ever be even where we are today, not yet there, but closer; the transformation to a low-carbon economy as a source of economic fidelity; an alternative to the failing Bush administration policy in Iraq; economic mobility.

These were the themes that we thought should define the debate about the future of our country and we are proud to have been present in identifying those and developing our work agenda around those issues. And we think we help steer the conversation to those key questions. The issues we're here to talk about today, we believe will be as important to the defining issues for the next round of debate about where our country is going.

John Podesta believes that women becoming primary breadwinners in families will bring about a profound cultural and economic shift and that the issues we have today must be one of the central areas of work for us at CAP going forward and we look forward to partnering with so many of the terrific people in the room who have been for a long time, been leaders on this issue. We want to build on and find ways to amplify and advance your work.

Now, please allow me a brief indulgence just to acknowledge our remarkable team who we're very proud of here at CAP. It was a labor of love; it was a Herculean effort. The time crunch was extraordinary and the result, we are extremely proud. The CAP project team was managed by our Senior Fellow Lauren Nichols and its policy work and editing was driven by the brilliant senior economist, Heather Boushey and our senior fellow, Ann O'Leary. We – their leadership was essential.

No less thanks is deserved by CAP's in-house editorial and online communications and art teams, Ed Paisley, Shannon Ryan, Andrew Sherry, Mac Busitery (ph) and all of them were kept together by Lauren Smith. The report also features a chapter on our enlightening poll on the current attitudes about the role of women in America that I mentioned before that we did with Rockefeller Foundation and Time Magazine, central foundation for this work. CAP's own Senior Fellows John Halpin and Ruy Teixeira helped to shape and design that poll and interpret it and we thank them.

We're obviously fortunate to have dozens of non-CAP contributors whose work is embodied here. I encourage you to take a look at copies of the report and that the executive

summary – so many great voices are here. If you go to the e-book edition, there's even a forward from Oprah Winfrey available online.

It heartens me to know that the Obama administration is already leading on these issues. The fight for health-care reform is a critical component in improving the lives of American families and an important aspect of this fight is ensuring that women are not discriminated against in purchasing health insurance.

The administration has promised that the charge on the issues addressed by the Shriver Report will not stop with health-care reform. On "Meet the Press" yesterday, White House advisor and chair of the President's Council on Women and Girls Valerie Jarrett recognized the administration needs to do more to continue the conversation started by this report and shine a spotlight on American businesses that are doing a good job of providing smart policy – family policies for their workers. And we're going to hear, in just a moment, from the leader of the administration's efforts on that, Secretary Solis. We're very excited to have her here.

I want to emphasize as well that this report's just a first stop in CAP's own efforts. We're going to focus on these issues and we're going to help build out a policy agenda on economic security, workplace flexibility, work-life balance, gender equality. We must turn these bud words into reality.

The program here is tremendous that we're going to have but I want to – we're really lucky to start with a true champion of women, families, and workers, the Obama administration's Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. And I know she has to rush to go to the White House so I'm going to slightly abbreviate her rather remarkable background.

She was confirmed as the secretary of labor earlier this year, the first Latina to hold the position. Prior to confirmation, she represented the 32<sup>nd</sup> congressional district in California. In Congress, her priorities included affordable health care, protecting the environment and improving the lives of working families.

She was a nationally recognized leader on the environment. We enjoyed very much working with her on the Green Jobs Act, for example, in Congress. But she was the first woman to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile Encourage Award in 2000 and it was for her pioneering work in environmental justice.

She was – had a long history in elected office in California. She led the battle to increase the state's minimum wage act. She authored a record 17 state laws aimed at combating domestic violence. But less known is her efforts to ensure that California became the first state in the nation to offer paid family leave to its workers.

She really started the ball rolling there that led to the eventual passage of the California Paid Leave Family Act. She's former federal employee, having worked in the Carter White House Office of Hispanic Affairs and later appointed to the Office of Management and Budget. She's fiercely proud of her family and her heritage. She's the daughter of immigrant families

and the first in her family to graduate college. But as secretary, we know that she's working hard to improve job training for women, improve the economic security for all American families.

We look forward to working with her as she leads the country on many critical issues, including many that we talked about in this report, expanded family leave, access to greater flexibility and control over work schedule and an insistence on gender equity in our federal contracting workforce. We are so thankful to have the secretary here today and look forward to her leadership as we move this discussion forward.

Please join me in welcoming Secretary Hilda Solis. (Applause.)

SEC. HILDA SOLIS: Thank you for that wonderful introduction and good morning and buenos días to all of you. It's great to be here and congratulations to a woman's nation and the Center for American Progress. I want to extend my best wishes to Maria Shriver and to also John Podesta, a great man.

I saw them all morning on the different channels talking about this report and yesterday, on a trip home – trip back to Washington, I was reading the Times Magazine article which references a lot of important data that the Department of Labor, through the Bureau of Labor Standards puts out. So very good, very timely information and put together in such a wonderful format, I think, for anybody to understand the kind of challenges that we're faced with right now.

But I want to tell you this morning that the Shriver Report is so important for this very important debate that we're having today on these policies and shining a light on critical issues for today's workplace and today's working families. Let me begin, also, by thanking you again, Sarah Wartell and Heather Boushey and the good folks here at the center for helping to put this together and for all the women and women's groups that have come by my Department of Labor.

I want to thank you so much for coming in and seeing us and I invite all of you here in the room that haven't had an opportunity to come by and meet with my staff and with our experts to please to do that. You're welcome to come into the Department of Labor. We welcome all of your input. I care very, very much about the Department of Labor issues that we are handling and I have an open-door policy. So I really do want to make clear of that.

Today, you have a very exciting group of people that are going to be speaking to you. One of my good friends, Maria Echaveste, who I worked with years ago, who led the Wage and Hour so ably at the Department of Labor some years ago. She's going to be here to talk about women workers who provide the child care and elder care.

Those are the actual people that provide the assistance in our homes and sometimes in our other facilities and often are hidden in the shadows and don't get the respect, dignity and even pay that should be provided to them. So those are also issues, I think, that need to come to the forefront and I'm glad she's going to do that.

Another wonderful, tremendous leader that I've had the opportunity to work with here in Washington, D.C., is none other than Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, who is my champion,

somebody who has worked on family issues and is a good mentor for other women in the house. And that needs to be underscored as well because as we see more women taking up the challenges in serving us in the legislature, it's always a good sign to have someone there to help you bring you in, mentor you and kind of show you the ropes of the house, which doesn't always necessarily happen in a right manner. So I want to extend my wishes to her.

As you know, we're going through some very, very tough economic times, especially for women because they are the primary breadwinners for their families in many instances. And it's important that we look at how we can help women succeed because when you help women succeed, you help their families succeed.

We know that we have to tackle this challenge and it will not be an easy task for any of us. But let me just say that it's an honor and a privilege to be working for a president who is committed to improving the lives of women and girls. The first bill President Barack Obama signed into law was a Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, restoring basic protections against pay discrimination for women and other workers.

The president also helped to establish the White House Council on Women and Girls to provide a coordinated federal response to the challenges confronted by women and girls. The council, as you know, will help ensure that all cabinet agencies consider their policies and programs and how they impact women and families and the advancement in economic security of women is of most importance to the president and to all of us and his administration.

And as a former co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, you know and I know that I am strongly committed to improving the lives of women and their children and girls especially. I entered into public life to improve opportunities for families like mine, working class families, working hard and eager to help realize that American dream.

Today, these hardworking families like yours and mine are feeling the pinch. There is uncertainty going on in our economy and as you know, our unemployment rate right now is at an all-time high of 9.8 percent. And women have a lower percentage of unemployment at 7.8 percent, but to me, this is not a victory at all. It simply means that more families are depending on women as a sole bread earner and women are still not achieving equity in their pay.

They remain concentrated in low-skill jobs and earn less than men do, dollar for dollar. And millions of working women do not have a single paid sick day. Millions of working men and women have no flexibility at their work and even when they need to care for a family member, it becomes harder and harder.

These needs are, as you know, are a priority for us at the Department of Labor and my department has been working to give men and women the appropriate tools necessary to find and to keep good jobs.

And by the way, what I mean by good jobs is the following: jobs that can support a family by increasing incomes and narrowing the wage gap, jobs that are safe and secure and give people a voice at the workplace, jobs that provide good benefits and workplace flexibility for

families and for personal care-giving, and jobs that are sustainable, that will last, like green-collar jobs that won't – that will export products but not paychecks, and jobs that restore a strong middle class.

In this economy, you know that's a hard task to follow. It's easy to say but it's hard to get to but that's what our president believes and that is what I believe. And at the Department of Labor, we have moved quickly to protect workers who have lost their jobs and provided workers with training opportunities for those looking to upgrade their skills or prepare for a new career.

The recovery act has had a tremendous impact in helping to ease some of the pain of this recession and to help generate new economic activity. Through the recovery act, we have increased unemployment benefits so that workers will get an extra \$25 each week to help pay for their family necessities.

And through the modernization of the U.I. program, we have ensured that workers previously excluded could access unemployment insurance. And this is a great example of the type of policy changes that we are going to be discussing here today. Before our work to modernize U.I. benefits, many low-wage workers and part-time workers were excluded from the system and that was based on an outdated view of the workforce.

Only 33 percent of unemployed women could receive unemployment support. Our policy needs to keep pace with the changing times and A Woman's Nation, in their report, I believe, starts us at a good place. And I hope that we can work together in months to come to help strengthen the safety net system for all of our women and all of our families.

I want to also mention that during this effort to restore and secure our economy, that we went to great lengths to help provide and enlarge our safety net through extending COBRA health coverage and reducing premiums so that working women and men could still have health care coverage for themselves and their families, even if they lost their job.

And of course, one of the major ways we will bring stability to the economy and all working families will be health insurance reform, the top priority for our president and for me and I believe, for many, many women in this country. The Department of Labor is also charged with making sure that workers are paid fair wages and that they are treated fairly in the workplace.

The Wage and Hour Division is charged, as you know, with making sure that women get their due wages in the workplace and that the provisions under the Family and Medical Leave Act are carried out. And as I said earlier, we welcome your expertise, your input about how to increase awareness and enforcement of these laws that protect our families.

Those are a few of our safety net and preventative programs, but we're also looking to promote long-term economic stability for women in the workplace. And I'm proud to say that the Department of Labor houses an agency exclusively concerned with serving and promoting the interests of women, through the Women's Bureau.

And many of you know our nominee for director, Sara Manzano-Dias and our Deputy Director Latifa Lyles. Under their leadership, we will be able to do so many more good and exciting things, improving the lives of women workers, improving their working conditions and advancing employment opportunities for all.

And while we know that work-life balance is the major issue for working women and their families, it's also a major issue for me and for the rest of this administration. And I have asked all of my agencies to address issues facing women in the workplace and DOL will look to improve work-family policies.

One Women's Bureau initiative is the flex options project, which is helping businesses create and expand workplace flexibility policies and programs for their workforces. This project brings together who volunteer to mentor business owners and other employers interested in developing flexible workplace programs like flexible work schedules, family-friendly leave policies and telework.

These are all aimed at helping employees navigate their work, family and personal responsibilities while helping employers meet their needs. And I see you have a panel also this afternoon of businesses who are going to be responding to the Woman's Nation report and we need to seek out and lift up employers that are realizing that work-life balance can be a win-win situation for good workers, for good families and for good business.

The Women's Bureau is also working to help improve the economic security of women through financial literacy. Through free classes online as well as in the classroom setting, women can learn about everything from how to apply for unemployment insurance and how to buy a home and planning for a secure retirement.

We're also working on programs that will allow women to take advantage of new opportunities being created and as we transition into the green economy, we need to also make sure that all our sisters and daughters in the women's nation are included in this green revolution. This means we need encourage women and girls to pursue careers in math and science areas, where we are incredibly represented.

And it means training women for nontraditional jobs. And at the Department of Labor, we are investing \$500 million for high-growth job training projects, including green jobs. By hosting green jobs roundtable across the country, the Women's Bureau is already starting to ensure that women of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds are aware of these new opportunities in the green sector.

We always know that allied health and information technologies are two of the areas that are the fastest growing in our economy and that's why my agency has announced approximately \$220 million in competitive grants to train workers in these high-growth occupations and will work to ensure that women have access to these growing fields and that these jobs pay well and that they are secure.

These are just some of the programs that we're working at, on in the Department of Labor, our women, our families are facing tough times. I don't need to tell you that. But this government now is on your side and ready and willing to give you the tools and the services that you need to help make this a better place for all Americans and for our families.

I'm deeply pleased to be here and honored that so many of you are as – just as excited as I am about this report. It is well long overdue and the fact of the matter is, is that women do make a difference, whether we're leading as Cabinet members, secretaries, whether we're leading in our homes or whether we are caretakers for our family, extended family members. We all play a very significant role in our economy and in this recovery.

Thank you very much on behalf of our administration. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. WARTELL: All right, we are – I think we have to get the secretary to the White House shortly, but we have time for a just a couple questions. I'd like to ask first if there are members of the media here who would like to ask a question? Please wait until someone comes to you with a mike and you're called upon. And then if you would – identify yourself, please. For standing members of the media, okay. Let me open it up to the public, please? Anyone else have questions for the secretary?

Q: Hi. My name is Lee Yang (ph). Actually, I affiliate with many civic organizations. What I think is the important thing is really based on merits – the appropriation or a budget or a grant – everything, what I see is not really based on merits. When it's not based on merits, it's easy to be abused and they use money to hire employee. Basically, it means buy more votes, buy more unfair, unjust lobbyists. So I just wonder if you can really spend time based on the merits and also to resolve the improper processing outcome plans with three branches of government. Thank you.

SEC. SOLIS: Thank you. That's a very important question for our department and we are, right now, going through a review process. It's been some time, I think, that we've really not been to able to gather information about our enforcement policies and how those were carried out in the past few years, whether it's dealing with government contracting or discrimination in the workplace.

All of these issues are going to be coming to the Department of Labor in a very timely manner. And I'm very happy to say that many of the appointments that I have made along with our administration have created, I think, a bounty full of diversity, where we have more women, women from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic areas of the country are now coming and are going to help lead us.

And I'm very proud that our new director for the Women's Bureau will be helping to lead me in that discussion so that we can go around the country, talk about how women can access services better, where to go not just for jobs, but also for grants, opportunity and to bring forward any complaints that they might have to our appropriate agencies. We are the second largest enforcement agency in the federal government.

MS. WARTELL: Let me just ask you one question as you leave. One of the things that we noted in the poll was that men as well as women share these concerns, that increasingly now, this is a shared problem for them in balancing workplace flexibility and their family duties. And when you talk about the role of the Women's Bureau, how does that evolve now as women are increasingly sharing – this isn't a struggle between women and men anymore. It's a shared set of goals that they both have for their own ability to meet their family needs.

SEC. SOLIS: Well, I think at the Department of Labor, certainly, we want to take a look at what policies we can look at to review, to make it easier for women to have flex time and for men as well. We're finding that the challenges that I saw in the report and just in the Times article show that there's a lot of support on behalf of our male colleagues and partners.

It also realized that these issues aren't just focusing in on one gender, but they affect the entire makeup of a family and the success of that family. So these are very important areas – issue areas that we're going to be look at and as we go around the country and have our Women's Bureau getting more women involved and helping to get private industry foundations and employers to come forward and work with us in this partnership.

That's going to be very essential. We definitely want to highlight those good employers that are doing the right things, those that are on the cusp and then also help implement those changes at the federal government level and at the local level. So we're there and we're ready to hear from any of you all that want to provide us with that expertise.

MS. WARTELL: Well, we at CAP think we are very, very lucky to have Secretary Solis working on these issues for us in the administration and we are very pleased to have her here. President Obama has asked her to come to the White House, so I think it is our responsibility – (laughter) – to help her say yes to her boss. So please join me in saying thank you. (Applause.)

SEC. SOLIS: Thank you so much. Thank you.

MS. WARTELL: Okay, I think we will move into the second panel, now. So just give us a minute to have everyone take their seats.

(END)