

Yearly report of the Public Policy Vice-President – June 2023

The program year began with Women's Equality Day, August 26 each year. In 2022 it was the 102nd anniversary of women's right to vote in national elections.

The first newsletter to the Public Policy branch directors alerted them to encourage their branch members to become involved in National Voter's Registration Day on September 20, 2022 whether at their local college or other public building in conjunction with their local League of Women's Voters.

The 2nd big item was the Equity Summit on October 13 sponsored by PowHer NY. National women advocate speakers encouraged women to become involved in labor and health care issues. From this Summit arose the idea and later action project of participating with the Domestic Worker groups who advocate for higher wages for Home Health Care workers. Most folks desire to remain in their own home as they age. At this time New York State is 30th in allocation of funds for Home Health Care work. There is currently an urgent need for more workers in this field. With 150% or higher wage increases, more folks will desire to do home health care work and more older Americans can be served in their home.

Several Public Policy directors are concerned with climate issues. I sent out resources from the Earth Action group to help promote the passage of Proposition #1 on the November ballot.

I spoke at the Bath Branch luncheon meeting about my role in Public Policy and encouraged them to get involved in the Great Decisions discussion group promoted by the National Foreign Policy Association. Unfortunately, no one joined in from Bath on the group I lead this winter and spring.

I sent out a monthly newsletter to the branch Public Policy directors. I researched topics that might be pertinent to use as their newsletter resources.

At the close of 2022, I suggested that branch members canvass

their local Home Health Care agencies to access the needs of these agencies. Most branches rejected this idea as too time consuming and not able to be accomplished by aging branch members. Adirondack Branch developed a list of criteria to discuss with HHC agencies. This branch became acquainted with the State Office of the Aging to share the developed criteria with state representatives. This project continues at this time.

Ilana Berger from the Caring Majority spoke to the State Board of Directors meeting in January 2023 to encourage participation during the annual New York State Legislature budget sessions during March 2023 for increased wages for HHC workers and less involvement in insurance company drainage of money given to Home Health Care Agencies. On Lobby Day, May 23, 2023, not attended by any branch other than Adirondack, Ilana and Julie Solow, Caring Majority, taught the group how to lobby assembly and senate members in their individual offices. The New York State Legislature is still in session as of this late June time, so there is always hope that some progress can be made toward higher wages for HHC workers' salaries.

Equal Pay Day for white American women workers was March 14. Equal Pay Day for black American women workers will be July 27. It takes these women 1 year and up to this date to earn what an American male worker earns in 1 year.

I feel we have few of the National issues in New York State that other branches in other states have, such as abortion, books banned, demanding parents in school board meetings, etc. But with an aging population in most New York state branches health care needs should be a priority issue and is within the National 2023-2025 Public Policy Priorities.

Nan Scinta, Public Policy Vice-President, 2022-23