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WOMEN WORK!
The National Network for Women's Employment

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Congress calls on Department of Labor to Protect the Women's Bureau

Washington, DC – In a letter delivered to Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao on May 2, Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and 26 of her House colleagues strongly urged the Department of Labor to restore Women's Bureau funding to the level Congress intended and provided for in the Continuing Resolution passed earlier this year. The Department's cut to the Bureau's budget threatens critical programs for working women and represents a disregard for the interests of nearly 70 million women in the U.S. labor force. The Bureau is the only federal agency devoted to the concerns of women in the workplace.

DeLauro and her colleagues wrote in opposition to the Department of Labor's decision to reduce the Women's Bureau budget under its operating plan for FY2007. Their letter stated that Congress intended to maintain FY2006 funding levels for the Bureau—under House Joint Resolution 20—and that it is imperative that the Department fund the Women's Bureau at a level which supports agency initiatives to empower 21st century women workers to participate more fully in the American economy.

National women's organizations have also called on the Department of Labor to reinstate the full budget of the Women's Bureau and amply fund the agency in the future.

"We are extremely concerned that your decision to reduce the Bureau's funding below the full amount budgeted by Congress appears to be part of a larger attempt to gradually and quietly downsize the Bureau until it can no longer function," said an April 20 letter sent to Secretary Chao by 24 organizations including Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment, Wider Opportunities for Women, The American Association of University Women, The National Women's Law Center, The National Organization for Women and Feminist Majority.

"This cut to the Women's Bureau's budget is unnecessary, unconscionable and unacceptable," said Jill Miller, Women Work! President & CEO. "The Women's Bureau and its programs are vitally important to working women and their families."

Since 1920, the Women's Bureau has led the nation in representing and protecting the needs of wage-earning women. In recent years the Bureau has advanced 21st century solutions to help women in economic transition obtain employment in high-growth, demand-driven occupations and take steps to improve their families' security. Programs funded by the Women's Bureau help hundreds of thousands of women succeed and advance in the workforce each year. The budget cut jeopardizes the Bureau's projects and also harms a grant program that supports job training and education programs for women.

Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advances economic justice and equality for women through education, advocacy and organizing. Since 1978, the Network has assisted more than 10 million women to successfully enter, re-enter and advance in the workforce. Through supporting, advocating and increasing women's economic self-sufficiency, Women Work! members strengthen families and communities. For more information, visit www.womenwork.org or call (202) 467-6346.

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