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WOMEN WORK!  
The National Network for Women's Employment

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**U.S. Households Led by Single Mothers and Displaced Homemakers on the Rise**  
*Critical New Study Finds Continuing Trend of Poverty and Low Wages*

**WASHINGTON, DC – February 17, 2005** – A critical new study has found that single mothers and displaced homemakers are not a disappearing phenomenon in the United States; in fact, these family groups are on the increase and likely to be vastly over-represented in the nation's low-paying service jobs. In a Capitol Hill event today, sponsored by Congresswomen Ginny Brown-Waite (FL-5<sup>th</sup>) and Hilda L. Solis (CA-32<sup>nd</sup>), co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, the full report, *Chutes and Ladders: The Search for Solid Ground for Women in the Workforce*, was released by Women Work!, the nation's largest network of women's education and training programs.

"It is so important that we are here today to join in this effort," said Congresswoman Solis. "The Women Work! report reminds us that women still face numerous challenges in the workforce. We must fight the deep funding cuts proposed by President Bush to vital programs that help women maintain economic security, including career education, child care, job training, and Medicaid."

The work and family landscape has changed dramatically during the past 50 years; unfortunately, workforce policies have not changed with it. In 1960, 70% of families with children had one parent home full time. Today, it is precisely the opposite, with 70% of families headed by two working parents or a working single parent. In 2003, there were 20.9 million single mothers and displaced homemakers in the United States

The report provides an in-depth analysis of 2003 Census data and recommendations for policymakers and employers, along with suggested best practices, for supporting women's efforts to obtain education, job training and economic self-sufficiency. This is the third in a series of reports published by Women Work!, the first in 1985, and the second in 1994.

"There is a reason we're calling this report *Chutes and Ladders*," points out Jill Miller, Women Work! Chief Executive Officer. "The data show that single mothers and displaced homemakers

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find themselves on a downward slide in their struggle to establish secure and solid footing in the workforce. The good news is that there are policy solutions and business practices to guide government and employers in crafting ladders to job security for women, while helping to address the growing problems associated with the looming labor shortage.”

Other key data highlighted in the report include:

- **Single mothers and displaced homemakers are “poor” or “near poor” although they are working.**
- **Those who are employed are vastly over-represented in low-paying service occupations with few, if any, benefits.**
- **More than half have not completed education beyond a high school**

“Given that labor shortages are predicted as early as 2010, employers need to start exploring new sources of workers, and displaced homemakers and single mothers represent a huge, untapped resource,” said Miller. “And, in order to recruit and retain this historically underemployed group, businesses and governments need to implement programs that address real-life issues like job training, workplace benefits and flexibility.”

Among the policy and employer recommendations suggested in the report are:

- **Flexible work schedules for all employees**
- **Benefits for part-time employees**
- **Increased federal and state funding for education and training**
- **Expanded family-related leave policies**
- **Social Security reform that addresses the needs of female workers**

The organization will spend 2005 educating policymakers and the business community on the study’s findings and advocating for the recommendations, leveraging its role as a vital link between programs, agencies and educational institutions nationwide that provide education, job training and support services to millions of America’s displaced homemakers, single parents and other women in transition.

**Women Work! The National Network for Women’s Employment**, a national nonprofit organization, is dedicated to empowering women from diverse backgrounds and assisting them in achieving economic self-sufficiency through job readiness, education, training, and employment. For more than 25 years, the Women Work! Network of more than 1,100 programs has served an estimated 10 million women in transition. For more information, please call 202-467-6346.

**To access a copy of the full report, *Chutes and Ladders: The Search for Solid Ground for Women in the Workforce*, visit the “News, Projects & Events” section of [www.womenwork.org](http://www.womenwork.org).**