

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, April 28, 2004

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**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN (NCRW) RELEASES
“MISSING: INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN’S LIVES”**

***Report Documents Disturbing Pattern of Vital Information Important to
Women and Girls Disappearing***

***“MISSING” is A Wake Up Call to the Nation to Demand Accurate, Timely, Nonpartisan
Information About Women’s Health, Workplace Rights and Safety***

Wednesday, April 28, 2004, New York, NY – The National Council for Research on Women (NCRW) today released “MISSING: Information About Women’s Lives.” The report documents a disturbing pattern of vital information important to women and girls’ lives disappearing from Federal Government websites, reluctance on the Government’s part to support and sustain offices dedicated to addressing the specific needs of women, and the Government’s willingness to undervalue and tamper with key research affecting women’s lives.

“This report outlines a series of decisions by federal agencies to delete, delay, alter, or spin data about what is happening to American women,” said NCRW President Linda Basch. “Over the last four decades, researchers and citizens – under both Republican and Democratic administrations – have been able to trust and depend on a vigorous flow of reliable data from federal agencies. This is no longer true. Politics and ideology are trumping science on important issues that affect women’s daily lives, resulting in the loss or manipulation of information critical to women and girls as they make decisions about their health, careers and safety. Without accurate information, research suffers; women and girls suffer; our society suffers.”

MISSING concentrates on those areas that affect women and girls where priorities have changed, funding has been cut, research findings distorted, important social differences masked, and critical committees and programs dismantled. The report is about the dissolution of specialized offices, task forces, and committees that focused on women’s needs and concerns, and the implication that these needs and concerns are not important to public policy and programs. MISSING also identifies examples where activism and advocacy have prevented these changes in policy and practice from becoming permanent. Among the evidence Missing presents:

- Twenty-five key publications of the Department of Labor are no longer available on the Women’s Bureau website. Prior to the current Administration, women could find a wide array of information about their rights in the workplace by logging onto the DOL website. With no explanation, the Administration removed 25 fact sheets, denying women and researchers critical information on everything from staffing to pay equity to child care to issues of specific importance to black and Latina women and women business owners.
- Disbanding and underfunding of key Government offices dedicated to addressing the needs and status of women: The Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach in the White House and the President’s Interagency Council on Women are disbanded; Women

Implementing New Goals Successfully (WINGS), the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (designed to enhance the employment opportunities for women and ensure fair treatment within the department) is disbanded; the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was slated to be dismantled; has been resuscitated after an outcry, but with a new mission - to focus on issues such as health care for service women and the effects of deployment on family life, but not issues of equity and access.

- Denying the value of critical disaggregated data: The executive summary of the National Healthcare Disparities Report, a Congressionally mandated report card on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in healthcare, was watered down and its conclusions underplayed. And on February 21, 2004, the government confessed that it improperly altered a report documenting large racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare. According to Health and Human Services Secretary Thompson, "some individuals took it upon themselves" to make the report sound more positive than was justified by the data.
- Failing to submit congressionally mandated reports on women. Under the 2000 Violence Against Women Act, the Attorney General is required to conduct a national study of discrimination against domestic violence victims in the issuing or administration of insurance policies. The report to Congress was due in October 2001 and to date has not been submitted. This delay is affecting the case for important federal legislation on domestic violence and workers' rights in both the House and Senate.
- Ignoring medical advisory committees. After two medical advisory committees recommended the emergency contraceptive known as Plan B be made available over the counter, the Administration caved to lobbying by conservative groups. Ignoring the recommendation that making this available to women was a "public health imperative" the Administration delayed making a decision. Plan B is still not available over the counter.
- Providing misleading information about women's health. After numerous studies established no link between breast cancer and abortion, the Administration posted information saying studies were "inconsistent," intentionally misleading women in an effort to scare them from getting an abortion. In fact, they removed earlier versions of the fact sheets that stated clearly that there was no connection. And information on a Health and Human Services (HHS) website has been distorted, and performance measures to test the effectiveness of abstinence programs have been altered, in order to make abstinence-only approaches to pregnancy prevention appear more successful than they have been otherwise proven to be.

Said Basch: "MISSING is a wake up call to the nation that a nonpartisan legacy of government is being destroyed. Decisions to distort or withhold information have a cumulative negative effect for women and girls that is serious and detrimental and must not be left unchecked. Concerned citizens must make their voices heard through communicating to officials and elected representatives the crucial need for unbiased, objective information."

"As researchers, we at NCRW know that clear, accurate data and comparative analyses are crucial to solving problems and achieving equality," said Basch. "Distortion of information and omissions deny researchers critical facts and impede our ability to craft solutions and develop strategies to address the pressing challenges of our times. When data and analysis are

obscured and regular reports withheld, women – and women’s research and policy centers – are left in the dark.”

NCRW will continue to shine a light on this disturbing pattern of withholding or spinning data about women and girls through its MisInformation Clearinghouse (www.ncrw.org). The full report is available in PDF format on the site, and the Clearinghouse is a growing register of omissions, alterations, and distortions of vital information that was once readily available, and a repository of links to sites where good information can still be found.

For example, the MisInformation Clearinghouse highlights:

- Information on Environmental Pollutants and Women’s Health Are Missing. According to a recent study, environmental toxins have a disproportionate effect on women— especially low-income women and women of color. But, disturbingly, no new fact sheets on the effects of environmental pollutants on women’s health have been posted on federal government websites since 2000—this, despite promises in 1997 by the Science Policy Council of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address gender specific issues and use gender and age-differentiated data in Agency risk assessment and management decisions. Not only has the government neglected to produce this type of data, but in a recent trend, has ignored and altered the information that has been collected, resulting in the development of unsound environmental policy on toxins like mercury and lead, both of which disproportionately affect women.
- Key Information on Realities of Violence Against Women in ‘Healthy marriage’ Proposal is Missing. Government research on violence against women appears to be ‘missing’ from the current Administration’s ‘Healthy Marriage’ proposal. This proposal puts women in danger, as it lacks provisions that take the prevention of and protection against domestic violence into account.

About the National Council for Research on Women

The National Council for Research on Women is an alliance of 100 leading US and international women’s research and policy centers. NCRW uses research as a tool for progressive social change. NCRW promotes scholarship on issues significant to women and girls; fosters collaboration across borders of gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, class, and generation; and influences public debate through accurate information and analysis.

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