

Talbert, Lilly

From: Talbert, Lilly
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To: Talbert, Lilly
Subject: VCW VIEW Message: Vermont Summit on Working Families

Vermont Gathering Focuses on Working Families

Just over a week from now, on June 23rd, President Obama will convene a [White House Summit on Working Families](#), focusing on strengthening our nation's workplaces to better support working families, boost businesses' bottom lines, and ensure America's global economic competitiveness in the coming decades. The summit, hosted jointly by the Center for American Progress, the Department of Labor, and the White House Council on Women and Girls, will convene businesses, economists, labor leaders, legislators, advocates, the media, and ordinary citizens for a discussion on issues such as affordable quality childcare, workplace flexibility, equal pay, workplace discrimination, and worker retention and promotion.

Last night Vermont's lead-up event, the Vermont Summit on Working Families, took place in Burlington. The event was hosted by organizations that support working families and included Family Values at Work, the Vermont Commission on Women, Hunger Free Vermont, Main Street Alliance, Main Street Landing, Vermont Legal Aid, the Vermont Paid Sick Days Coalition, Vermont Works for Women, the Vermont Women's Fund, the Vermont Workers' Center, and Voices for Vermont's Children.

Cary Brown, Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women (VCW), a non-partisan state agency working to advance rights and opportunities for women and girls, set the stage with opening remarks which included a recognition of those in the room who will represent Vermont at the national summit.

Keynote speaker Madeleine Kunin, former Vermont Governor, US Ambassador to Switzerland, and author of several books, including *The New Feminist Agenda: Defining the Next Revolution for Women, Work, and Family*, spoke about earned paid sick leave in the context of class issues: those who work in lower paying jobs lack the power to negotiate time off when family members or they themselves become sick. She provided direction for advocates in Vermont to involve elders, people with disabilities and those caring for them in providing information, stories, and support to legislators considering this issue. She urged those in attendance to involve more mainstream business people as well and emphasized increased productivity of Vermont workers if this law was passed.

Other speakers included Ashley Moore, a restaurant worker and student who worked multiple jobs without paid sick days. Ms. Moore spoke of working while ill and frequently witnessing co-workers who did so as well to make ends meet. She spoke about the need for cultural change that begins with legislation. Robyn Freedner-Maguire, Campaign Director of Let's Grow Kids, a public education campaign to increase Vermonters' understanding of the importance of the earliest years in the lives of Vermont's children, spoke about how crucial support of young working families is for child development. Randy George of Red Hen Baking Co. in Middlesex, with over 40 employees, described how offering earned paid sick days increases staff retention and dedication, as well as attracts well-qualified employees.

Facilitated group discussion followed. Legislators and other policymakers spoke about recent accomplishments that provide support to working families. Employers spoke about programs and

policy they have in place that also support their bottom line. The event closed with a discussion about most important next steps and messages that Vermont delegates can impart to the national conference. Attendees filled in postcards with their top initiative. The postcards will be delivered to the national conference.

More info: [Link to reporter Molly Walsh's story in yesterday's Burlington Free Press.](#)

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Vermont Commission on Women (VCW)

VIEW Message – Vermont Information Exchange for Women

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