



**eliminating racism  
empowering women  
ywca**

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**bush signs voting rights act bill**

On Thursday, July 27, the President signed H.R. 9, "The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006," into law. The bill signing follows the unanimous passage of H.R. 9 (by a vote of 98-0) on July 20 in the U.S. Senate. The measure previously passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 390-33 on July 13, 2006.

The signing of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) is the outcome of more than two years of hard work by civil rights and voting rights advocates. The YWCA USA has been working hard toward this reauthorization, as full and fair voting rights for all Americans is an important part of our mission to eliminate racism and empower women.

Despite the efforts of a small, but vocal group of opponents who wanted to gut the VRA, voting rights advocates and their bi-partisan allies in Congress succeeded in defeating the weakening amendments that had been proposed to H.R. 9. Indeed, the expiring provisions of the VRA have not only been renewed for another 25 years, but also strengthened to the effects of several U.S. Supreme Court decisions that undermined the effectiveness of the VRA and ran counter to the original legislative intent of Congress.

While we applaud Congress and the

**gma segment postponed again**

Good Morning America has postponed its two-day segment, "Is Race Still Relevant", for the fourth time. The broadcast was planned for Thursday and Friday of this week. The main reason for the delays is that the topic has perennial interest, meaning it can run anytime. The segment features Glenda Kearney DuBoise, our past National Coordinating Board chair, and five other women in a roundtable discussion hosted by ABC's Diane Sawyer and Robin Roberts.

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**breaking the glass ceiling**

It could take 40 years for women to achieve parity with men in leadership and top-paying corporate level positions if the scant progress of the past decade continues, a newly released census study concludes. The study, which tracked women executives in the Fortune 500, found that most large U.S. companies have made very little progress in advancing women, especially women of color. The corporate level positions held by women fell dramatically to 0.23 percentage points per year, the lowest yearly gain in the past 10 years. The report was conducted by Catalyst, a non-profit research and advisory organization working to build inclusive environments and expand opportunities for women at work. For details, go to [Survey](#).

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President's support of this vital civil rights legislation, the law has little meaning if it is not enforced. In recent years, the administration has been lax in its enforcement of these civil rights protections. We hope that this reauthorization will re-energize the Department of Justice in its enforcement efforts.



*(Left to right) James Swoyer (PennPIRG), Bitsy Jeffers (Northampton County League of Women Voters -NCLWV), Margaret Krawiec (NCLWV), Flordelisa Perez (YWCA Bethlehem), Joan Carson (NCLWV), Esther Lee (Bethlehem-NAACP), William Lee (Bethlehem-NAACP) and Representative Dent.*

### **ywca bethlehem leads coalition meeting**

Flordelisa Perez Dolan, empowerment center director of the YWCA Bethlehem (PA), organized a meeting with her Representative, Charles Dent (R-PA15) to urge him to support the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act (VRA). Dolan reports, "For my first advocacy meeting as a YWCA employee in the local district office, it went well. We had representatives from PennPIRG, Bethlehem-NAACP and Northampton County League of Women Voters at the meeting. Representative Dent plans to vote for the reauthorization of the VRA without amendments!" Thanks to the help of YW Activists like Flordelisa, the VRA passed.

### **yw provides support groups for sexual abuse survivors**

The YWCA Greater Rhode Island is offering a free support group for Spanish-speaking survivors of childhood sexual abuse and their non-offending family members. Executive Director Claire Silva said the "We SPEAK" program may be the first of its kind in the nation. "We SPEAK" stands for Survivors Provide Education, Affirmation And Kinship." It is funded by Helping Outreach Programs to Expand (HOPE II), a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime and the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Silva, author of the recently published book, "A Child's Heart Speaks: Surviving Sexual Abuse," said she learned that Rhode Island lacked free services for survivors when she sought help for a family member three years ago. During her search for assistance, she thought about how difficult the situation must be for families with limited English skills. She said she is grateful that the YW can now provide the support group along with a similar one for English-speaking survivors. The association is seeking community donations to fund the latter support group.