

## SAVE THE DATE!

Maryland NOW will host its annual legislative reception in Annapolis on February 28th from 6-8pm at the Maryland Inn. Featuring keynote speaker **Martha Burke**.

For more information, contact Pam Klecan at [pklecanow@verizon.net](mailto:pklecanow@verizon.net).

## Calendar of Events

- 2/1/07 Baltimore NOW Board Meeting, Towson. Open to all members  
For info: 410-668-4399
- 2/5/07 Memorial Service for Victims of Domestic Violence in Annapolis. Contact MD Network Against Domestic Violence for Details at 301-352-4574
- 2/8/07 Program Meeting: The Struggle for Equal Rights for LGBTs of Color. See page 1 for details.

## How to Contact Us

### Mailing Address:

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[www.baltimorenow.org](http://www.baltimorenow.org)

If your name or address is incorrect, please send entire label with corrections to NOW Membership, 1100 H Street NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20005.



Baltimore Chapter  
National Organization for Women  
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# The Equalizer

Newsletter of the Baltimore Chapter of the National Organization for Women



Baltimore NOW, P.O. Box 253, Timonium, MD 21094

February 2007

## February Program:

## THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS FOR LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR

The intersection of homophobia and racism makes life particularly hard for lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender folks of color. Our speakers for the February NOW meeting will explain current Maryland and national legislative efforts to advance rights for LGBTs of color, and their dual struggles against homophobia in the people of color community, and against racism in the LGBT community.

**Sian Lewis** is a member of the *Marylanders of Color Collective of Equality Maryland*, and an *Equality Maryland* board member. Ms Lewis is a longtime workers', civil, and LGBT rights activist. Her career includes stints at the national offices of the *Service Employees International Union (SEIU)* and *Jobs with Justice*. Ms. Lewis also worked for the AFL-CIO's *Pride at Work* on LGBT-workers' rights, and the *National Black Justice Coalition*.

Presently, Ms. Lewis serves as a political action representative for the *American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees' International Union (AFSCME)* and is an accomplished lobbyist, organizer, and writer.

The *Equality Maryland* website says, "The *Marylanders of Color Collective* is an organization of people of color dedicated to engaging in heart-to-heart dialogue about LGBT people of color — engaging LGBT communities of color and our allies in the movement for equality and social justice through visibility, political advocacy, religious dialogue and grassroots education in order to increase awareness and improve the quality of life for LGBT people and our families". MOCC's legislative work

includes "raising awareness about marriage equality (same sex marriage), health care in our communities and hate crimes protection".

**Meredith Moise** is the Associate Director of Religious Affairs for the Washington, DC-based *National Black Justice Coalition*. She has been a teacher, truancy counselor, child protective service worker and social justice activist. Most importantly, she is a passionate human rights advocate. Ms Moise is a core volunteer at the *Portal*, Baltimore's Black LGBT community center. She has a long history advocating for the LGBT community, and freelance writing for LGBT (and African American) publications. She is also an ordained independent Catholic deacon serving under Archbishop Lawrence J. Harms of the American Catholic Church.

The *National Black Justice Coalition* "is a civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black same-gender-loving, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. The Coalition works with our communities and our allies for social justice, equality, and an end to racism and homophobia."

The meeting will begin at 6:30 (remember the earlier time) on **Thursday, February 8th** and is free and open to the public.

**When:** Thursday, February 8, 2007 at 6:30 pm

**Where:** Stony Run Friends Meeting  
5116 N. Charles Street

**Info:** 410-668-4399 or [info@baltimorenow.org](mailto:info@baltimorenow.org)



## Passage of the Minimum Wage Bill – NOW says "It's about time!"

January 10, 2007

By a vote of 315 to 116, the House of Representatives, under the ambitious new leadership of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), passed a bill today to increase the minimum wage. The legislation proposes to raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 per hour over two years.

"While this is a definite improvement over the current minimum wage, \$15,000 a year still isn't enough to support a family in this country. But it's a step in the right direction and the Senate should follow suit."

NOW applauds the tenacity of the new Congressional leadership and the inclusion of raising the national minimum as part of their "first 100 hours" goals. With this momentum, the Senate will should work quickly to pass a *clean* minimum wage bill and send it to George W. Bush for signature.

"This is good news for women and families," says NOW President Kim Gandy. "This is a bold statement to George Bush and a tribute to the voters who said they wanted to see a change.

Gandy adds, "Women's wages are the lowest of the low, and it is time our elected officials took notice. Raising the minimum wage is a matter of fairness."

Consider these facts: Nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers are women. Overall, women are twice as likely as men to work at the minimum wage. Congress has not provided minimum wage earners with a raise in almost 10 years. However, in the last nine years, Congress has voted itself seven pay increases. In addition, the number of people in poverty has increased by 5.4 million since President Bush took office. Nearly 37 million people live in poverty, including 13 million children. Among full-time, year-round workers, poverty has doubled since the late 1970s -- from about 1.3 million then to more than 2.6 million. An unacceptably low minimum wage is a key part of the problem.

There is still much work to do -- the Senate is expected to vote on the legislation next week. We are confident and hopeful that our allies in the Senate will do the right thing for women and families.

*From www.now.org*

## HELP WANTED!

Baltimore NOW is looking for volunteers to serve on our Board of Directors or to assist the Board with planning and administrative tasks. We are only asking the volunteers donate a few hours a month to the chapter. Our current board vacancies are: Action Committee Chair and Fundraising Committee Chair. We can also use help in the following areas: writing articles for our newsletter; helping plan actions and events, staffing booths at community fairs and festivals; monitoring the media and writing letters to the editor; assisting during the legislative session by monitoring legislation and writing letters to legislators; helping plan and implement chapter fundraisers. If you are interested in helping with any of these projects, please contact us at [info@baltimorenow.org](mailto:info@baltimorenow.org) or 410-668-4399. Email or leave a message and a member of our Board will be in touch!

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Baltimore NOW congratulates Baltimore Mayor **Sheila Dixon**. Mayor Dixon is the first woman to serve as mayor of Baltimore City. With the appointment of Sheila Dixon to the office of Mayor, four of Baltimore City's most influential offices are now occupied by women, including: City Council President, **Stephanie Rawlings Blake**; State's Attorney **Patricia Jessamy**; and Comptroller, **Joan M. Pratt**. *You go, girls!*

## 2007 Legislative Preview

The 2007 session of the Maryland General Assembly is underway! This year, we have many new legislators in Annapolis, as well as a new Governor. Accordingly, there will much happening to impact women.

Some of the legislation of interest to women which will be introduced this year include:

- Extending the duration of a Protective Order from 1 year to 2 year
- Allowing workers to use accumulated sick leave for the care of a child, parent or spouse
- Terminating the parental rights of a convicted rapist (when a child is born as a result of a rape)
- Providing cervical cancer vaccines for low-income girls
- Protecting the property rights of domestic violence victims by closing a loophole in the property statute

Baltimore NOW plans to monitor these and other bills which effect women and take appropriate action, such as writing letters of support and issuing action alerts.

If you would like to receive legislative updates from Baltimore NOW, send us your email address to [info@baltimorenow.org](mailto:info@baltimorenow.org) and we will send you email alerts as they are available.

## NOW Shows Support for Pelosi With Giant Congratulations Card

January 5, 2007—At the beginning of a long day of celebrations, NOW supporters welcomed other guests at a special Swearing In Brunch at the historic Library of Congress with a giant, eight-foot "Congratulations" card for new Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). Nearly 10,000 messages came in from across the country congratulating Pelosi on breaking the marble ceiling, expressing sentiments both personal and political. Passersby added their own messages, and many took photos in front of the card.

"One small step for a woman, one giant leap for womankind!" said a note from Knoxville, Tenn.; from Durham, N.C., "We will be walking with you every step of the way;" from Lafayette, La., "Congratulations and can't wait to watch your bravery rock the house;" from Belleville, Ill., "All the suffragists, feminists and everyone else who supports the causes for women are celebrating here and in heaven. Our time (many years in the making) has come;" and thousands more like these came from her home states of Maryland and California and everywhere in between.

"This is a historic day for women and girls everywhere," NOW President Kim Gandy exclaimed. "Everyone who sent a message was here with us in spirit, celebrating this great beginning."

When Speaker Pelosi passed by, she waved and exclaimed, "Thank you! NOW has always been there for me."

