

Our accomplishments speak for themselves



Women Employed
2008/2009 ANNUAL REPORT

“ Smart problem solvers, innovative thinkers, dogged advocates for low-paid working women. ”

—foundation program officer

Shaping Federal Policy

Women Employed seized new opportunities to make a national impact for working women. We helped to craft new education and employment initiatives to benefit women and low-income workers.

We met with President Obama's transition team in Washington about key issues including equal pay, a minimum wage increase, paid sick days, and affirmative action. Based on three decades of experience, we advised on ways to better enforce equal opportunity laws.

After an intense campaign to pass the **LILLY LEDBETTER FAIR PAY ACT**, we celebrated with other national advocates at the historic signing ceremony at the White House.

Championing Paid Sick Days

Women Employed continued to build support for the **HEALTHY WORKPLACE ACT**, which would guarantee a minimum of seven paid sick days for Illinois workers. We organized town hall meetings throughout the state and heard heartbreaking stories from women about how the lack of paid sick days has affected their families. Women Employed shared their hardships with policymakers to demonstrate the urgent need for legislation. We are simultaneously working to pass the federal Healthy Families Act so that workers nationwide can have time to care for themselves and their families without the threat of losing a paycheck or their job. We spurred media coverage to build awareness about the issue and momentum for both bills.

Rising E-Activism

Our **ACTION NETWORK** had a standout year. Membership increased by 50 percent and members delivered 4,504 messages to the Governor, 139 state representatives and senators, and over half the U.S. Congress. Increasingly, members are reaching out to their own networks to ask them to take action on our issues, spreading our message even further.

We used social media to strategically expand our voice and connect to new audiences. Women Employed is getting the word out through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and using surveys, video footage, online newsletters, and blogging to inspire online advocates to speak up and join our cause.

“ Career Coach helps my students realize there is a whole world out there. ”

—job skills trainer

Mobilizing New Leaders

Our **ADVOCACY COUNCIL** engages young women in economic justice issues through events and social media to increase awareness, dialogue and activism.

The Council's *Be An Advocate* initiative involved young women in our paid sick days campaign, resulting in media placements and almost 100 new advocates taking action in support of the Illinois Healthy Workplace Act.

The Council's annual *WE Can Do It* cocktail party created buzz and inspired all 80 attendees to get involved—from joining our Action Network to volunteering for committees.

“ Experts say we should all stay home when we are sick, but we don't have that choice. ”

—school janitor

Students Speak Out

This year we launched **STUDENT ADVOCATES FOR SUCCESS (SAS)**, to help low-income students advocate directly with policymakers in Springfield to improve financial aid policies. Within a year, SAS recruited and activated members at 17 institutions of higher education in Illinois.

Along with our Action Network, SAS played a pivotal role in restoring need-based financial aid that had been cut for nearly 140,000 low-income students. By providing testimony at hearings, helping organize the largest student rally in the state, and sending 564 letters to the Governor, SAS has become an important force for change.

“ Women Employed gets what low-income college students need. They understand the challenges and work to overcome them. ”

—community college administrator

Success in College

Twenty-seven colleges—more than half the community colleges in Illinois—have joined our **CLEAR CONNECTIONS PROJECT**, a unique collaboration to improve support services so that more low-income students can enter and succeed in college. Women Employed and our project members analyze services, catalogs, and websites to make improvements that help students successfully navigate registration and financial aid and other supports. Direct feedback from “mystery students” helps us know exactly what's working and what could work better. We identify and share best practices so that all members benefit from proven solutions. Colleges are making specific changes that will help thousands more students complete certificates and degrees.

New Educational Pathways

More students will be able to start on paths to their career goals because of our intensive work with community colleges and state partners this year. Women Employed is a leading proponent of **BRIDGE PROGRAMS**, a crucial strategy to prepare low-skilled adults for training programs that can lead to better careers. We encouraged the community college system and state agencies to establish a funding stream that will promote the spread of these proven programs. Our input also helped to ensure that bridge programs include career development and connect to employment. With policies in place, Women Employed will work with colleges and other partners to establish more bridge programs to serve low-income and low-skilled Illinois residents.

Advancing Careers, Building Communities

Over 35,000 Chicagoans learned about **CAREER COACH**, our innovative online career development program, through a public education campaign in community newspapers, on buses and cable television.

We reached thousands of others by working with 30 community-based organizations to help them provide career planning to their participants. Our custom workshops are being used for career seminars, job readiness courses, and individual coaching. Through user feedback and site analysis, we revised Career Coach content and navigation to ensure people can find the resources they need and keep coming back.

We reached out to community college educators and provided them with a customized curriculum to assist students with career planning. Our online resources and presentations at national conferences are getting the curriculum into classrooms nationwide and providing career development to thousands who wouldn't have received it otherwise.

We launched **WOMENACHIEVE.ORG**, a website that provides resources to women who are trying to advance their careers through education. This new website, built in collaboration with an online university, is a social networking site that includes blogs and forums so that women can connect with each other directly for support.



We are grateful to the foundations, corporations, organizations, and individuals who contribute to our efforts. We recognize the importance of every contribution and regret that we cannot list the many people who donated less than \$100 between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009. Heartfelt thanks to all our supporters.

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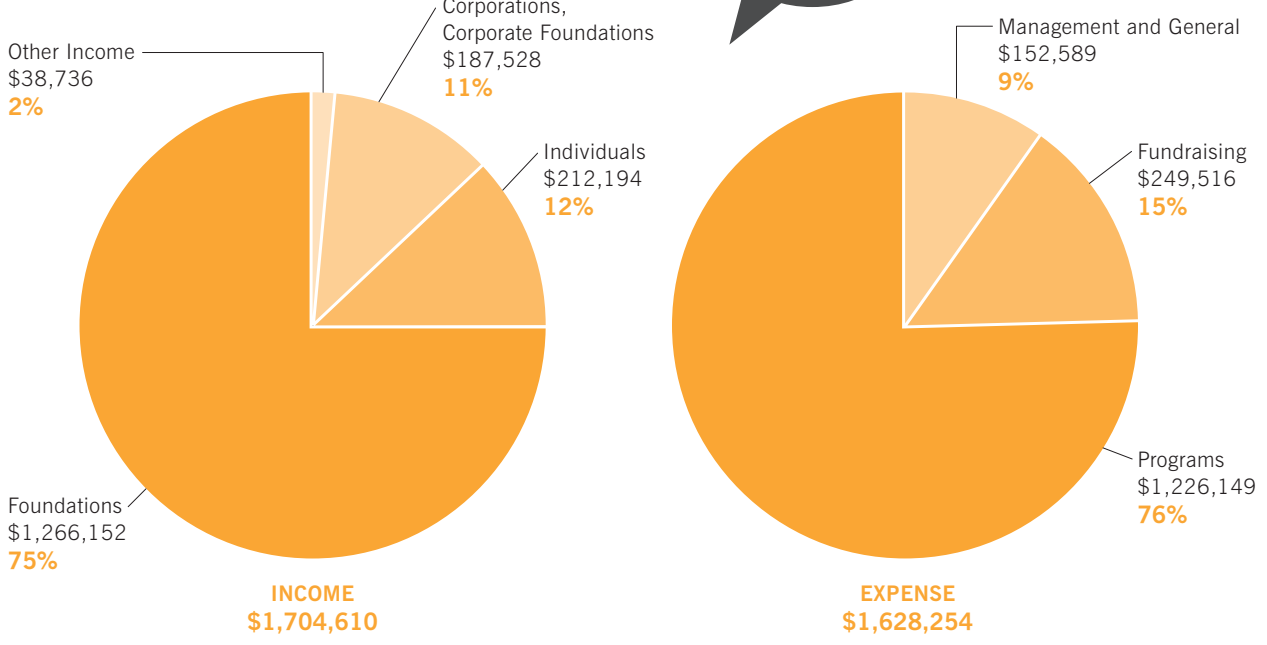
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