

What's at Stake: Budget

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In order to understand someone's priorities, you often need to look no further than their checkbook. How a person spends their money is a pretty reliable indicator of what they believe to be important.

The same is true when you look at our nation's budgets at the state and federal levels. How our leaders choose to allocate spending tells a great deal about their priorities. Unfortunately, far too often women and children are not near the top of the list when budgeting decisions are made.

Women and our families have a tremendous amount at stake in budget decisions. These decisions determine whether we can go to college or get the job training we need to support our families. They impact our ability to receive preventative health care. They impact what our lives will be like as we age. They also impact the kind of start our children will get in life, whether the air they breathe and the water they drink will be safe, and whether they will be able to succeed.

These budgets include funding for job training programs for women, student loans to help us go to college, health care and benefits for women veterans, Social Security and Medicare for our seniors, enforcement of civil rights and labor laws by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, affordable housing programs, education, early learning, children's health care and infant mortality programs, child care subsidies to allow parents to work, child nutrition, women's access to health care, environmental enforcement to keep our air and water clean, and much more.

In the last year, we've seen deep cuts both at the state and federal levels to programs families relied upon and that our children need to reach their full potential. While lawmakers may call these cuts "discretionary", women know that these programs are vital. Unfortunately, too often women's voices aren't at the table when these decisions are made.

Even though budgets far too often involve arcane and frankly boring details, they ultimately have a very real impact on all of our daily lives. They reflect our priorities as a nation and as a state.

And if women aren't at the table as voters and decision makers, it's likely that our nation's and our state's budgets will continue to undervalue and under invest in women and our children.