

= Independent Women 's Forum =

The Independent Women 's Forum (IWF) is a politically conservative American non @-@ profit organization focused on policy issues of concern to women . The IWF was founded by activist Rosalie Silberman to promote a " conservative alternative to feminist tenets " following the controversial Supreme Court nomination of Clarence Thomas in 1992 .

The group advocates " equity feminism , " a term first used by IWF author Christina Hoff Sommers to distinguish " traditional , classically liberal , humanistic feminism " from " gender feminism " , which she claims opposes gender roles as well as patriarchy . According to Sommers , the gender feminist view is " the prevailing ideology among contemporary feminist philosophers and leaders " and " thrives on the myth that American women are the oppressed ' second sex . ' " Sommers ' equity feminism has been described as anti @-@ feminist by critics .

In the 2012 U.S. presidential election , Independent Women 's Voice ran an advertisement comparing President Obama to a dishonest boyfriend .

= = Origin and history = =

Founded in 1992 by Rosalie Silberman , Anita K. Blair , and Barbara Olson , the IWF grew out of the ad hoc group " Women for Judge Thomas , " created to defend Clarence Thomas against allegations of sexual harassment and other improprieties . By 1996 the organization had some 700 dues @-@ paying members who met regularly at luncheons to network and share ideas . Silberman was the IWF 's first president ; subsequent leaders have included Nancy Pfotenhauer and Anita Blair . The current executive director of the organization is Sabrina Schaeffer . The IWF has been described as " a virtual ' Who 's Who ' of Washington 's Republican establishment . " In 2006 , the organization had 20 @, @ 337 members and a budget of \$ 1 @. @ 05 million .

= = Opposition to other feminist ideas = =

The IWF opposes many mainstream feminist positions , describing them as " radical feminism " . IWF @-@ affiliated writers have argued that the gender gap in income exists because of women 's greater demand for flexibility , fewer hours , and less travel in their careers , rather than because of sexism . In an article for the Dallas Morning News , IWF Vice @-@ President Carrie Lukas attributed gender disparities in income to " women 's own choices " , writing that women " tend to place a higher priority on flexibility and personal fulfillment than do men , who focus more on pay . Women tend to avoid jobs that require travel or relocation , and they take more time off and spend fewer hours in the office than men do . Men disproportionately take on the most dirty , dangerous and depressing jobs . "

Conservative commentators have praised the IWF ; Linda Chavez credited Women 's Figures : An Illustrated Guide to the Economic Progress of Women in America , a 1999 book published in part by the IWF , with " debunk [ing] much of the feminists ' voodoo economics . " Writing in Capitalist Magazine , John Stossel cited Michelle Bernard 's 2007 book Women 's Progress as evidence that " American women have never enjoyed more options or such a high quality of life . "

Some writers have asserted that feminist rhetoric is used by the IWF for anti @-@ feminist ends . A New York Times editorial described the IWF as " a right @-@ wing public policy group that provides pseudofeminist support for extreme positions that are in fact dangerous to women . "

= = Domestic policy and programs = =

= = = United States healthcare policy = = =

In 2009 , IWF produced a political advertisement run on YouTube and in eight states arguing that " 300 @, @ 000 American women with breast cancer might have died " if U.S. healthcare included a

government @-@ funded option . FactCheck.org labeled the IWF ad false and manipulative of women 's fears , finding that the IWF ad relied on " old statistics , faulty logic and false insinuations . "

= = = Education policy and campus programs = = =

The Forum is active in education policy discussions and focuses on a number of different issues both in primary / secondary education and higher education .

= = = Title IX enforcement = = =

Since shortly after the organization 's inception , the IWF has joined with groups like the National Wrestling Coaches Association in opposing the manner in which the United States Department of Education 's Office for Civil Rights has enforced Title IX gender equality legislation . The 1972 Title IX law that states : " No person in the United States shall , on the basis of sex , be excluded from participation in , be denied the benefits of , or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . " According to IWF senior fellow Christine Stolba , the law has resulted in a number of negative , unintended consequences . Elaborating on the group 's position , Stolba asserts ,

The (women 's forum) is often accused of opposing Title IX . But we don 't oppose Title IX What we 're opposing is the way the Office for Civil Rights chooses to enforce Title IX . Given their regulations , colleges are enforcing statistical proportionality Common sense and poll data suggest that men are more interested in playing sports than women . But there are more female students than male . It becomes a numbers game , where the number of athletes has to be proportional . The easiest way to do that is to cut men 's teams .

In support of the group 's claims that absent current Title IX enforcement , men are more likely to enroll in collegiate athletic programs than women , the IWF conducted a 1998 survey that examined the percentage of students at all @-@ women 's schools participating in athletics compared to the percentage of female students participating in similar programs at undergraduate schools generally . The survey found that female students at co @-@ educational schools are far more likely to be student athletes . Jeremy Rabkin cited the survey in an April 1999 article in the American Spectator , asking , " If ' discrimination ' keeps down the proportion of women athletes at co @-@ ed schools , what accounts for overall participation rates that are half of the national women 's average at Bryn Mawr , Mount Holyoke , Wellesley , and Smith ? "

In a January 2012 article remarking on the 40th anniversary of Title IX , IWF executive director Sabrina Schaeffer described her " hope [that] feminists will begin to accept that men and women ? no matter how balanced the circumstances ? maintain different strengths and preferences . Because what is very clear is that legislation in the name of " gender equality " does not actually make men and women the same . "

= = = Advocacy for school choice = = =

In response to falling test scores in American public elementary , middle , and high schools , particularly among young boys , IWF created its Women For School Choice project . The effort targets in part what the organization describes as the negative results of the Women 's Educational Equity Act . According to researcher Krista Kafer , whose report was published by the IWF ,

WEEA is a solution without a problem . The program wastes money that would be better spent on actual crises ? boys ' literacy for example ? or returned to taxpayers Girls are more engaged and ambitious in school , while boys are more likely to suffer academic and behavioral problems .

The creation of this project was also largely a reaction to the National Organization for Women 's vocal opposition to single @-@ sex schools , which decried such arrangements as unacceptable modern examples of segregation .

===== 2006 Duke University lacrosse case =====

After rape accusations against Duke University lacrosse players surfaced in March 2006, the IWF was quick to call attention to the fact that the parties involved in the case were receiving much attention in the press, something that would be harmful to their reputations regardless of the ultimate legal outcome. In April 2006, Carrie Lukas of the IWF said,

At Duke, a woman has accused three men of raping her. Two have been indicted. We know the names of the accused; we've seen their pictures; their lives will never be the same.... Perhaps the evidence will show they... committed the heinous crime of rape. If so, they will be and they should be severely punished. Yet the media so quick to sensationalize the accuser's account and condemn the lacrosse players now is revealing facts suggesting that the accused might be innocent of this crime.

Columnist Michael Gaynor, writing for Alan Keyes' organization Renew America, noted IWF's early criticism of the school's and the district attorney's mishandling of the case, saying, "The Independent Women's Forum's Charlotte Allen figured out early that the real scandal was the way the players were mistreated and her posts during April 2006 on the IWF website showed a commendable concern with due process and evidence instead of rushing to an erroneous misjudgment."

===== Campus programs =====

The organization emphasizes traditional family roles and cultural norms as essential for civil society. In particular, IWF encourages young women to embrace what it presents as a healthy attitude towards dating, courtship, and marriage. This emphasis is reflected by high @-@ profile, sometimes controversial work on college campuses where IWF sponsors advertising campaigns and literature distribution to promote its views. One such effort included the running of advertisements with provocative headings such as "The Ten Most Common Feminist Myths." IWF also offers internships and sponsors an annual essay contest open to full @-@ time female undergraduate students.

As a reaction to reports of growing promiscuity on college campuses and the V @-@ Day movement founded by Eve Ensler, IWF created its "Take Back the Date" campus program to "reclaim Valentine's Day from radical feminists on campus who use a day of love and romance to promote vulgar and promiscuous behavior through activities like The Vagina Monologues." Specifically addressing the controversial play, IWF's "Take Back the Date" release states that, "although the play raises money for a good cause, the hyper @-@ sexualized play counteracts the positive contributions of the feminist movement and degrades women."

In an article in The Guardian, Jessica Valenti wrote that the program was merely "[r]evamping outdated notions of femininity and positioning them as cutting edge."

===== Right to keep and bear arms =====

Individuals affiliated with IWF have advocated for the right of members of the public to keep and bear arms. Allison Kasic, director of the Forum's R. Gaull Silberman Center for Collegiate Studies, wrote an article for Townhall.com praising Antonin Scalia's District of Columbia v. Heller decision, in which the Supreme Court of the United States held that the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution recognized an individual right to keep and bear arms. Kasic described her enthusiasm for the manner in which the court resolved the case by noting, "as Justice Scalia pointed out in his opinion, 'the American people have considered the handgun to be the quintessential self @-@ defense weapon.' All citizens of D.C. should rejoice at their new found freedom. But for women especially, guns are the ultimate equalizer in self @-@ defense." In January 2012, Anna Rittgers, an IWF senior fellow writing in support of federal legislation that would guarantee interstate reciprocity for concealed handgun permitholders, asserted that this issue is of particular importance to women because,

In many cases , women lack the physical ability to defend themselves against or outrun would be assailants . Intangible factors that make women vulnerable are heightened when traveling because of a tourist 's lack of familiarity with her surroundings and local trends in crime . Taking away a woman 's access to effective means of self defense makes her an even more attractive target .

= = International programs = =

Since its founding , IWF has sponsored numerous conferences , panels , and other programs designed to promote its message to an international audience . These primarily include activities and events discussing or taking place in the countries of Iraq and Afghanistan , and focus on promoting female participation in democracy .

In October 2004 , the Feminist Majority Foundation objected to the U.S. Department of State 's decision to award part of a grant to IWF . IWF 's work in Iraq is in concert with that of the American Islamic Conference and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies , a neo conservative think tank .

= = Funding = =

Donors to IWF have included Donors Trust , the John William Pope Foundation , the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation , the Scaife Foundations and the Randolph Foundation .

= = Board members = =

The board is chaired by businesswoman Heather Higgins with other members Elizabeth Biar , Yvonne Boice , Kellyanne Conway , Giovanna Cugnasca , Lisa Gable and Nan Hayworth . Directors emeritae of the organization include former Second Lady of the United States Lynne V. Cheney , writer Midge Decter , Kimberly O. Dennis , economist Wendy Lee Gramm , Elizabeth Lurie , journalist Kate O 'Beirne , Nancy Pfotenhauer and Louise V. Oliver .