



Top Ten Historic Advances for Women's Lives Now at Risk

1. Women's Right to Vote (1920)

The [19th amendment](#) to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1920, guaranteed American women the right to vote, although many women of color did not win full voting rights until 45 years later under the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Currently women surpass men both in the proportion and numbers of women who vote.

Threat:

Instead of advocating a 21st century voting system that is inclusive, conservative legislatures in 30 states are attempting to turn the clock back to the 19th century when only privileged white males were allowed to vote. Newly imposed ID requirements target students, people of color and women. As many as 32 million women of voting age do not have documentation with their current legal name.

2. Social Security Act (1935)

Social Security is the bedrock of older women's financial security – virtually the only source of income for 3 in 10 women 65 and older – and a critical source of disability and life insurance protection throughout their lives.

Threat:

Bills introduced by conservative Members of Congress would gut the current Social Security program and disproportionately impact women's economic security. The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction could propose benefit cuts, such as a reduction in the annual cost-of-living adjustment that would especially hurt women, or an increase in the retirement age.

3. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Taken together, these laws prohibit employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, including pregnancy, and national origin. The Equal Pay Act deals specifically with pay discrimination on the basis of sex. Title VII covers all employment actions, including hiring, promotion, pay, and termination, as well as all of the other terms and conditions of employment. Both have been central to expanding women's economic opportunities and helping women achieve economic and retirement security.

Threat:

Recent rulings by the conservative majority of the Supreme Court have weakened employment discrimination laws, placing women's rights in the workplace in jeopardy and actions by conservative Senators have undermined efforts to restore these acts and strengthen employment protections for women, including filibustering the Paycheck Fairness Act in 2010.

4. Medicare (1965)

Medicare is the nation's health insurance program for seniors and younger adults with permanent disabilities. More than half (56%) of all Medicare beneficiaries are women.

Threat:

The conservative majority of the House of Representative passed a fiscal year 2012 budget bill that will effectively end Medicare and replace it for those now under 55 with a voucher to buy private insurance. It would increase out-of-pocket health care costs, limit benefits and severely restrict the choice of doctors.

5. Medicaid (1965)

Medicaid provides 19 million women access to vital health services at all stages of their lives. In 2007 nearly seven in ten elderly individuals who relied on Medicaid for assistance were women. Additionally, Medicaid covers millions of mothers and [more than one-third of all children](#).

Threat:

Under the conservative House budget, Medicaid was targeted for deep budget cuts and converted into capped block grants to states. Medicaid still faces threats as the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction deliberates and identifies at least an additional \$1.2 trillion in budget cuts.

6. Title X, The National Family Planning Program (1970)

[Title X](#) is the only dedicated source of federal funding for family planning services in the United States. Title X provides family planning and other preventive health care to more than 5 million low-income and uninsured women who may otherwise lack access to health care.

Threat:

For the [first time in history](#), the U.S. House of Representatives voted to completely defund Title X in 2011. Nine states have reduced family planning funding through legislative action and one (NJ) has eliminated it through the [governor's veto](#).

7. Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972)

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded education programs or activities. Title IX greatly expanded equal access to college education, professional and graduate schools and dramatically increased equal access to sports opportunities so that today girls and women represent over 40% of all college and high school athletes. Title IX also plays a vital role in increasing gender equity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education by improving the climate for women in those fields.

Threat:

A combination of administrative budget cuts, regulations, private school vouchers schemes, and pressure from congressional opponents threatens to weaken enforcement of Title IX.

8. Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision (1973)

In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Roe v. Wade* that a right to privacy under the 14th Amendment extended to a women's decision to have an abortion.

Threat:

Anti-abortion Members of Congress have introduced legislation that would make all abortions illegal and essentially overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In 2011, over 1,000 pieces of legislation have been introduced and 162 bills have been passed at the state level to restrict access to abortion and/or family planning.

9. The Violence Against Women Act (1994)

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) created the first U.S. federal legislation acknowledging the severity of crimes related to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and violence against women.

Threat:

VAWA will [expire](#) at the end of 2011 unless it is reauthorized. The law needs to be updated and strengthened, including the addition of provisions that will help protect students on campus who are consistently subject to sexual harassment, assault and violence. Despite this, no action has yet been taken to ensure VAWA is reauthorized.

10. The Affordable Care Act (2010)

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) covers maternity care, eliminates pre-existing conditions and prevents health plans from charging women more than men for the same coverage. ACA also covers well-woman preventive health services, such as an annual well-woman visit, contraceptives, mammograms, cancer screenings, prenatal care and counseling for domestic violence, as basic health care for women at no additional cost and includes the first federal ban on sex discrimination in health care programs and activities. Combined with [other provisions](#), the ACA is an historic step forward for women's health and economic security.

Threat:

The House of Representatives voted to repeal the ACA. Conservative senators, state legislators and governors have also pledged to repeal ACA and deny women, of all ages, critical preventive care services.