

SENATOR JOHN HEINZ (R.PA)  
OLDER WOMEN'S LEAGUE MOTHER'S DAY PRESS CONFERENCE  
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I am honored to be here with members of the Older Women's League (OWL) to launch the annual Mother's Day Campaign. I don't know if Lou Glase and Joan Kuriansky realize that I have a special personal interest in Mother's Day. My great grandfather H. J. Heinz, helped Anna M. Jarvis formalize the first Mother's Day observances in Philadelphia back in 1908.

First, I want to congratulate you on OWL's report on retirement income for women. Heading for hardship deserves national attention. This report so painfully illustrates how bad policy and public complacency have combined to blight the retirement years of American women. It demonstrates the antiquated basis for our Social Security and pension policies, going back several decades to when Dad brought home the bacon and Mom stayed home to cook it. To my mind, the original symbol of the modern American woman is that poster portrait of the wartime worker. Rosie the Riveter. Where is Rosie now? Retired in her late sixties, we might assume. Once the image of industrial might, she has a 2 in 5 chance of living in poverty.

Once the promise of a free world, Rosie probably faced wage discrimination on her job. She probably interrupted her career at least once to shoulder the responsibilities of family caregiver -- and suffered the consequences in lost pension income. More than likely she depends on her Social Security check -- which averages much less than that paid her retired mail co-riveter.

The Congress has made some progress for Rosie in the area of pension reform. With OWL's support, two provisions from my Retirement Income Protections Act (RIPA) -- five-year vesting and limits on integration -- made it into the 1986 Tax Reform Act.

But these changes aren't enough. Without additional reforms -- like portable pensions and equitable Social Security benefits for disabled widows and divorced spouses -- the economic future of young women today may be as bleak as that of many grandmothers. We must recognize that equal opportunity in employment without equal protections in retirement is the ultimate abuse of the American worker.

Legislation I have introduced addresses on at least a modest level the need for such protections. S. 2290 would revise the Social Security program so that disabled widows are not subject to more stringent standards than other disability applicants. My bill would also allow disabled widows of all ages -- not just those between the ages of 50 and 60 -- to qualify for benefits.

It's been 23 years since Congress addressed the eligibility standards for this group of disabled Americans. You can be assured that I will be pushing for a bi-partisan, bi-cameral resolution of existing inequities before this Congress adjourns.

OWL is a formidable advocate in our legislative process and I am indeed proud to play a part in this campaign to turn hard times ahead into hard times behind. Together we can effect the reforms needed to assure retirement equity for all Americans, regardless of race, creed, career -- or gender.