

# Montgomery County Commission for Women 2015 Women's Legislative Briefing Planning Committee Co-Chairs: Lorna Forde, Katie Smith

The 35<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Legislative Briefing was held on Sunday, January 25, 2015 at the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville. The purpose of these Briefings is to inform Marylanders about state and federal legislative proposals of specific concern to women and families, and to build a strong advocacy for these important issues. This year, 700 people attended.



The Montgomery County Commission for Women, with the assistance of sixty-five women's and community organizations, planned the program. Thirty-eight of these organizations presented colorful and informative exhibits lining the hallways leading to the main conference auditorium. The Briefing was made possible by the funding and support from Kaiser Permanente our Ruby Sponsor, AARP, our Sapphire Sponsor, and Opal Sponsors: Maryland NOW, Risk Management Group and Washington Parent.



A pre-conference President's Networking Session provided the leaders of these community organizations an opportunity to meet with the keynote speaker in a conversation about her trajectory to the White House, the importance of collaboration among women's organizations, and the use of social media to educate and mobilize women regarding key issues. It also provided a means for these groups to identify potential partners in the community addressing the same issues or implementing similar projects.



The plenary session was opened with greetings by Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett; Secretary, Maryland Department of General Services C. Gail Bassette; Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner and our federal legislators: Senator Ben Cardin, Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Congressman John Sarbanes and Congresswoman Donna Edwards. DeLinda Washington, Vice President of Human Resources of Kaiser

Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States and Nancy LeaMond, Executive Vice President, State and National Group of AARP Maryland also addressed the crowd giving unique perspectives on the health and welfare issues being discussed.

The highlight of the plenary session was a keynote address by Ann F. Lewis, senior White House Staffer from 1997 - 2000. Ms. Lewis spoke about many of the key issues women are facing today including caring for aging parents, the fight for equal pay, gender discrimination and the importance of Social Security.



The opening session was followed by eight seminars each featuring legislators and prominent advocates: Advocacy: The Pitch for Your Legislators; Senior Women and Long-Term Care; Women in Leadership; Immigrant Women; Economic Empowerment for Women; Health and Safety for Women and Girls; Meet the New Legislators; and a special presentation of *Raising Ms. President*, a compelling documentary of raising the next generation of female political leaders.

Once again this year, the Legislative Briefing offered a ‘Teen Track’ comprised of two sessions. Parts of the documentary film *Raising Ms. President* were shown followed by interactive, small group skills-building discussions on how to advocate to tackle issues impacting the girl’s peers and communities. A panel of young community leaders discussed women in leadership, politics, advocacy and community engagement. This event was well-received by the thirty-six teens in attendance.



At the closing ceremony, enthusiastic participants gathered to celebrate the induction of Judith Vaughan-Prather and Senator Susan Lee into the [Montgomery County Women’s History Archive](#). The archive was created in 2002 to recognize the contributions of women of historical significance to the county. The biographies and photographs of Vaughan-Prather and Lee are featured on the Commission for Women website.

Past and current Commissioners gathered to celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women’s Legislative Briefing.





The Montgomery County Commission for Women is grateful for the continuing cooperation and support it receives for the Women's Legislative Briefing. It is especially appreciative of the contributions of the sixty-five women's and community co-sponsoring organizations and the dozens of volunteers and hundreds of hours they lend to this effort, and to Kaiser Permanente and AARP without whose financial support this event would not

be possible. The Commission also greatly appreciates the time and expertise donated by the fifty-five legislators, public officials, advocates and subject experts who donated their time to serve as speakers, panelists and moderators in the program. Above all, the Commission appreciates the hundreds of women and men who believe these issues are so important that they will give up an entire Sunday afternoon on a cold day in January to participate.

