



*Opinion-Editorial / Point of View submission – August 29, 2014  
Open Letter to North Carolina Media – Women’s Forum of North Carolina*

### **360 degrees of progress**

For the women of North Carolina, it’s been a long winding journey, and we’ve finally come full circle to a place that seems eerily familiar: the past. Economic, social and political issues that were introduced in the 1920s, 1940s, 1960s and 1980s are still pervasive throughout the state, region, nation—and many remain as yet unresolved.

In 1999, the Women’s Forum of North Carolina published the state’s first Boards and Commissions report, highlighting the gender disparities and composition of 14 public “power boards” in North Carolina, whose members are appointed by the governor and General Assembly. Over a period of 20 years, women’s representation on these boards has remained virtually unchanged, reflecting a total of 22 percent, although women make up 54 percent of the state’s population and 57 percent of enrollment in higher education—where many future leaders are developed. The next report will be published in 2015.

The women of North Carolina continue to face more daunting challenges of unemployment, under-employment, domestic victimization, sub-standard housing and impoverishment compared to men. In our state, women fill the majority of low-wage jobs while many also pull double-duty as head of household and primary breadwinner for less money. Most Americans are familiar with the oft-quoted statistic highlighting the fact women still only earn 87 cents per dollar earned by men, while paying 100 percent for the same groceries, gas, utilities and prescriptions. North Carolina does not have an employment state family leave insurance program, which results in a disproportionate effect toward women who traditionally serve as primary caretakers for children, aging parents and ill or injured spouses. Our state’s Equal Rights Amendment legislation initially failed in 1982; again in 1992, 2002, 2012 and every single year in between. The list goes on and on...

Despite our collective stalled progress on a number of critical issues, the Women’s Forum remains committed to achieving and maintaining social, economic and political progress and power for women. The statewide non-partisan organization will continue to champion the causes that affect North Carolina’s 54 percent and make our voices heard, because NC Women Matter. We will continue to support our members of proven influence who are willing to use their power and positions to help make North Carolina better for women – for everyone.

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