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WOMEN DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY JOB LOSSES

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By Robin McCarthy, Executive Director of Women At Work

THE news this week has been a bit gloomy. I have read with a bit of fear and worry the ongoing articles about the state budget, coupled with the layoff situation in Los Angeles.

Supplementing these dismal stories are the layoffs being discussed by local school districts, all of which are moving rapidly ahead distributing pink slips.

Facts illustrate that the majority of government workers are women. A report I saw recently stated that of the government jobs lost last year 86 percent were held by women. Data coming from the Department of Labor, headed by a woman, Secretary Hilda Solis, presents negative information on women not returning to work in the numbers that men have.

Even unions for the city of Los Angeles recently began complaining that those targeted on the layoff list are disproportionately women.

The trend with school teachers focuses on the need to eliminate classroom instructors, which since the early days of the red school house, have been and continue to be women. Female teachers are the norm and yet they are targeted each spring, often in drastic numbers.

Sadly I say to so many, the two industries hardest hit now are government and education, both of which have higher percentages of female employees!

Now the question is ... where do these women go? And when these women lose their jobs what about the children and families standing behind them, needing shelter, food, clothing and education?

Women At Work was created at a time when women were moving from the home into the work arena. These former homemakers found themselves lacking in skills and direction.

Women were not office managers, human resources administrators or even construction workers. They did not have a place in the working world. Now, 33 years later women are still finding their place in the employment market. So many are trying to move ahead, to jump on the path to survival - not even wealth, just simply maintaining their families.

As another client comes through the doors of Women At Work, she is looking for a job and a future. She needs income to maintain her family, continuing to provide the many necessities.

Across the country 41 percent of women are their families' sole source of income, according to the Center for American Progress. In California, 58.9 percent of women are breadwinners or co-breadwinners

Women At Work offers so many classes and services that are so needed to help women and men in this tough economy. I am always surprised, but more saddened, to see how far behind some individuals are in basic skills, such as technology or writing.

These abilities continue to be an integral part of nearly every job and are often delineated on every job announcement I see. There is much to learn, so let us help.

If you are a woman or a man facing this awful hardship, stop into Women At Work any Monday at 11a.m. for Women At Work 101 and discover our services and how we can help.

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