

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY

Duration: 90 minutes

Format: In person

Number of participants: No more than 30

Audience: State federation and central labor council delegates and activists, local unions and community partners

Learning Objectives:

After completion of the session, participants will be able to:

- Draw a connection between our shared values around gender equity and reproductive rights.
- Share with others their experiences with the economy and how the economy is not working for women, parents and others who choose to have and care for children (access to paid leave, rising costs of child care and the gender wage gap).
- Describe the impact of the right-wing political agenda on women and families.
- Explain how working people can change the rules of the economy by acting together (voting, volunteering, organizing and activism).
- Empower co-workers, family and friends with a specific message to join together to change the rules to create an economy that works for everyone.

Materials for Participants:

- [Convention Resolution 8: Promote Gender Equity](#)
- [The Right-Wing Agenda handout](#)
- [AFL-CIO *Dobbs* Response toolkit](#)
- [Common Sense Conversations handout](#)

Helpful Resources for Facilitators:

- [Abortion Rights Are Economic Rights](#)
- [The Economics of Caregiving for Working Mothers](#)
- [Quantifying America's Gender Wage Gap by Race/Ethnicity](#)
- [Gender Pay Gap in U.S. Held Steady in 2020](#)
- [The Impact of Early Fertility Shocks on Women's Fertility and Labor Market Outcomes](#)
- [Dobbs Common Sense Economics Tips and Pivots](#)

Duration	Section	Facilitator Notes	Technical Notes
10 minutes before training begins	Pre-Training Prep	Print handouts in advance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention Resolution 8 • The Right-Wing Agenda handout • Common Sense Conversations handout Acquire flip chart and markers.	Prepare flip charts in advance: Group Agreements, Our Shared Values, Small Group Debriefs and Link to the <i>Dobbs</i> Toolkit.
20 minutes	Welcome and Introductions	<p>Say: “Welcome to this Common Sense Economics discussion on reproductive health and the economy. The 2022 Supreme Court ruling in <i>Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization</i> is a decision that reversed nearly 50 years of settled law. This decision affects millions of Americans in a direct and urgent way. This is a matter of national importance with profound implications. Thank you for coming.”</p> <p>Say: “We understand there are many ways to think about and discuss reproductive rights from a moral, legal, medical, philosophical or religious perspective. We are here today to focus on the economic impact of the <i>Dobbs</i> decision. The goal of this training is to better our understanding of how the <i>Dobbs</i> decision is connected to issues like the gender wage gap and lack of family and medical paid leave, which only perpetuate the challenges women and working people face in fully participating in our economy.”</p> <p>Facilitator Introduction</p> <p>Say: “My name is [insert name]. I am [insert credentials].”</p> <p>[Include a quick personal story as you introduce yourself. Quick can be defined as two sentences that let people know why you are here.]</p> <p>Participant Introductions</p> <p>If you have a group of 20 or fewer people, have everyone briefly introduce themselves. Ask for their name, where they are from and their organizational affiliation. If you have a larger group, you could ask people to raise their hands if they are from particular geographic locations or are part of particular organizations. Choose locations and organizations you know are likely to be represented in the room. For example, if the event is hosted by a coalition, you might mention the coalition member organizations and cities or towns in the immediate area.</p> <p>Say: “We want to acknowledge that this issue is not only an economic issue and that even if all the economic challenges faced by parents are met, reproductive autonomy is a basic right that is vital and fundamental.”</p> <p>Say: “We are here today to discuss how the court’s opinion represents the immediate revocation of freedoms for women and all people who could become pregnant and their ability to control their own reproductive health decisions. It is also yet another attack on working people’s ability to collectively bargain for these very important rights.”</p> <p>Say: “This session will prepare us for [insert action campaign, e.g., state or local laws restricting or expanding reproductive health care, the Women’s Health Protection Act in the U.S. Senate, taking action to protect reproductive health care in our union contracts or voting in the upcoming election].”</p>	

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		<p>Say: “We hope that coming out of this session, you not only will have a clearer sense of how this decision by the Supreme Court and other policy choices impact the lives of working women and parents, but you will also be ready to go into action, and to recruit your friends, family and co-workers to get involved.”</p> <p>Note: You may want to be prepared for personal stories or some difficult conversations. Please read these tips to help you get ready:</p> <p>Resource: Dobbs Common Sense Economics Tips and Pivots</p>	
5 minutes	Group Agreements	<p>Review Group Agreements</p> <p>Assume good intentions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We come from a wide variety of backgrounds and lived experiences. While we may disagree with someone’s position on a particular issue, please assume we are all here to learn from each other. [Note: We know that this topic can be particularly polarizing, so this is a very important agreement.] <p>Listen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is very important to really listen to what your fellow participants are saying. Give each other the space to talk and take in what we are learning. <p>Keep an open mind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may have different opinions on the topics covered in this session, but don’t be too quick to dismiss ideas that might be different from yours. <p>Value your own experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to keep an open mind, but don’t forfeit what you know, feel or believe. Have confidence in who you are. <p>Step up, step back.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you find yourself shy and contemplative, push yourself to step up and contribute to the conversation. If you are feeling very talkative, step back to allow others the space to contribute. We aim to create an equitable learning space. <p>Confidentiality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want this session to be a safe space. Respect the confidentiality of your fellow participants. <p>Ask if there are any additional group agreements participants would like to add.</p> <p>Transition to Next Exercise</p> <p>Be sure to pause before saying the following:</p> <p>Say: “This is a moment to think deeply and compassionately about our members, about the millions of women, young people and families for whom this decision represents confusion, uncertainty and chaos.”</p>	<p>Support:</p> <p>Share Group Agreements on prepared flip chart; add any additional group agreements.</p>

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10 minutes	Our Shared Values Exercise	<p>Say: “In the labor movement, we have many shared values: good jobs with a fair return on our work, quality health care, safety, freedom from discrimination, the freedom to join together and negotiate a fair return on our work, just to name a few.”</p> <p>Say: “Another one of our shared values is gender equity.”</p> <p>Say: “Whether it be through our contracts, organizing campaigns, the policies we support or the candidates we help elect, unions have long been a critical mechanism in the fight for gender justice. A core value of the labor movement is to lift up and empower groups that have been historically marginalized.”</p> <p>Ask: “Guided by our core values, how has the labor movement, either historically or currently, helped advocate for women’s economic equality?”</p> <p>Possible answers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal pay/addressing the wage gap. • Parental and family medical leave. • Paid leave. • Affordable child care. • Workplace safety and harassment. • Access to good health insurance. • Expanding unemployment insurance. • Training/apprenticeships. <p>Say: “Working women make up 47% of the workforce but are paid less and lack access to child care and paid leave, even though women carry the majority of caregiving responsibilities and continue to face discrimination with deep consequences for their health, safety and economic security.”</p> <p>Say: “There has never been a more urgent time to confront gender oppression and advance gender justice. At the most recent convention, the AFL-CIO introduced and passed Resolution 8: Promote Gender Equity.”</p> <p>Distribute full resolution.</p> <p>Say: “The entire resolution is worth reading, but we want to focus today on the section that addresses women’s economic equality:</p> <p><i>‘The AFL-CIO supports paid family and medical leave, universal high-quality child care for every family, expanded unemployment insurance and sick leave. We believe all individuals should have quality health care and the right to control their own bodies, including equal access to contraception and reproductive health care, regardless of where they work or live. The AFL-CIO Committee on Women Workers will review the impact of state legislation that restricts access to reproductive health care for women, their partners and families, and develop a response to ensure these laws do not infringe on the protections of collectively bargained health care benefits.’”</i></p> <p>Say: “Gender equality is a core value of the AFL-CIO and the labor movement, and reproductive health is a part of gender equality. Reproductive health care is also an economic issue. In the next exercise, we want to explore how reproductive health care decisions impacted our own lives and the lives of those we care about.”</p>	<p>Support: Record responses on the flip chart.</p> <p>Support: Distribute Resolution 8 handout.</p>

Duration	Section	Facilitator Notes	Technical Notes
25 minutes	Lived Experience Exercise	<p>Break into small groups and ask groups to consider the following questions for 10 minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about yourself or someone you know who is a parent, what kind of paid maternity/paternity leave, if any, did you or they receive? • Thinking about yourself or someone you know who is a parent, what kind of child care support did they receive? What was the economic impact of that support? • Thinking about yourself or someone you know who is a parent, what impact did parenthood have on their career (i.e., did they take time off or change careers after becoming a parent)? <p>Facilitator note for debrief on getting a variety of economic impacts. If a variety of responses are not provided by participants, ask participants if other people or groups may be impacted differently.</p> <p>Exercise Report Back</p> <p>Take turns having each group report back one or two responses to the question(s) they discussed. Take one or two additional responses from the large group to lift up anything that wasn't already mentioned.</p> <p>After the Paid Leave group reports back, read the fact below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 23% of workers had access to paid family leave in 2021, defined as leave granted to an employee to care for a family member, including paid maternity and paternity leave.¹ <p>After the Child Care group reports back, read the fact below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of young children—and especially mothers, due to cultural norms and societal expectations—are only able to participate in the labor force when they have access to work-family supports, including child care. The high cost of child care makes this especially difficult for most families. In 2014, a low-income family earning less than \$50,000 per year that made child care payments spent one-third of this income on child care alone.² <p>After the Career group reports back, read one or both of the facts below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2020, women earned 84% of what men earned. Race also plays a role in the wage gap, with Latinas earning 49 cents per dollar earned by a white man and black women earning 58 cents per dollar earned by a white man.³ • Motherhood can also lead to interruptions in women's career paths and have an impact on long-term earnings. Mothers were nearly twice as likely as fathers to say taking time off had a negative impact on their job or career. Among those who took leave from work in the two years following the birth or adoption of their child, 25% of women said this had a negative impact at work, compared with 13% of men.⁴ <p>[Feel free to replace any of the national facts with local facts and figures if you have them. You can find state and local facts on a variety of these issues at the National Women's Law Center at nwlc.org.]</p> <p>Debrief Question</p> <p>Ask: "What connections do you see now that each group has reported back?"</p> <p>Take several responses.</p>	<p>Support: Randomly assign participants into three groups: Paid Leave, Child Care and Career.</p> <p>Support: Record responses on the flip chart.</p>

1 <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2021/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2021.pdf>

2 <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/economics-caregiving-working-mothers/>

3 <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/fair-pay/quantifying-americas-gender-wage-gap.pdf>

4 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/25/gender-pay-gap-facts/>

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		<p>Say: “Again, we want to note that while making the decision to have children has profound economic impacts for parents, reproductive choices are not made for economic reasons alone. While this is our focus today, we want to be clear that people make reproductive choices for many valid reasons. Some people choose to be parents through birth, some choose to have children through other methods, and some choose not to have children at all. These are deeply personal decisions.”</p> <p>Say: “Reproductive decisions are also about bodily autonomy. The AFL-CIO believes that all workers should have access to full health care, including reproductive health care, no matter where you live or work. Respecting the self-determination of workers means respecting their ability to determine their reproductive future.”</p>	
15 minutes	The Right-Wing Agenda	<p>Say: “As you can see from the previous exercise, the Supreme Court decision will have a profound and lasting impact on working people.”</p> <p>Say: “This decision by the Supreme Court is just one of many right-wing decisions that is supported by corporations and the wealthy in order to attack rights and freedoms that we value as workers.”</p> <p>Say: “We started the session by discussing our shared values around gender equality. [Refer back to shared values around gender equity.] Unfortunately, corporations and the wealthy use their influence to rig the rules of the economy in ways that run counter to all our values.”</p> <p>Say: “Let’s take a closer look at the ways the corporations exert their influence.”</p> <p>Distribute and review The Right-Wing Agenda handout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-Wing Courts: Make no mistake—this is the most radical right-wing Supreme Court that we have seen in our lifetimes. Their decisions make their agenda clear; they are willing to roll back rights and freedoms that have been taken for granted: voting rights, privacy rights, the ability of states to regulate gun safety, environmental regulation and, yes, as we saw in the <i>Janus</i> decision in 2018, collective bargaining rights. • Attack Unions: Across industries, reproductive health care protections are guaranteed as part of contracts that workers collectively bargain with employers. In the wake of what the conservative majority of the court has done, working families will now be forced to navigate restrictive laws and bans that will directly impact or take away the rights negotiated into those contracts. This is just another example of the court’s intent to continue undermining the power of unions and to chip away at democracy in the workplace. Unions have hard-fought health care benefits that are called into question with this decision, and we are, of course, unified around fighting for what our members have collectively bargained and won. • Economic Inequality: At a time when we should be focused on expanding equity for all working people, particularly for marginalized communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, this most recent decision by the court will sadly only deepen racial and economic disparities. The ability to delay having a child has been found to translate to significantly increased wages and labor earnings, especially among Black women.⁵ 	<p>Support: Distribute The Right-Wing Agenda handout.</p>

5 https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3512913#:~:text=The%20increase%20in%20wage%20rates,both%20intensive%20and%20extensive%20margins.

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		<p>Engage in a short discussion on how the right-wing agenda hurts working people.</p> <p>Ask: “How do you see the right-wing agenda affecting your family and friends? How do you see the impact at your workplace?”</p>	
5 minutes	Campaign Overview	<p>Say: “The current conservative majority of the Supreme Court is bent on limiting freedom and self-determination, and that is fundamentally undemocratic. America’s unions remain committed to the fight for gender justice, access to health care and economic equity for all people. The guarantee of reproductive rights is not just a women’s issue. It matters to a broad cross section of working people and families across this country. This is why we are asking you to get involved in [insert your action campaign here].”</p> <p>[Examples: Take action on state or local laws restricting or expanding reproductive health care, the Women’s Health Protection Act in the U.S. Senate or to protect reproductive health care in our union contracts. Please review the AFL-CIO Dobbs Response campaign toolkit for the latest information on state-level bills that address various issues related to reproductive health care rights and access, upcoming measures in several states this year that would limit or expand abortion protections, city and county council resolutions related to reproductive health care, as well as other resources.]</p> <p>Provide participants with a link to the AFL-CIO Dobbs Response campaign toolkit.</p>	<p>Support: Share link to the toolkit on the flip chart: http://go.AFLCIO.org/dobbs-toolkit</p>
10 minutes	Campaign Action Steps	<p>Say: “Let’s take a look at the handout Common Sense Conversations.”</p> <p>Distribute and quickly review the handout in no more than two minutes.</p> <p>Introduce: Start with a conversational and comfortable approach. “Hi, how are you?”</p> <p><i>Tip: Approach people when they have some time to talk. Ask whether you can tell them about a campaign you are involved with to fight back against an anti-worker court decision.</i></p> <p>Share: Tell them you have been to a workshop about the <i>Dobbs</i> decision. Say very briefly how you or someone close to you will be affected by this decision.</p> <p><i>Tip: Keep your story short and focused, but choose some telling details that make it real. Then be clear this is not about just you; it is about all of us.</i></p> <p>Inquire: Ask the person what their experiences have been on this issue you are discussing. Ask open-ended questions, rather than “yes” or “no” questions, in order to get the person to talk about their experiences.</p> <p><i>Tip: Listen to what they say! Getting the person you are talking to engaged in the conversation at this point is crucial. Ask follow-up questions based on their experiences to hear more about their thoughts on why this is a problem.</i></p> <p>Inform: Explain that the corporate agenda uses right-wing court rulings to attack unions, our collective bargaining rights and increase economic inequality.</p> <p><i>Tip: There is no need to get all technical here! Naming a couple of policy examples that the person you are talking with can relate to will suffice.</i></p>	<p>Support: Distribute the Common Sense Conversations handout.</p>

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		<p>Ask: Invite the person to get involved in taking action together to change the rules of the economy and protect reproductive rights for women. Ask them to be part of the political, legislative, community or contract campaign focused on reproductive health care.</p> <p><i>Tip: Ask them to do something specific—come to a meeting, make a phone call to an elected official, etc. Let them know their participation really will matter. Have a couple of options in mind.</i></p> <p>Say: “Are there any questions on this format or template?”</p> <p>Take questions, if any.</p> <p>Say: “We now want to give you an opportunity to prepare for your recruitment conversations. Imagine you are speaking with a family member, friend or co-worker, and you are trying to recruit them to participate in [insert your action campaign here].”</p> <p>Say: “Using the Common Sense Conversations model, take two minutes to write down some notes for yourself on a piece of paper on how you are going to approach your conversation.”</p> <p>Ask: “How will you take the message you have received today and use it to recruit more people to this effort?”</p> <p>Give participants two minutes to journal.</p> <p>Say: “We in the labor movement will always fight for economic equality for women and those raising children. We do that through good union jobs that provide the protections of a collective bargaining agreement. And we can also mobilize during elections, including this November, to support candidates who will pass policies that protect our rights instead of taking them away.”</p> <p>Say: “We can exercise our power to build an economy for shared prosperity for all working people, but we need you, your family, your friends and your co-workers to take action.”</p> <p>Get commitments for the action campaign.</p> <p>Say: “Please raise your hand if you are willing to participate in [insert action campaign].”</p> <p>Acknowledge how many commitments you received and thank everyone for their participation in the workshop.</p>	
5 minutes after training ends	Post-Training Reporting	<p>Please let us know how your session goes by reporting on it here: http://go.aflcio.org/CSE-Reports.</p>	