

**From:** Nancy Ratzan  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 2, 2009, 10:32 AM  
**Subject:** From Strength to Strength

Dear Leaders,

Since January 20, practically from the moment this Administration stepped into the White House, NCJW's grassroots power has proven pivotal in the advancement of our vision for America — a vision that strives for an equitable, just, and progressive policy agenda in the United States. In just a few months of this Administration, NCJW has been at the forefront of the successful movements to:

- ▶ Ensure the passage and signing into law of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act
- ▶ Repeal the detrimental global gag rule
- ▶ Expand S-CHIP, the children's health insurance program
- ▶ Restore access to affordable contraception
- ▶ Begin the process to overturn the HHS conscience rule
- ▶ Release restrictions on embryonic stem cell research — thereby returning rationality and science to policy decisions
- ▶ Create the new White House Council on Women and Girls
- ▶ Develop a Presidential Commission of Women through congressional action

In addition to our engagement in these seminal policy advances, since January 20 NCJW has been to the White House three times and, along with members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, participated in a historic meeting with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican. There, the Pope issued the strongest statement to date made by the Church in support of the Jewish community and against anti-Semitism.

I am convinced that there has never been, at least in my lifetime, a more auspicious time to influence the future; to engage in *tikkun olam*; and to be an advocate, an activist, a volunteer, or a community organizer — all integral parts of who we are as active members of the National Council of Jewish Women.

When I think about what we have done in the past few months, I do so knowing that you and the members of our sections are responsible for all these successes. I know that the engagement of our grassroots base — you, me and the 90,000 of our colleagues around the U.S. — ensures that the social justice vision of NCJW can be realized. As NCJW leaders, members, and sections, you have set the stage for NCJW to be at the table — literally and figuratively — to meaningfully engage in creating progressive policy in the United States. On a local level, you have taken your commitment to social justice to your new state congresses where you have demanded that your voice — the voice of progressive Jewish women that speak out on behalf of women, children, and families everywhere — be heard. You understand that even when we have representatives whose ideologies are more reflective of our vision, our work is essential. For even our allies need to receive the groundswell of grassroots voices that we provide in order to move forward a new, progressive agenda.

At Leaders' Retreat just a few weeks ago, I had the honor to meet many of you and to hear what you do on a local level to ensure that our crucial issues remain at the forefront of your community service, advocacy, and section work. I heard about the Bergen County section's journey to build a website in order to make section information accessible and easy to find, and their success in attracting members and reinvigorating women through their site. I heard the Rhode Island section leaders talk about their stay-at-home fundraising event that raised tens of thousands of dollars for their section, enabling them to continue to do their important work. I heard the Dallas section leaders explain the section's project to provide comprehensive sex education to young women who graduate from the state's foster system. And I heard and was inspired by so much more.

Your stories, triumphs, and challenges fill me with pride about what we are doing and confidence about our future. I know that with your energy, your dedication, and your commitment we WILL make this world a better

place. I look forward to continuing to work with you to improve and to help bring much needed change to our communities, in America, and beyond.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Ratzan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nancy Ratzan  
NCJW President  
National Council of Jewish Women  
*A faith in the future. A belief in action.*

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**NCJW's website has been redesigned with you in mind.**