



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, DECEMBER 11, 2013

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Women Come Together to Move Forward in 2014

TECW and local women's groups host Vision 2020 regional event to promote economic strength

NASHVILLE – Tennessee was home to a special moment in the national movement for gender equity in civic and business leadership this October, at the 10th Annual Economic Summit for Women. For the first time, the Economic Summit's presenters, the Tennessee Economic Council on Women (TECW) and the Women's Economic Council Foundation (WECF), joined with Vision 2020, a national initiative committed to achieving women's economic and social equality, to hold its Regional Congress in partnership with the Nashville-area Summit.

The theme of the Congress was *Vision 2020: Collaborating for Change*, a discussion of the national and state strategies and networks striving to bring women to 50-50 parity by the year 2020, when Americans will celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of women's right to vote. "With attendees traveling from all over the Southeast, this united effort allowed several organizations to present a strong program on issues affecting women's economic and social progress, and to return to their respective states with the knowledge and practices shared by their peers across the region," said Mary Flannery, Director of Communications for Vision 2020.

During the Congress, several presentations focused on women running for elected office and the promotion of female participation on corporate and non-profit boards. Deedee Corradini, former Mayor of Salt Lake City and a Vision 2020 Delegate in Utah, explained Utah's non-partisan initiative, *Real Women Run*, and shared local efforts to encourage and prepare more women to run for public office. "We had sessions where more than 500 women attended to learn the many factors of running for office; we answered the questions why, who, where, when and how," said Corradini.

Yvonne Wood, Chair of the Tennessee Economic Council on Women and a Vision 2020 Delegate, explained why there is a clear need to put more women on boards. "Women are a hugely significant component of our economy. Not only do they make up nearly half of Tennessee's workforce, research indicates that they also handle a significant majority of the spending on goods and services in the average American household."

"Despite their presence in the workplace and their tremendous importance as a consumer group," says Delegate and WECF member Pat Pierce, who led the discussion on boards and commissions, "the vast majority of corporations in America have little or no female presence in their leadership. Beyond the matter of equality, this is increasingly seen to be disadvantageous to economic growth and must end."

Veronica Marable Johnson, president of the Coalition of 100 Black Women, Nashville Metropolitan Chapter and a member of the TECW encapsulated the purpose of the event: "In achieving gender equity on boards and commissions, we are working to ensure that women of all colors are prepared for a seat at the table and an office in the 'C-Suite.'" Women make up 51 percent of the population in Tennessee, which reveals a significant leveraging power and a tremendous population of innovators who are not being effectively incentivized by the current economy. "That power – economic and creative, should not be ignored," Johnson added.