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## WPI to target wage gap in NH

By REBECCA T. DICKSON  
Union Leader Correspondent

The economic status of women in New Hampshire is at the top of the list for the new executive director of the New Hampshire Women's Policy Institute.

Katherine Merrow, of Hopkinton, recently took over as the group's first executive director, and she said what is needed are better wages and more women on corporate boards and in leadership positions.

The goal of the non-partisan, non-profit WPI is to increase equity and women's involvement in decision-making in New Hampshire through research, policy development and public education. Merrow comes to the group from a senior research position with the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies. Jennifer Frizzell is the WPI's chairwoman and was head of the search committee that chose Merrow. She said Merrow's experience as a research profes-



MERROW

► See WPI, Page C3

## Casual works full-time



WPI . Continued From Page C1

sional, who can lead the organization at its formative stage, made her stand out.

"Her expertise in policy, and her relationships with state officials and community leaders are an ideal match to help us fulfill our mission: to generate research and shape public policy as it relates to women in New Hampshire," Frizzell said.

Merrow, whose first day as executive director was Oct. 1, also formerly worked with the Rhode Island Division of Mental Health and was a budget analyst for the Massachusetts Legislature.

With her leadership, the Institute will begin work on a project to increase women's representation on corporate board and in women-owned businesses in New Hampshire, Frizzell said.

The newest project actually stems from the last, which Merrow was also a part of. Last year, the Institute released a report detailing the economic status of women in New Hampshire, which also showed where they ranked nationally.

"One of the main findings was that women make 73 percent of what men in this state earn," Merrow said. "The wage gap is greater, and greatest as women age and approach retirement. That has implications for retirement policy in the state."

The report also found that most minimum wage workers in the Granite State are women. The state was near the bottom of the national list ranking the number of women who serve on corporate boards and in leadership positions. Yet, the level of education of New Hampshire women is quite high.

"That lack of representation limits access and influence," Merrow said, adding that one of her first tasks will be to work with businesses in developing ways to address that.

"In general, there's a lot to celebrate about the status of women in New Hampshire," she said. "We have relatively high levels of health insurance — one report ranked us fifth in the nation in health overall. But we also know there are a lot of areas where we need to do and can do better."

Merrow, who has three children, earned her Masters in Business Administration from Southern New Hampshire University, and her bachelor's degree from Middlebury College in Vermont. She is a 2006 graduate of Leadership New Hampshire.

The New Hampshire Women's Policy Institute, based in Concord, began in 2002. Part of its mission is to gather unbiased data that reflects women's status in New Hampshire.