



## International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN)

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## Be The Help – Win Rights and Respect for Domestic Workers

### *A Public Statement of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN), 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2012.*

As domestic workers gather at the various “Be The Help Oscar Night Viewing Parties” across the United States today, the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) will make an on-line submission to the Department of Labor of the U. S. government in support of the newly proposed regulations to bring overtime and minimum-wage protections to two million home-care workers in the country, and to provide basic record-keeping protections for live-in domestic workers. In addition, the IDWN called upon the California government to pass the CA Domestic Workers Bill of Rights (AB 899) in order to extend the basic labor protections to domestic workers.

On this special Oscar Night, the world will be watching to see if the acclaimed film “The Help” — which brought the lives and struggles of domestic workers to an international film audience — will receive Hollywood's highest honor. The film and its stars are contenders for several major Academy Awards: Best Supporting Actress, Best Actress and Best Film.

In the United States, domestic workers are excluded from many labor protections and hence are denied a host of basic labor rights such as minimum wage, workers compensation, health and safety protections, and overtime payment. Domestic workers in the United States do not even have the right to form trade unions, which is enjoyed by domestic workers in most other countries. In New York in 2010, due to the successful campaign of the domestic workers and their organizations and many supportive allies, they won a Bill of Rights to protect domestic workers. However, outside New York, such as in California, domestic workers do not yet have any law similar to the Bill of Rights in New York.

The IDWN welcomes the proposal made by President Obama and the Department of Labor in December last year, which would guarantee federal minimum and overtime protections for home care workers and require that employers of live-in domestic workers keep records. This is a significant step forward in recognizing that domestic workers are workers like any other deserving of equal labor protections. To ensure its success, the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) has pledged to mobilize 1000 domestic workers to write their comments to support the proposed regulations. The IDWN has been mobilizing support among domestic workers organizations globally to lend their support. It further calls on organizations and individuals to do the same. (To send comment: please go to <http://www.idwn.info>)

Finally, the IDWN believes that the U.S. government should take further steps to protect domestic workers by ratifying the new International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention (Convention 189) at the earliest opportunity, incorporating its provisions into domestic law and implementing it in policy and practice. The Convention, when adopted on 16 June 2011, was supported by an overwhelming majority of governments including that of the United States, whose supportive position had been strong and consistent throughout the discussion.