

BIZfact

70,700

Manufacturing jobs
on Long Island in
January, down 1,400
from a year earlier

Source: State Department of Labor

GERMAN QUOTA FOR BOARD WOMEN

BERLIN — Germany's Parliament has approved a quota system that will require leading companies in Europe's biggest economy to have supervisory boards that are at least 30 percent women.

The quota, starting next year, will apply to the directors of more than 100 listed companies, though not to their management boards. Another 3,500 firms will be required to set targets of their choosing to raise the number of female directors and women in other leadership positions.

"If there are no equal opportunities at the top of companies, there are none in other areas either," Manuela Schwesig, the minister for women and families, told ZDF television last week.

Lawmakers from Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition of conservatives and Social Democrats backed the legislation Friday. Opposition lawmakers who argued it didn't go far enough abstained.

"A real quota for women must apply to all companies," said Caren Lay, a lawmaker with the opposition Left Party.

The new quota won't apply to public-sector employees, though officials are pledging to increase the number of women in public-sector leadership jobs.

The German Institute for Economic Research found last year women accounted for 18.6 percent of the supervisory board members at the country's top 100 companies. — AP

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Out of the shadows

Financial abuse is lesser known but prevalent in domestic violence cases

BY SHERYL NANCE-NASH
Special to Newsday

Domestic violence makes headlines, but financial domestic abuse is its little-talked-about evil twin.

In 98 percent of domestic violence cases, financial abuse helps keep victims trapped in the abusive relationship, according to a new report by the Allstate Foundation. While physical violence and financial abuse often go hand in hand, nearly 80 percent of Americans have not heard about financial abuse as a component of domestic violence, the report, titled "Silent Weapons: Domestic Violence and Financial Abuse," found.

The unfortunate truth is "people use money to control people," said Steven J. Eisman, a matrimonial lawyer at Abrams Fensterman in Lake Success and president-elect of the Nassau County Bar Association.

Financial domestic abuse can take many forms, including what Eisman termed "financial infidelity," in which one partner runs up a lot of debt without telling the other. Recovering financially can take months or years, and — as with other types of abuse — the emotional scars can last a lifetime, experts said.

Growing trend

The National Domestic Violence Hotline in Austin, Texas, has seen an increase in calls about financial abuse, CEO Katie Ray-Jones said. Last year more than one in 10 were related to financial abuse, she said.

One victim had a six-bedroom, \$2.5 million house — the best of everything — but after 20 years of marriage found herself starting over. The 49-year-old, who did not want her name used, said she gave up her career to take care of the kids. Her husband, a hedge fund trader, handled the money.

"I was passive, uninvolved in the finances," said the Connecticut resident, who learned as the marriage crumbled after her husband's affair with a younger woman that her name was off the mortgage.

The day her husband filed for divorce, she said, he called

the police to remove her from the house. She fled to a hotel. When she went to the bank the next day, she said, "the joint accounts were depleted. I just had the clothes on my back."

Telltale signs

No two cases are alike, but there are signs. Victims may talk about their partner's temper, jealousy or possessiveness, the Allstate Foundation said. Their spending often is tightly restricted by their partner, and they may worry excessively about how their partner will react to what are commonly considered everyday purchases.

Financial abuse is "a weapon to keep the victim dependent on the abuser," said Anthony Zenkus, director of education of The Safe Center, which assists Nassau County victims of family violence and sexual assault. "We have seen cases where the victim is not allowed to have access to credit cards, or has gone to an ATM and the account is drained."

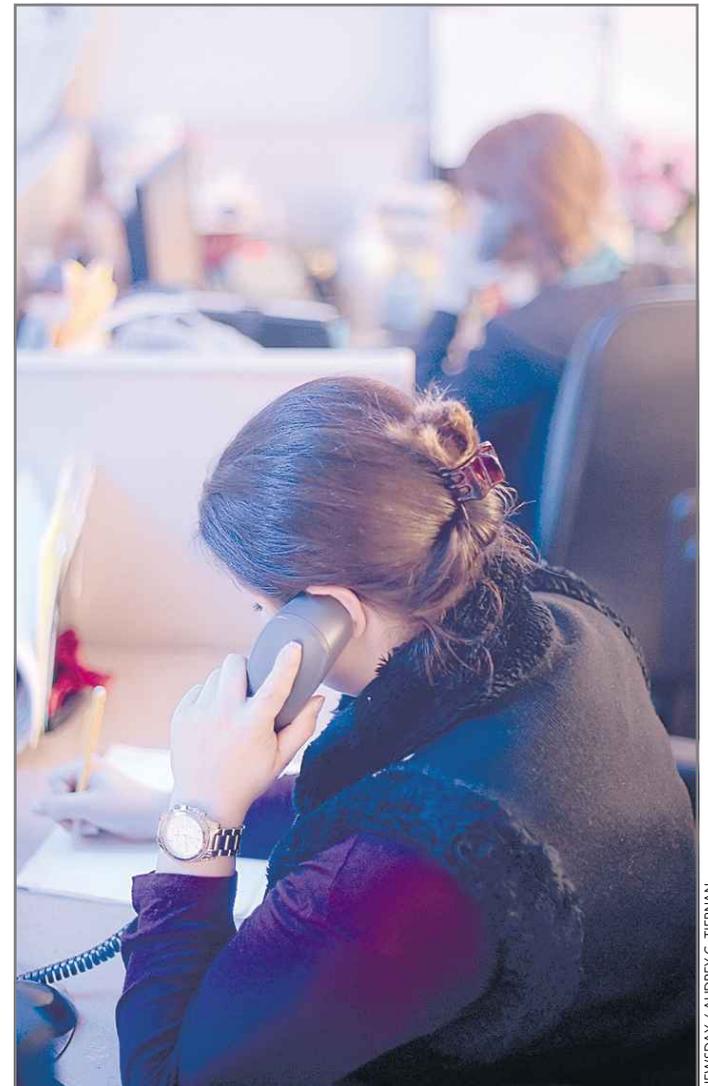
Some abusers try to sabotage their partner's ability to hold a job, Zenkus said. "There was a receptionist whose boyfriend called 50 to 70 times a day because he knew she had to pick up the phone. She got fired."

Domestic financial abuse doesn't happen only to women.

One victim, a Brooklyn man, 37, told of supporting his wife's dream to open a clothing boutique. "I had all the credit," he said. The shop did so well that his wife "developed a taste for fancy things," he said.

But business slowed. He tapped savings. She kept charging, spending to the tune of \$10,000, mostly on herself. The shop ran up a \$5,000 factory bill and couldn't fill orders; customers sued. The couple divorced after two years. The man cashed out his pension to pay off creditors and the divorce settlement. "I'm starting over financially," he said.

He's moving forward, as is the Connecticut woman, who got help from domestic violence groups. "I got \$5,000 to get on my feet, and took financial literacy classes," she said. "I lost my identity in my marriage, but I'm back. My eyes are wide open."



NEWSDAY / AUDREY C. TIERNAN

The Safe Center in Bethpage runs a hotline to help victims. Financial abuse is "a weapon to keep the victim dependent on the abuser," said education director Anthony Zenkus.

AVOIDING ABUSE

■ **Don't take the ostrich approach.** "Ask questions. I've seen situations where someone didn't know their partner had taken a loan against the mortgage or a 401(k)," said Steven J. Eisman of Abrams Fensterman in Lake Success.

■ **Stay involved.** Even if your partner is better at numbers, that's not an excuse for being uninvolved, said Jacqueline Newman of Berkman Bottger Newman & Rodd in Manhattan.

■ **Review credit card and bank statements and tax returns.** "If your partner won't let you see financial documents, it's a red flag; seek counsel," says Jeffrey Sklar of Sklar, Heyman, Hirshfield & Kantor in Bellmore.

■ **Seek help.** Reach out to a friend, or your church or synagogue. Call the Suffolk County Coalition Against Domestic Violence hotline at 631-666-8833 or The Safe Center hotline: 516-542-0404.

— SHERYL NANCE-NASH