

Commentary: Hello? I'm not invisible yet

By Joanne Cleaver

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Hi there.

Yes, I've been standing in front of you for a full three minutes.

Just to prove it, here's my number. Oh, you didn't see me? You saw that middle-age guy you just helped. And you sure saw that cute young woman who showed up after me. I've been here right next to your "Line forms here" sign and not just walking up to the counter as though the rules don't apply to me. I'm not invisible. Yet. I hope.

Sorry for the rant. I'm here to file for my menopause dividend.

My ID? Hold on, it's in here somewhere. You know, it doesn't seem so long ago that I was getting carded because I looked like I was too young to buy alcohol! Then stores started carding anyone who looked like they were under 40. There was no time at all between that and getting carded to claim a senior discount.

Which, let me be clear, I don't need. I never asked for that AARP membership card. It just showed up in the mail — at about the same time that people started automatically giving me 10 percent off for my coffee and movie tickets. Of course I don't take it. I won't qualify for that for a decade!

Here you go. As you can see, my ovaries have officially expired.

I was told that if you ask for it, you can get a dividend as sort of an age bonus.

Who told me this? My girlfriends. And some sociologists. I'm pretty sure I read it somewhere.

Honestly, I don't know why this isn't advertised. You folks could really improve your brand image if you let us all know about this dividend. There are 38 million of us, you know. We're quite a market.

I know, right? We're the biggest market nobody has ever heard of. Or that everybody chooses to ignore. Here's a little secret: We'll outlive our husbands and get their money in the end. Then those marketers will be sorry! Ha ha!

You're right, that's a joke only an actuary could love.

So while you're getting me in the system, tell me exactly what this dividend involves. My understanding is that my take-home pay gap will close a bit because I won't have to be spending money on monthly necessities anymore (not to mention birth control). That's, what, at least \$800 a year, right? Will that be automatically deposited in my account?

Are you kidding?

A surtax on hot flashes?

Climate change isn't my fault! You're right, the 38 million of us are a record. But really? Is this scientifically documented?

Well, if the savings and the tax cancel each other out, what about the nonfinancial aspects of the dividend?

According to what I've read, the empty nest means we finally get to accelerate our careers! It's our time! Experience, insight, confidence — we've got it all! Plus, people finally listen to us due to the fact that older women supposedly are sexually nonthreatening to men and uncompetitive with younger women.

Well, we can't all be Helen Mirren, can we?

An old wives' tale? You do realize that's spectacularly sexist.

But seriously: You're telling me that what I've been holding on for doesn't exist? I'll still have to remind everybody in meetings that Bob's great idea was the one I said first?

Well, this explains why everybody keeps asking me for Kleenex and aspirin. I didn't know "office mom" was an official life stage.

Now we're getting somewhere. Is this the official dividend package? Fantastic! Thanks! Down the hall, first room on the left. Wonderful! I look forward to meeting my sister dividenders.

Excuse me ... excuse me ... sorry to interrupt ... I think there's been a mistake. You accidentally gave me some kind of uniform.

What's wrong with it? The question is, what's right with it? White polyester pull-on pants? A sweatshirt printed with a quote from that poem "When I am an old woman I shall wear purple"? A visor?

Look, I'm working on estrogen fumes here. And this whole experience has made me realize that when the last of the estrogen goes, you know what's left? That's right: testosterone. Come to think of it, that's not such a bad thing. It's done pretty well for the guys all these years.

No, nope, never mind the uniform. I'll just scoot on to that meeting. If they figured out what I just did, there's no time to waste.

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