

BODILY AUTONOMY MATTERS TO EVERYONE

The notion of bodily autonomy should not be a difficult concept to grasp. It isn't radical: it is simply that **each person should have control over his or her own body**. Yet we continue to see policies that deny this autonomy to individuals, particularly women, through rationales often based on religion or other personally held moral objections.



Over the last few years, women's basic **reproductive rights have been trampled** through systematic discriminatory legislation on the state and federal levels. This backward motion shows no signs of slowing,

especially in conservative states that use women's reproductive autonomy as a political bargaining chip. State legislatures enacted 205 abortion restrictions from 2011–2013, more restrictions than the total number enacted in the entire previous decade. Then, earlier this year, the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* favored corporations' religious freedom at the expense of women's access to contraceptive care, a decision that has led to a fresh onslaught of religious exemption lawsuits and requests.

Some of these challenges follow in Hobby Lobby's footsteps and seek exemptions specifically from the ACA contraceptive care requirement. But, troublingly, others are using the *Hobby Lobby* decision as leverage for exemptions from other legal requirements, such as the group of religious leaders who urged President Obama to include a religious exemption to his LGBT anti-discrimination executive order.

The aftermath of *Hobby Lobby* proved what we've known for years—an **attack on women's rights can very easily translate into an attack on everyone's rights**. So while bodily autonomy is at the core of the reproductive justice movement—women and their families should be able to decide how, when, and with whom to form their families—Legal Voice is also working in other issue areas to change systems that deny women (and men) the right to control, protect, and make decisions for their own bodies.

For instance: **health care coverage for transgender people**. In the health care system, transgender people have repeatedly been denied the opportunity to have control over their health care decisions. Both public and private health insurance policies routinely include clauses that **specifically prevent transgender people from having the same coverage** for medical services that is provided for other policy holders. Some plans exclude coverage for surgical or non-surgical services for medically necessary transition-related care, while in other cases, insurance companies outright deny coverage to the individual. We are currently representing a transgender woman who was denied coverage for gender reassignment surgery by her insurer on the grounds that it was “cosmetic”—despite the fact that her health care providers unanimously regard the surgery as medically necessary under well-established standards of care.

Bodily autonomy is also at the core of end-of-life decision-making and care. Death with Dignity laws provide options for elderly and terminally ill individuals to **control their own end-of-life care**. People living in states with these laws—Washington, Oregon, and Vermont—have access to one of the greatest human freedoms: to live, and die, according to their own desires and beliefs.

But people living in states without Death with Dignity laws—or people whose secular, taxpayer-supported hospitals have merged with Catholic hospital chains—lack the ability to control what happens (or does not happen) to their bodies at the end of their lives. You may have heard of Brittany Maynard, the 29-year-old woman who was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and who wanted to die on her terms—without suffering and surrounded by the people she loved. Living in California at the time, Brittany lacked the legal right to request that her physician aid her in dying. To obtain the right to control her end-of-life care and to access appropriate medication legally, Brittany and her family moved to Oregon and, in an act of complete autonomy, Brittany ended her life on November 1.

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We believe **ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR BODIES** without politicians, insurance companies, employers, hospital policy-makers, or anyone else telling them what decisions to make or how to make them. We have actively worked to change culture and policies that threaten individuals' autonomy over their own bodies by:

- Sending a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder calling on the U.S. Department of Justice to **renounce enhanced criminal penalties for women** on the basis of pregnancy.
- Working with the Seattle City Council to pass a resolution calling on federal lawmakers to **repeal all bans** on public insurance coverage of abortion, including the Hyde Amendment.

- Engaging in civil discourse about sexual abuse, street harassment, non-consensual pornography, and other **violations to women's bodies.**
- Advocating for Washington's Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) to **provide inclusive health benefits** for transgender people covered by PEBB plans, which they approved earlier this year.

When a woman has the power to decide when and how to get pregnant—or when and how to not get pregnant—she has control over her body. When transgender people have the ability to receive the medical treatment they need without the fear of discrimination, they have control over their bodies. When a woman approaching the end of her life has the ability to make important decisions for herself, she has control over her body.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO HER BODY IS HER RIGHT ALONE.

OUR SENIOR LEGAL WELLNESS PROGRAM: A YEAR IN REVIEW

Stephanie Ekloff wears many hats—she is a granddaughter to a 92-year-old woman, a daughter to aging parents, a spouse, a mother, a grandmother, and a caregiver to clients in the Snohomish area. She is a classic example of someone in the “sandwich generation”—people, primarily women, who take care of elderly relatives while simultaneously parenting a child. Stephanie attended one of our Senior Legal Wellness workshops and was so impressed with the presentation that she purchased two copies of the *Handbook for Washington Seniors: Legal Rights and Resources*—one for her, and one for her mother.

Stephanie left the workshop with a newfound knowledge about death and the importance of having a plan in place before you pass away. It is because of Stephanie—and the many other seniors, family caregivers, and service providers who have attended our workshops—that we are counting the Senior Legal Wellness program's first year a success.

However, calling 2014 the program's first year is a bit misleading—we've been working with our allies and friends for many years to make the Senior Legal Wellness workshops a reality. In 2006, the Legal Voice Self Help Committee identified two different groups of women who were heading for a crisis. As the “baby boomer” generation was aging, many elderly women—who, compared to men, tend to live longer and earn less money over their lifetimes—were being left vulnerable and without resources. At the same time, the “sandwich” generation was taking on even greater burdens of responsibilities as their older relatives' aging more often coincided with their children's youth.

In identifying these two groups of women, we knew something needed to be done. Some people thought, *Why Legal Voice?* But with so few legal resources available for seniors and their caregivers, and given that our mission is to pursue justice for all women in the Northwest, we found ourselves asking, *Why not Legal Voice?* This year, we launched the Senior Legal Wellness program to meet the urgent need among seniors and their caregivers for help navigating the complex legal, health care, and benefits systems.

Over the course of this year, our Senior Legal Wellness program hosted several workshops in Washington State, reaching over 500 Washington seniors and caregivers. What's more, we're getting the *Handbook for Washington Seniors* into the hands of people who need it most: we've sold nearly all 750 of our hard-copy handbooks! Most importantly, we're reaching people at various levels of need, and providing them with resources no one else provides.



The Handbook for Washington Seniors: Legal Rights and Resources can be ordered in searchable CD form online; spiral-bound book versions are available (while supplies last) at our upcoming free workshops. Please visit us on Facebook or at www.legalvoice.org for workshop dates.

SAVE THE DATES!

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9TH:
Legal Voice's Annual Legislative
Lunch & Learn 12-1:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19TH, 2015:
Legal Voice's Cocktails for
a Cause, 6-8 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3RD, 2015:
Legal Voice Auction, 5:30 p.m.



PHOTOS: Suzanne Fiore Photography

HISTORY-MAKING AUCTION!

Wow, you've done it again! In addition to a *new* date and *new* location, there was another "new"—a new record! Together with other Legal Voice friends, family, and colleagues, you played a part in raising more than \$227,000, making this **our most successful auction ever!** YOU did that, and we appreciate you for it.

Our goal for this year's Raise the Paddle was \$60,000, equal to the generous match we received from *Michele's Fight for Human & Animal Rights*. We surpassed that goal, bringing in a total of \$121,200 through the Raise the Paddle appeal, the matched donation, and online giving from our friends who weren't able to attend this year's event. Thank you!

We are honored and inspired by you and the rest of our community who so generously support us and the work that we do. Each and every day, we envision a world where every woman and girl enjoys complete economic, social, and legal equality. Thank you for believing in us and investing in that vision.

We couldn't do this without the commitment of our community, businesses, and friends who donate amazing items and experiences to our auction each year. Also, thank you to all of our sponsors for their generous support: Foster Pepper, Stoel Rives, Summit Law Group, Garvey Schubert Barer, K&L Gates, and Skellenger Bender; and also our friends 1st Security Bank, Perkins Coie, Stokes Lawrence, Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt, MacDonald Hoague & Bayless, Mainstreet Legal Malpractice Insurance, and Ogden Murphy Wallace.

INTRODUCING THE ALLIANCE

We are proud to announce that Legal Voice is the lead Convener of an innovative new group, **The Alliance of State Advocates for Women's Rights and Gender Equality**, a first-time collaboration among regional women's rights and gender equality centers across the United States. We formed The Alliance to strengthen our collective advocacy capacity, pursue pro-active state strategies to advance women's rights, and produce clear wins on critical issues in Alliance states.

The Alliance comprises four additional progressive organizations—Gender Justice (Upper Midwest), Women's Law Project (Pennsylvania), Southwest Women's Law Center (New Mexico), and California Women's Law Center—with whom we have collaborated, albeit informally, for years. We are excited to be working even more closely with such incredible organizational leaders in our movement, and look forward to sharing strategies, coordinating campaigns, and promoting our best practices across state lines.



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BECOME A VISIONARY...



I DEPEND UPON LEGAL VOICE IN MANY WAYS. I depend upon them to do work that is important to me and that I can't do myself. I depend upon Legal Voice to let me know about important issues that I'm not aware of. I depend on Legal Voice to fight the good fight over the long haul. That's why I support Legal Voice with an annual gift and volunteer my time.




Like most Legal Voice supporters, I always wish I could give a bigger gift and do more to support the work and the amazing staff. That's why I have included Legal Voice in my estate plans as a beneficiary on a retirement asset. I don't know how big that gift will be when it gets to Legal Voice, but it is my chance to give the gift Legal Voice deserves.

Legal Voice Visionaries are supporters and friends who have included Legal Voice in their estate plans or wills. If you are interested in our Visionaries program and would like to know more about it, please contact B. Michelle Johnson, Director of Development at 206-682-9552 x113, or by email at MJohnson@LegalVoice.org .

#GIVINGTUESDAY™

Last year, Black Friday shoppers shelled out \$59.1 billion in department stores nationwide. That's a whole lot of money! While we know how tempting flashy electronics and holiday gifts at steal-of-a-deal prices can be, we also know this: Legal Voice supporters put their money where their hearts are. Last year you made it through Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday, and **supported our work on Giving Tuesday.** Join the national movement and the Giving Tuesday community this year on **December 2nd** by donating directly through the Legal Voice website: www.LegalVoice.org/donate. Happy Holidays!

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