

THE EQUAL TIMES

Women's Rights. Nothing Less.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

As we go to press, the Washington State Legislature is in special session to finalize the state budget. While we're still advocating in Olympia for women and their families during budget negotiations, we're happy to report that nearly all of our priority bills for this session have been approved by the Legislature and signed into law!

We've highlighted our work on the domestic violence bill (HB 1565) and the limited service pregnancy center bill (HB 1366/SB 5274) in other articles in this newsletter. Here's a quick rundown on our other priority bills for this session:

STRENGTHENING THE LAW'S RECOGNITION OF DIVERSE FAMILIES:

Governor Gregoire has signed into law HB 1267, legislation that updates Washington's Uniform Parentage Act to respect the wonderful diversity of today's families. In particular, the bill helps ensure that same-sex parents are treated the same as different-sex parents under the law, including explicit language providing that when couples in registered domestic partnerships have a child together, both partners are legally presumed to be the child's parents. However, provisions of the bill that would have allowed compensated surrogacy agreements in Washington were stripped out of the bill in the Senate. We had worked with the bill's sponsor to ensure that the surrogacy provisions respected women's reproductive autonomy and protected women's rights. We expect legislation to permit compensated surrogacy will arise in future sessions and we will continue our efforts to protect women's autonomy and rights in this debate.

PREVENTING BULLYING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

The Governor has signed HB 1163, a bill that creates an ongoing school bullying and harassment prevention workgroup to develop, recommend, and implement strategies to improve school climate and create respectful learning environments. This bill builds on prior legislation that requires school districts to adopt anti-bullying policies that are, at a minimum, as strong as the model policy developed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The bill also includes mental health and suicide prevention education in classroom-based assessments of health and fitness learning standards.

RECOGNIZING RIGHTS OF MARRIED SAME-SEX COUPLES:

The Governor also signed HB 1649, which provides that same-sex couples who are legally married in another state or country have the same rights and responsibilities as registered domestic partners while in Washington. Previously, Washington law provided no recognition at all to such couples. Although the bill doesn't eliminate Washington's ban on same-sex civil marriages, it is an important first step toward extending legal rights to married same-sex couples in the state.



NEW LAW PROTECTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

On April 20, we were proud to watch Governor Gregoire sign House Bill 1565 into law. This bill, one of our top priorities for the 2011 Washington legislative session, will help domestic violence victims keep long-term protection orders against their abusers.

Protection orders restrain domestic violence perpetrators from coming near or having contact with their victims. These orders are an essential tool for interrupting an abuser's ability to commit domestic violence. In cases where an abuser poses a long-term danger, courts may issue protection orders that last for years or even permanently.

But last September, the Washington Supreme Court issued a decision (*In re Marriage of Freeman*) that put every long-term protection order in the state at risk. In effect, the decision meant that if an abuser asked a court to terminate a long-term protection order, the victim would have to come back to court and demonstrate all over again that she had a current "reasonable fear" of imminent harm by the abuser. *(continued)*

NEW LAW PROTECTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS (CONTINUED)

The decision wrongly put the burden on the victim to show why she was still afraid, rather than requiring the abuser to prove he had changed. The ruling put such a low burden on the abuser that some lawyers believed that no protection order in the state was secure anymore.

We knew we could not let this ruling stand. So in partnership with our allies at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV), we got to work on drafting legislation to overturn this decision. While there were many twists and turns along the way, we were able to get a strong version of the bill passed *unanimously* by both houses of the Legislature.

The new law specifies that a long-term protection order (one that is issued for more than two years) may not be terminated unless the abuser proves that there has been a substantial change in circumstances which makes it unlikely that he or she will resume domestic violence. The bill also makes it clear that a victim has no burden of proving a current reasonable fear of imminent harm by the abuser in order to keep a long-term protection order in place.

To prevent an abuser from harassing and intimidating the victim by bringing frivolous motions, the bill requires the abuser to make a threshold showing that there is adequate cause for the court to hear a motion to terminate a long-term protection order. Moreover, to deter frivolous motions even further, the bill authorizes courts to award attorneys' fees to a victim who must defend against a motion to terminate or modify a long-term order.

We are thrilled to get the law changed within a matter of months of the state Supreme Court's decision. Thanks to Representative David Frockt for sponsoring House Bill 1565, and to everyone who contacted their legislators to urge them to support the bill. Special thanks to our lobbyist Pam Crone, who advocated tirelessly for the bill on behalf of both Legal Voice and WSCADV.



LEGAL VOICE WILL NOT STOP UNTIL LIMITED SERVICE PREGNANCY CENTERS TELL WOMEN THE TRUTH

As you know, Legal Voice and our allies advocated strongly for a bill that would have required limited service pregnancy centers in Washington State (also called crisis pregnancy centers) to be honest about the fact that they don't provide or refer for abortion or birth control. Unfortunately, the Legislature failed to pass that bill this session.

We are heartened by the fact that New York City passed a similar bill this year, joining the cities of Baltimore and Austin in rejecting the deceptive practices of these organizations. We are also delighted to be joined in our efforts by Surge NW, a new and exciting collaborative of reproductive justice movement allies, such as the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum - Seattle, working to end racial and reproductive injustice in our region. These joint efforts helped bring tremendous media attention to the threats to women's health posed by these organizations.

What's next? Legal Voice and our allies will certainly go back to the legislature in 2012 and demand that it impose the same kinds of requirements on limited service pregnancy centers that real health care providers have to follow. And, in the meantime, under the leadership of the amazing volunteers on our Crisis Pregnancy Center Policy Workgroup, we intend to make sure that state agencies do not refer women who need abortion or prenatal care to these organizations, and that our state social service agencies stop telling women they need a health care provider to verify their pregnancy in order to get state-funded medical care.

In keeping with our self help model, we are working to draft know-your-rights materials, and plan to place them everywhere women seeking reproductive health care might find them: at pharmacies, with our allies in family planning clinics, on our website, and in other locations.

We'll also work with our terrific young women's leadership group, Raise Your Voice, to plan events and community discussions to get the word out to everyone that most limited service pregnancy centers are dishonest about the services they provide. What's more, the "medical information" they provide is inaccurate and often designed to delay or prevent a woman from taking the steps she needs to ensure her reproductive health, whether that be obtaining an abortion or seeking prenatal care. We will not give up until women and girls know the truth about limited service pregnancy centers.

SAVE THE DATE

PLEASE JOIN US ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2011,
AT THE SEATTLE RENAISSANCE HOTEL FOR THE
2011 LEGAL VOICE AUCTION!

CHECK OUT OUR SITE FOR MORE DETAILS.
[HTTP://WWW.LEGALVOICE.ORG/NEWS/AUKTION.HTML](http://www.legalvoice.org/news/auktion.html)



RAISE YOUR VOICE TURNS ONE, IS ALREADY RUNNING!



Happy Birthday, Raise Your Voice! In a single year, Raise Your Voice (RYV) has hosted numerous events, lobbied for bills that improve the lives of women and recruited lots of new people to the Legal Voice cause!

After a successful day in Olympia lobbying for the limited service pregnancy center bill (see the previous page for details), RYV members headed out to wrap up the day over a drink. The crew had been subjected to crowded hallways full of opponents wearing “I heart pregnancy resource center” buttons, and wore their bright orange “Protect Women’s Health” stickers proudly. The experience was so great that several members went back to Olympia for the Senate hearing several weeks later.

Raise Your Voice has been busy getting people involved throughout the recent legislative session. Members attended hearings,

called their legislators, and encouraged their friends to do the same. At the close of the session, the Raise Your Voice happy hour included a legislative wrap-up with Legal Voice staffers Sara Ainsworth and David Ward and lobbyist Pam Crone, who gave us insight on how our bills fared.

Over the summer, committee members will be giving themselves a break, taking in a film or two at SIFF, throwing barbeques, and partaking in other fun bonding activities. In the fall, Raise Your Voice will be addressing hot topics that concern young women, such as egg donation, women in the criminal justice system, and the portrayal of women in the media, through a series of salons. They will also continue their bimonthly happy hour tradition.

Raise Your Voice is a youth outreach project creating fun and affordable gatherings that spark vigorous discourse and welcome the younger community to Legal Voice, strengthening the fight for women’s rights. If you’re interested in becoming involved with the Raise Your Voice planning committee, please email Laurie Carlsson at lcarlsson@legalvoice.org.



THANK YOU, SARA



COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE 2011

After 10 stupendous years of advocacy, Sara Ainsworth is moving on from her position as Senior Legal and Legislative Counsel at Legal Voice. We will miss Sara’s keen legal skills, her passion, and her all-around awesomeness, but are very proud that Sara was with Legal Voice for so long, and that she accomplished such significant changes in the law. Her advocacy for victims of gender-based violence, including ground-breaking cases like *Danny v. Laidlaw* and the companion legislation to protect the employment rights of victims of violence; her tenacity in protecting women’s reproductive health and rights (can you say “pharmacy refusals are bad!”); her fierce dedication to the rights of low-income women. Our state and region are much better places because of Sara’s amazing work.

Sara is not going away entirely. She will remain affiliated with Legal Voice as Counsel Emerita as she continues her research and writing on women’s rights and reproductive justice, and increases her commitment to teaching and mentoring law students.

More than 300 supporters, advocates, volunteers, colleagues, moms, sisters, partners, neighbors and friends celebrated with us on March 24, 2011!

This year, we tackled the multi-faceted topic of bullying. The 8th grade students from Seattle Girls’ School inspired us, describing how they are working to make a difference in their school and community. Beth Reis from Safe Schools Coalition provided a thought-provoking presentation on “Bullying, Safety and Respect for All.” And Legal Voice Executive Director Lisa M. Stone talked about our work combating power imbalances and bullying, including the “Freeman Fix” – House Bill 1565. As described on page 1, this bill provides that if an abuser seeks to terminate a long-term protection order, he must prove there has been a substantial change in circumstances that makes it unlikely he will resume domestic violence.

Cocktails for a Cause was a wonderful celebration of our long-standing work to support and protect women and their families: THANK YOU for making Legal Voice your cause!

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*LEGAL VOICE IS
PROUD TO BE
TEAMING UP WITH
THE SEATTLE
FOUNDATION AND
LOCAL BUSINESSES
ON JUNE 23RD, 2011
FOR THE GIVEBIG
CHALLENGE!*

GiveBIG is a one-day, online charitable-giving event that will inspire people to donate generously to nonprofit organizations like Legal Voice through The Seattle Foundation. When you make a donation that day through The Seattle Foundation website, your gift will be matched proportionally! It's a wonderful opportunity to make your passion for your causes go further.

WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GIVEBIG CHALLENGE!

HERE'S HOW:



Make a gift of any size to Legal Voice on June 23rd between 7 a.m. and midnight (PDT) through The Seattle Foundation website.

- Go to the Seattle Foundation website: www.seattlefoundation.org
- Search for "Legal Voice" in the upper right-hand search box.
- Click on "Legal Voice" when it comes up.
- Choose "Donate" to Legal Voice.

All funds donated to Legal Voice will be proportionally matched – allowing you to make your donation and your commitment to our work go just a little further!

If you have any questions, please contact B. Michelle Johnson at 206-682-9552x113 or via email at mjohnson@LegalVoice.org



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