

# THE EQUAL TIMES

Women's rights. Nothing less.



## 2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

*The Washington Legislature's 2016 regular session was a whirlwind! This short, 60-day session had Legal Voice on our toes as we pushed for strong bills to improve the lives of Washington women and families and defended against an equally large number of bills that sought to outright remove existing protections.*

Although the regular session ended on March 10th, Governor Inslee immediately called the Legislature back into special session to pass a supplemental budget. In announcing the special session, the Governor took unprecedented action and vetoed 27 bills that didn't measure up to the importance of the budget.

Control over the Legislature was again split, with a Democratic majority in the House and a Majority Coalition Caucus formed by 25 Republicans joined by one Democrat setting the agenda in the Senate. The impact of a divided legislature was apparent not only in its failure to reach agreement on important budget issues, but also on policy issues. Of the dozens of bills Legal Voice monitored, there were competing versions on multiple issues, and many amendments throughout the legislative process. Ultimately, very few bills made it through the gauntlet to final passage.

### VICTORIES

We are, however, very pleased that one of our priority bills did make it through and is awaiting action by the Governor: a bill to create a **tracking system for sexual assault kits** (HB 2530). Far too often, rape kits are never examined, and agencies lose track of them, adding to the difficulty in achieving justice for sexual assault survivors. This important bill will build on our work last year to address the national problem of untested rape kits. We are glad to see the Legislature continue to take steps to address the rape kit backlog in Washington State; this work must continue until the backlog is completely eliminated.

### DISAPPOINTMENTS

Unfortunately, this session also brought significant disappointments. We were frustrated to see several bills come very close to the finish line, but fail to receive a necessary final passage vote.

- The **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act** (SB 6149 / HB 2307), a top priority for Legal Voice, would have protected pregnant workers by requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodations during pregnancy.

- A bill to **strengthen sexual assault protection orders**, in part by removing the two-year limit on the duration of such orders, received unanimous support in the Senate, but stalled in the House due to last-minute opposition from the gun lobby (SB 6151 / HB 2033).
- The **Equal Pay Opportunity Act** (HB 1646) aimed to reduce the gender wage gap by, among other things, closing a loophole in the existing law, strengthening remedies, and protecting workers who discuss their wages.
- A commonsense bill that would have **increased contraceptive access** by requiring health insurance plans to cover a 12-month supply of birth control, dispensed at one time, received strong support in the House but failed to be brought up for a vote in the Senate (HB 2465).

### DEFENSE

We can celebrate the fact that we successfully blocked several measures that would harm women and their families, including bills that would have restricted abortion access by requiring **parental notification** (SB 5289) and **banning sex-selective abortions** (SB 6612); and a bill to allow legally recognized fathers to **challenge paternity** regardless of the child's age or how long the man has acted as a parent to the child (HB 2612 / SB 6452).

We also worked with our allies in the Washington Safety and Access for Everyone (SAFE) Alliance to strongly **oppose a slew of anti-transgender bills**. The bills aimed to restrict the rights of transgender people to use facilities consistent with their gender identity, rolling back civil rights protections created by the Washington Law Against Discrimination more than 10 years ago. Though we successfully stopped those bills from advancing in this session, our opponents have filed a voter initiative to seek to put this issue on the November ballot. We will continue our fight for the rights of transgender people to live and work safely in Washington communities.



## A MOTHER'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE COURTS: AN UPDATE

*We have made such enormous progress in the fight for LGBT equality. But our work is far from over. Even in states like Washington, where we have won long and hard-fought battles for legal protections, LGBT people continue to face discrimination in employment, in health care, in housing—and in our family court system.*

Last year we told you about Rachelle Black, a mother of three who filed for divorce from her husband after realizing that she is a lesbian. Shockingly, the trial court in her divorce case restricted Rachelle from discussing religion, homosexuality, or other “alternative lifestyle concepts” with her children, and from having her partner present without specific approval from the children’s therapist.

The court also gave primary custody of the children to the father, despite the fact that Rachelle had been a stay-at-home mother for her children’s entire lives.

We represented Rachelle in appealing this decision—not just to seek justice for Rachelle, but to make sure that what happened in her case **never happens again in Washington.**

We recently received a decision from the Court of Appeals, and we won on several important issues. Among other things, the Court agreed with us that the **trial court was wrong to restrict Rachelle’s speech and conduct with her children**, and to have given the children’s father sole decision-making over their religious upbringing. However, we’re disappointed that the lower court’s decision to give primary custody to the father still stands.

Our next steps are up to Rachelle. But the trail we’re blazing is up to us, and **we won’t stop until full equality is a reality** for all LGBT people and their families.

## COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE: CELEBRATING COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

You are the volunteers, supporters, board members, allies, staff, sponsors, and clients that make our work possible. At this year’s Cocktails for a Cause, we recognized our community and the diverse roles you play to make positive social change.

Together we raised \$21,000 to advance our work on the issues that matter most to women and girls in the Northwest.

**What a powerful testament to your belief in us!**

This event was made possible by the support of our dedicated sponsors: Foster Pepper; Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt; Stoel Rives; Summit Law Group; Fenwick & West; and Stokes Lawrence. Special thanks to Youth in Focus for running the photo booth, and to Reel Grrls for producing our inspiring film. Watch and share our film at [bit.ly/LegalVoiceTogether](http://bit.ly/LegalVoiceTogether).

### SAVE THE DATE:

*Cocktails for a Cause—Thursday, March 23, 2017*

*Photos by Pamela S. Eaton-Ford and Youth in Focus*



# Managing Your Assets

TOOLS TO GIVE YOU PEACE OF MIND AND ENSURE YOUR LOVED ONES ARE CARED FOR

*It's never too soon to start thinking about your will. But did you know that many other assets—including retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and property—can be left as gifts for your surviving spouse or family? Join us for a free estate planning seminar to discover how you can plan to take care of your family outside of your will.*

Presenter Jim Carney, Chair of Seattle Children's Legacy Advisor Council, will share tools and techniques to reduce income taxes, minimize gift taxes, and support the people and causes you care about. This free seminar is repeated twice on the same day:

*Monday, April 25, 2016*

**1:30–3:00 pm: Seattle Public Library Queen Anne Branch**  
400 West Garfield Street, Seattle, WA 98119

**6:30–8:00 pm: Bellevue Library**  
1111 110th Avenue NE, Bellevue, WA 98004

*Space is limited.* Light refreshments will be served. Please RSVP by April 18th to Michelle Johnson at [MJohnson@LegalVoice.org](mailto:MJohnson@LegalVoice.org) or 206-682-9552 x113.

The following nonprofits partner to host these twice-annual estate planning seminars: Food Lifeline, KCTS 9, Leave 10, Legal Voice, Make-A-Wish Alaska and Washington, Millionair Club Charity, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands, Providence Hospice of Seattle Foundation, Seattle Goodwill, Seattle Parks Foundation, Seattle Symphony, South Seattle College Foundation, Swedish Medical Center Foundation, and The Seattle Public Library Foundation.



Save the date to join us for **Wine, Women, & Wills** with Legal Voice's very own Teresa Byers—  
Tuesday, May 17th from 5:00–7:30 pm  
at Garvey Schubert Barer in  
Downtown Seattle!

More details to come.



## Welcoming Sara Ainsworth

*It is such a joy and an honor to return to Legal Voice as Advocacy Director. Granted, I almost changed my mind after the refusing pharmacies asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review our victory in Stormans v. Wiesman. That case has gone on so long that I had time to move on from my former position at Legal Voice, teach at both University of Washington and Seattle University Law Schools, serve as legal director at National Advocates for Pregnant Women, and come back to Legal Voice—and the quest to defend Washington's rule ensuring all patients access to their medications is still ongoing.*

*I suppose this lengthy battle is not a surprise; after all, the fight to ensure gender equality for all women and transgender people is not easy and not for the faint-hearted. That's exactly why I'm so happy to rejoin this stellar legal organization, which does not back down and will not rest until gender equality and equity are realities throughout the Northwest. I'm also thrilled to be here at a time when we are poised to truly incorporate reproductive justice principles in our work—supporting the leadership of affected communities, centering the needs of those most marginalized, and ensuring that all of our work recognizes the intersections of gender, race, immigration status, and class.*

*And of course, the thing I always loved the most about Legal Voice is stronger than ever: our community. I look forward to working with that community to ensure that every state in the Northwest is a place where the law supports the rights, liberties, and social equality of all women.*

—Sara Ainsworth

give  
BIG



Join us on May 3rd  
for this one-day, online,  
charitable giving event!  
More details at  
[LegalVoice.org/GiveBIG](http://LegalVoice.org/GiveBIG)

## LEGAL VOICE

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## BECOME A VISIONARY...

BY LISA STERRITT  
President-Elect, Legal Voice  
Board of Directors

*I have served as a board member of Legal Voice since 2012. My husband and I contribute as much time and money as we can to this organization because we believe in its mission and work. And like so many past board members and volunteers, I intend to continue to support Legal Voice long after my board tenure comes to an end.*

*But it wasn't until 2014 that I learned about planned giving at a Legal Voice gathering and realized that I could extend my support of this wonderful organization beyond my tenure on earth! Having others share how easy it was to become a Visionary donor inspired me to do the same.*

*I believe we all want to leave a legacy when we pass away. We volunteer, donate money, and spend time and energy working to make the world a better place while we here. Becoming a Visionary donor ensures your legacy lives after you are gone, and continues to make a difference.*

*Planned giving is easy, empowering, and more important than you realize. I encourage you to consider this option, and join me as a Visionary donor.*

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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 Michelle Johnson, Director of Development, at 206-682-9552 x113, or by email at [MJohnson@LegalVoice.org](mailto:MJohnson@LegalVoice.org)

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