

THE EQUAL TIMES

Women's rights. Nothing less.



2012 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The 2012 Washington legislative session was a rollercoaster ride for women's rights. We started with the thrilling victory for marriage equality, but then plunged to a disappointing low with the loss of the Reproductive Parity Act. After a series of twists and turns, the Legislature also expanded protections for survivors of domestic violence and passed a budget that preserved essential services for women and their families.

HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF HOW LEGAL VOICE'S PRIORITIES FARED THROUGH THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THIS HISTORIC SESSION.

WINNING MARRIAGE EQUALITY

For years, Legal Voice has fought in the courts and in the Legislature to win civil marriage equality for lesbian and gay couples. We've always believed that women's rights and LGBT rights go hand in hand – and in 2012, we helped make history when Governor Gregoire signed the marriage equality bill into law on February 13.

But the fight isn't over. As expected, our opponents collected enough signatures to put Referendum 74 on the ballot. This measure requires a public vote on whether to keep the marriage equality law. That means we have to make history again in November by winning the campaign to Approve Referendum 74.

FIGHTING FOR REPRODUCTIVE PARITY

After the incredible victory for marriage equality, we were brought back to earth when the Reproductive Parity Act failed to pass the Legislature this session. This bill would have required health insurers in Washington to provide coverage for abortion services if they also cover maternity care services.

The House approved the bill by a 52-46 margin. But in the Senate, efforts to bring the bill to the floor failed twice, both times by a vote of 23-26.

We're disappointed by this setback, but you can be sure that we're not giving up. With our allies, we expect to bring the bill back in 2013 – and together we won't relent until it passes.

PROTECTING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

With our allies at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, we helped pass a bill (HB 2363) to expand protections for survivors of domestic violence.

This bill provides survivors with greater protection against having to disclose confidential addresses and other private information to their abusers during court proceedings. The new law took effect on June 7, and is already being used by advocates to protect the safety of survivors.

PRESERVING THE SAFETY NET

The battle over the state budget put the Legislature into overtime this year. With the Legislature facing a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall, our priority was to prevent devastating cuts to programs serving the most vulnerable women and their families.

The final budget passed by the Legislature largely accomplished that goal. Among other things, the budget preserved funding for family planning services and the Basic Health Plan; did not reduce cash benefits or impose new time limits for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; and expanded eligibility for Working Connections Child Care.

But in the long run, we need to do more than avoid cuts to these essential services. That's why we're continuing to work with our allies for sustainable budgets that include new revenue. That is the only way to put Washington on a long-term path to economic justice for everyone.



Thanks to everyone who took the time to review bills, contact their legislators, and advocate for equality during the 2012 legislative session – and as always, special thanks to Legal Voice's lobbyist Pam Crone for her incredible work on behalf of women!



REF 74 – NEXT STEPS TOWARD MARRIAGE EQUALITY

After decades of advocacy for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Legal Voice is proud to be engaged in the latest fight for LGBT equality in Washington: Approve Referendum 74 to keep our marriage equality law!

Legal Voice has been at the forefront of the fight for LGBT rights and equality since our founding. We represented Col. Grethe Cammermeyer in her battle to remain in the military. We overturned draconian laws in Montana that criminalized same-sex relationships. We won court cases and legislation to protect the rights of LGBT parents and couples. In 2004 we filed *Andersen v. King County*, a case challenging Washington's ban on marriages of lesbian and gay couples. When we narrowly lost that case by a 5–4 margin in the Washington Supreme Court, we worked with our allies to pass a comprehensive series of domestic partnership laws—and retained those laws at the ballot box by winning approval of Referendum 71 in 2009.

And now, we are determined to make 2012 the year we win marriage equality in Washington once and for all! Earlier this year, under the heartfelt leadership of Governor Gregoire and LGBT leaders in the State House and Senate, the Washington Legislature passed a bill to make civil marriage available to all loving, committed adult couples. Washington joined only six states permitting same-sex couples to legally marry. (Maryland passed a similar law just a few weeks later.)

But we always knew that our opponents would file a referendum to put the marriage equality law to a public vote. So Legal Voice and our allies at the ACLU of Washington joined with cooperating counsel at Pacifica Law Group and filed suit to ensure the ballot title and summary for the referendum accurately and fairly reflected the law. We won that fight, and our opponents went on to the signature-gathering phase.

On June 6, 2012, our opponents turned in approximately 240,000 signatures supporting the referendum. And while some signatures were fraudulent, our expectations were realized: there were more than enough valid signatures to send the measure to the ballot in November.

So now we and all those who support every person's right to decide how to form and maintain their family must pour renewed energy and determination into the effort to APPROVE Referendum 74 and retain marriage equality. Legal Voice is proud to serve on the governing board of Washington United for Marriage, the coalition of organizations, congregations, unions and businesses working together to defend civil marriage for all loving couples.

We're also working with Pride Foundation and Planned Parenthood Votes NW on a special effort to reach women voters and educate them about the realities – and the beauty – of the lives of people in committed same-sex relationships. If you or someone you know would like to learn more about what civil marriage equality would mean in Washington or get involved in the effort please send an email to info@LegalVoice.org.

ANNUAL REPORT

Legal Voice is grateful to have such a wonderful community of supporters and volunteers. With your help, we are able to achieve amazing results and make positive change for women and their families in the Northwest. Our 2011 Annual Report reflects that powerful impact.

In keeping with our commitment to social justice and sustainability, we've moved to an electronic format for our annual report. You can find it online at <http://www.legalvoice.org/news/publications.html>. If you would like a hard copy, please let us know. Thank you for your support of justice, equality and our work.



COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE

What a tremendous event! More than 350 friends, supporters, advocates, volunteers, colleagues, moms, sisters, partners and neighbors celebrated the passage of the Marriage Equality bill and partied into the evening. The energy generated in the room that night continues to inspire all of us at Legal Voice. Executive Director Lisa M. Stone touched on our long history of fighting for LGBT rights in the Northwest, as well as the other important bills we were fighting for this legislative session. We also showed an 8 minute video highlighting our recent successes; you can see it on our website at <http://www.legalvoice.org/news/>. Once again, thanks for being with us in the fight for women's rights!

HONORING MICHELE VIVONA

Some people think that only lawyers support and really "get" Legal Voice. And some non-lawyers think they don't have enough to offer us as part of our community. Not true, on either count. Indeed, some of our most active volunteers and generous supporters are not attorneys, and have no connection to the legal system. Rather, they have a commitment to women's rights, and a belief in the power of law to do good.

We lost one such supporter this year, and Legal Voice – indeed, the entire community – is the poorer. Michele Vivona passed away suddenly in April, at the heartbreakingly young age of 47.

Michele was a dynamo who worked at LexisNexis for more than 20 years. Trained as an engineer, with the mind of a world-class businesswoman, she worked her way up to the highest levels of the company. She volunteered with Legal Voice first in the 1980's, and then again from 1997 until her death. She was a Board member, one of our Presidents, President of our Foundation, and a tireless advocate for women's rights, for our work, and for women all over the world. Her contributions, tangible and intangible, made Legal Voice a better, more effective organization; more than that, she helped us have fun and aspire to do more and better. We will miss her sorely.



LEGAL VOICE

907 Pine Street
Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98101

T 206-682-9552

W LegalVoice.org

E info@LegalVoice.org

NON-PROFIT
ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 2607



SAVE
THE DATE!



PLEASE JOIN US ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2012, AT THE SEATTLE RENAISSANCE HOTEL FOR THE 2012 LEGAL VOICE AUCTION! Our annual auction is a sparkling evening featuring both live and silent auctions, our Scarlet Club drawing, a delectable dinner and fun Dessert Dash. All proceeds from the Auction support Legal Voice's work pursuing justice for women and girls in the Northwest.

Please check out <http://www.legalvoice.org/news/auction.html> for more information.

WHERE: Seattle Renaissance Hotel

WHEN: October 13, 2012

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