

THE EQUAL TIMES

Women's rights. Nothing less.



2014 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Washington's Legislature's 2014 session saw some great achievements and some anticipated stalls. For the second year in a row, control of the Legislature was split, with the House controlled by Democrats while the Senate was governed by a Majority Coalition Caucus. The divided control of the Legislature meant that only bills with strong bipartisan support could make it through both houses. Only 239 bills were passed by the Legislature this session, **the fewest in over 30 years**. But with hard work, we won important victories for women and their families, while also defeating numerous proposals that would have moved women's rights backwards in Washington.

Even so, there is a lot of unfinished business from this session, and we will continue to push for measures that did not pass this year – including the Reproductive Parity Act, Paid Sick and Safe Days, and restrictions on the parental rights of rapists.



VICTORIES

After a crushing disappointment last year, we are thrilled that the Washington Legislature finally passed a new law (HB 1840) that prohibits domestic violence abusers from possessing or buying firearms while they are subject to certain civil protection orders. The new law also requires abusers to certify that they have surrendered firearms and directs law enforcement officials to establish processes for receiving, storing, and returning firearms. The measure will bring Washington's law into closer alignment with federal laws prohibiting firearm possession by abusers.

CHALLENGES

For the third year in a row, the Reproductive Parity Act failed to make it to a full vote in the Senate, despite winning approval in the House of Representatives. As the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been implemented, the bill's importance has become even more evident, as some Washington insurance companies either have chosen not to cover abortion care or are vague in their explanations of coverage, creating confusion for customers. The RPA would require health insurance plans in Washington to cover abortion services if they cover maternity care services so all Washington women could rest assured that their insurance covers a range of pregnancy options. You can be sure we will continue to advocate for this measure until we win.

We were also disappointed that the Legislature failed to pass a bill to empower sexual assault survivors to restrict the parental rights of rapists. Currently, Washington law provides few remedies when a sexual assault survivor becomes pregnant as a result of rape and the rapist seeks to assert parental rights. We, along with our allies at the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, will continue to advocate for survivors on this issue.

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THE FUTURE

The makeup of the Legislature will likely change at this year's midterm elections (be sure to vote!) where all of the members of the House of Representatives and half of the members of the Senate will be up for reelection. We're looking forward to working with next year's Legislature and will continue to advance our vision of a world where every woman and girl enjoys economic, social, and legal equality.

Among other initiatives, we will be back next session to push for legislation to ensure that workers throughout Washington have access to paid sick and safe days. Legal Voice strongly supports

efforts to ensure that workers are able to take paid time off work when they are ill, need to care for a sick family member, or need to cope with the effects of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Paid sick and safe days increase family economic security, as workers would not be forced to choose between the jobs they need and taking care of their own or their family's health and safety needs. HB 1313, which passed the House but stalled in the Senate this year, would have established statewide minimum standards for paid sick and safe leave, similar to those already enacted in Seattle after efforts by a coalition of which Legal Voice was proud to be a part.

SENIOR LEGAL WELLNESS PROGRAM OFF TO A GREAT START!

With the support of very generous donors, Legal Voice launched the Senior Legal Wellness Program this year. Our goal is at least ten workshops in its inaugural year, reaching up to 250 seniors and caregivers in person, and many more through our *Handbook*. In the first three months since the program launched, it is well on its way to fulfilling this goal, with six workshops and more than 100 seniors and caregivers already reached! The Senior Legal Wellness Program grew out of the innovative *Handbook for Washington Seniors: Legal Rights & Resources*, which we developed with the input of a wide variety of community collaborators. The *Handbook* is a comprehensive quick-reference guide on the full range of legal issues seniors face and is the centerpiece of Senior Legal Wellness services envisioned for this program.

This program started in 2006 when 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 still outlive male spouses) were left more vulnerable. At the same time, the "sandwich generation" (those taking care of elderly parents while parenting a child—who are also mostly women) were about to take on even greater burdens of responsibility.

A dedicated workgroup of Legal Voice volunteers and staff researched the legal needs of our elders. They found that this population is drastically underserved, and faces complex legal issues in multiple areas of their lives—health care, social security, pensions, age or disability discrimination, raising grandchildren, consumer issues, end-of-life issues, elder abuse, and many more. The resulting *Handbook* addresses this and many other issues.

In January, Legal Voice hired Anne Bradley Counts and Joan Schrammeck to get the program off the ground. Anne Bradley Counts came out of retirement to be the Attorney Trainer for Legal Voice's Senior Legal Wellness Project. She volunteered with Legal Voice's Self Help committee for the past eight years, drafting and editing Senior Handbook sections. Joan Schrammeck is the Outreach Coordinator for the Senior Legal Wellness Program. She spent nearly 25 years organizing for access to reproductive rights and health, first with NARAL Pro-Choice Washington and subsequently with Cedar River Clinics.

If you would like to arrange a Senior Legal Wellness Workshop for your community or group of interested folks, please contact Joan Schrammeck at joan.legalvoice@gmail.com.

Save the date: Legal Voice Auction Saturday, September 20, 2014 at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel

If you have a vacation home, access to a unique experience (e.g., private dinner at a restaurant with a well-known chef) or any other unique item that you think would be a good fit, please feel free to contact Jennifer Knutson at jknutson@legalvoice.org or 206-682-9552 x114.



INSPIRE!

PHOTOS: Suzanne Fiore Photography

We hope you were at this year's Cocktails for a Cause! It was another amazing gathering of friends, colleagues, family, and supporters. Conceptualized, shot, and edited entirely by volunteers, our short film "Inspire" featured Legal Voice board members, staff, volunteers, and supporters who talked about what inspired them and what was still left to do in order to fulfill our vision of a world where every woman and girl enjoys economic, social and legal equality. It was truly inspiring, as was the rest of the evening.

More than 325 supporters, advocates, volunteers, colleagues, moms, sisters, brothers, husbands, partners, neighbors, and friends joined us for an evening to celebrate women's rights. You also raised \$34,000 to enable us to do our work. For 35 years, you have stuck with us through thick and thin, through wins and losses, through laughter and tears. We're proud of the work we do and we're fortunate to have you with us. **We're inspired by you!**

Save the date: Cocktails for a Cause 2015 — Thursday, March 19, 2015



BIGTHANKS FOR PARTICIPATING IN GIVEBIG!

We are grateful to be part of a very generous community. The outpouring of support shown to Legal Voice and our entire community during The Seattle Foundation's GiveBIG was astonishing.

Together with thousands of other people, you donated more than **\$12.8 million** to 1,400+ local charities. Legal Voice supporters raised more than **\$30,000** for our work! THANK YOU!

2013 Annual Report is available!

Legal Voice is grateful to have such a wonderful community of supporters and volunteers. Your investment in our work allows us to achieve amazing results and make positive changes for women and families in the Northwest. Our 2013 Annual Report reflects that powerful impact. You can find it online at <http://www.legalvoice.org/news/publications.html>

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BECOME A VISIONARY...

BY HELEN WINKLER

When I moved to Seattle in 1981, I used the yellow pages (no internet then) to look for a local women's organization working for women's rights. I gave a small donation to the Northwest Women's Law Center (now Legal Voice), started receiving the newsletter, and knew I had found the right organization. When I retired, I was able to take a more active role. I enjoy attending the social and educational functions because I know I will meet others who share my values. I also started volunteering in 2007 one afternoon a week to do whatever job is needed in the office.

I do not have children. I have nieces and nephews whom I love and plan to leave a small remembrance. But I believe the bulk of my estate should go to charity. Legal Voice is my favorite charity. I am also leaving money to conservation causes because when Legal Voice finally achieves women's equality, there should be

a world left to enjoy. Legal Voice is a beneficiary on my retirement account and a residuary beneficiary after I am sure my partner is taken care of.

Legal Voice fights for the things I believe in. At this point in my life, I have a number of great- and great-great nieces and nephews. I believe the best legacy I can leave them is to continue the fight for equality for all.

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

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