

Summer 2017

# THE EQUAL TIMES

Women's rights. Nothing less.



## LEGAL VOICE: BY THE NUMBERS

153

Members of the Legal Voice community who supported us through GiveBIG—thank you!

6

Pints & Progress events in Washington reaching 1,457 Legal Voice supporters

633

Abortion clinics featured on The Safe Place Project, a website created by our high school intern Maddy Rasmussen ([safeplaceproject.com](http://safeplaceproject.com))

259,622

Valid signatures required for opponents of equality to put discrimination on the Washington ballot. Please decline to sign I-1552!

\$10

Admission to a benefit concert in Seattle on July 6th. All proceeds go to Legal Voice! More at [legalvoice.org/events](http://legalvoice.org/events)



## 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

*The Washington Legislature's 2017 regular session was one for the Legal Voice books! Despite the challenges at the federal level, we remained **undaunted in our advocacy for progressive policies** that improve the lives of Washington women, girls, and LGBTQ people. That advocacy, combined with **unprecedented support from our community**, resulted in important changes to Washington State laws.*

Several of our top priority bills passed with **strong, bipartisan support**—a critical point as control of the Legislature remains split, with a Democratic majority in the House and a Republican majority in the Senate. The bills that passed—and that were recently signed into law—support sexual assault survivors' safety, women's economic security, and reproductive freedom.

### VICTORIES

- Both chambers of the Legislature unanimously passed the **Healthy Starts Act** (SB 5835), a groundbreaking law that combines workplace protections with public health strategies to support the health and economic security of pregnant people and their families.
- The **Sexual Assault Protection Order Act** (SB 5256) allows judges to issue permanent sexual assault protection orders, previously limited to a maximum of two years, so that survivors need not return year after year to face their rapist in court.
- The **Rape Survivor Safety Act** (HB 1543) received strong, near unanimous support in both chambers. This life-changing law allows a survivor who becomes pregnant as a result of rape to limit the parental rights of the person who assaulted her, preventing her from having to co-parent with a rapist.
- Washington lawmakers took a step to advance reproductive health for the first time in many years by passing a bill that **improves access to contraception**. HB 1234 requires insurance companies to cover 12 months of birth control at a time, thus helping ensure access and consistent use for people with geographic barriers to visiting their pharmacy each month.

Of course, our advocacy to move the law forward must always be matched by efforts to **keep opponents of equality from moving the law backward**. We were able to stop an onslaught of

attacks on abortion access. One of these bills would have required health care providers to **notify parents before providing a minor with an abortion**—a requirement that directly harms young women’s health and human rights.

We also stopped a bill that threatened **transgender Washingtonians’ safety, humanity, and dignity**. However, our fight continues as people opposed to transgender equality attempt to put discrimination on the November ballot. Initiative 1552 seeks to **take away long-standing protections** that allow transgender people to use restrooms and other facilities consistent with their gender identity. Learn more at [WAWontDiscriminate.org](http://WAWontDiscriminate.org).

**WHAT’S NEXT?**

Although the regular session ended in April, Governor Inslee immediately called the Legislature back into a 30-day special session—and then a second special session—to pass an operating budget. At the time of print, state lawmakers are still working toward this goal.

Likewise, a select group of lawmakers and community stakeholders continue negotiating a bill to create a statewide **paid family and medical leave program**. Though the Legislature did not come to an agreement on this issue during the regular session, the negotiations continue because the bill affects the budget. We are hopeful that this bipartisan group can work together to bring a strong, effective paid family and medical leave policy to Washington workers.

Again, **this progress was due in no small part to your efforts**. Our community showed up in record numbers to write and call state legislators urging their support. We hope we can count on your advocacy again next year as we fight for more progressive policies—including a continued effort for equal pay protections.

For updates and action alerts related to the 2018 session, please sign up for our emails at [bit.ly/LegalVoiceSignUp](http://bit.ly/LegalVoiceSignUp).

## COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE: RAISING OUR VOICES!

At Cocktails for a Cause, you raised more than just your voices! Together, we raised \$26,000 to advance our efforts on the issues that matter most to women, girls, and the LGBTQ community in the Northwest. **Thank you for believing in us to do this crucial work.**

The Legal Voice community was honored to welcome our brave client, Rachelle Black, who spoke about the discrimination she faced by the court as an LGBTQ mother. And just weeks later, we celebrated a victory for her, her family, and the community! *Read more about Rachelle on the following page.*

This inspiring event was made possible by the support of our annual partner, **Lane Powell**, and our dedicated sponsors: Perkins Coie; Stoel Rives; Summit Law Group; and Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt. Check out our Youth in Focus photo booth pictures and Morgen Schuler Photography photos at [legalvoice.org/Cocktails](http://legalvoice.org/Cocktails).



**SAVE THE  
DATES!**

*Legal Voice Auction  
Saturday, October 7, 2017 at the  
Seattle Marriott Waterfront*

*Celebrate International Women’s Day  
with us at our 2018 Cocktails for a Cause!  
Thursday, March 8, 2018*

## A VICTORY FOR RACHELLE: KEEPING DISCRIMINATION OUT OF THE COURTROOM

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We love sharing good news with you! Especially when it's a long-fought victory in the courts that will impact countless women and families.



In April, the Washington Supreme Court **unanimously** stood with our client Rachelle Black and affirmed what we believed all along: that the trial court **disfavored Rachelle because of her sexual orientation**.

You may remember Rachelle's story: she filed for divorce from her husband after coming out as a lesbian. When creating a parenting plan for the couple's three children, the trial court gave primary custody of the kids to their father, despite the fact that Rachelle had been a stay-at-home parent *for the kids' entire lives*.

In reaching that decision, the court **criticized her for not having a career**, which she put on hold to raise the children. Further, the court expressed that it would be "very challenging for the children to reconcile their religious upbringing" with Rachelle's sexual orientation—or what the court-appointed guardian ad litem repeatedly referred to as **Rachelle's "lifestyle choice."**

The Washington Supreme Court shut down those claims, calling out the trial court for **relying on unfair bias** and the presumption "that Rachelle's sexual orientation is inherently disruptive to the children." It also acknowledged that the trial court **unfairly favored the father's religious beliefs** over Rachelle's ability to parent her children.

We are absolutely thrilled with this positive result for Rachelle and her family. But **this never should have happened** in the first place. We are hopeful that this strong decision from the Supreme Court will serve as a lesson to courts in Washington—and beyond—so that no one else will have to face discrimination in child custody decisions **because of who they love**.

## ENSURING PARENTS CAN PROTECT THEIR KIDS FROM VIOLENCE

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Legal Voice and our allies have worked for years to ensure domestic violence survivors have access to the protection they need. But, even with strong laws, we're seeing a disturbing trend across Washington that keeps survivors and their families from safety.

The source of this trend? **Our courts.**

When a parent asks the court for a protection order to keep them and their children safe, the court **sometimes refuses to include all of the children**.

This is exactly what happened to Jose, who asked the court for a protection order against his ex-wife. She had **assaulted their nine-year-old daughter** in the presence of the child's other siblings. Instead of granting a one-year protection order (the standard minimum) to keep them all safe, **the court protected only the nine-year-old**, and only for four months.

We spoke out in support of Jose, in partnership with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence,

arguing that short-term protection orders undermine the law's intention: to provide **quick, accessible protection to survivors** before further abuse can happen. The Court of Appeals agreed with us and reversed the decision.

Now, we are continuing to fight this dangerous trend alongside Esmeralda, who experienced severe violence at the hand of her former partner. She sought safety **for herself and her children**, but was denied protection for her two-year-old son because he was sleeping while her partner assaulted her.

We can't let that ridiculous notion stand. So we're urging the Washington State Supreme Court to reverse the decision and affirm that when a parent is a victim of domestic violence, **her kids are entitled to be protected, too**.

Simply put, **parents should be able to use the law to protect their children** from abuse. Legal Voice is committed to righting these injustices and standing up for people who are given empty promises of protection.

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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](mailto:mjohnson@LegalVoice.org)

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