

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
MAYOR

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

CITY HALL, ROOM 2111
200 N. SPRING STREET
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012
(213) 978-0300

FAX: (213) 978-0309

E-mail: csw.webmaster@lacity.org

KELLIE HAWKINS
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COMMISSIONERS
SUSAN BERKE FOGEL, J.D.
PRESIDENT
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FRANCILLE RUSAN WILSON, PH.D.

MINUTES

MARCH 6, 2008
National Council of Jewish Women
543 N. Fairfax Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90036

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Susan Berke Fogel, President
Katie Buckland, Vice President
Rocio Córdoba
Helen Han
Francille Rusan Wilson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Dominique DiPrima
Liliana Pérez

STAFF

Kellie Hawkins, Executive Director
Anne Dunn

GUESTS

Eve Sheedy
Emily Austin
Jacquelyn Horton
Jenifer Cuerspeckman
Joan Crear
Clint Eastwood
Adrienne Lamar
Eva Lamar
Brandi Cotright

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Buckland called the meeting to order.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2008 AND FEBRUARY 29, 2008

On motion by Commissioner Córdoba, seconded by Commissioner Wilson and unanimously carried, the Minutes were approved.

III. PRESENTATIONS

A. Eve Sheedy, Los Angeles City Attorney's Office – Legislation

Eve Sheedy gave an overview of domestic violence legislation. She stated that because of the Supreme Court decision in Crawford v. Washington, prosecutors across the country have been

forced to have the victim in court in order to successfully prosecute their cases. Many more domestic violence cases are being dismissed. The one exception in that decision was a concept called "forfeiture by wrongdoing" which basically says that if the victim is absent because of the defendant's conduct then her statements are admissible. She stated that AB 268 sponsored both by the City Attorney's office and the California District Attorneys Association would codify that concept, forfeiture by wrongdoing, as a hearsay exception. However there is also a California Supreme Court case, which addresses that issue. The United States Supreme Court has granted review of that case, which is presently being briefed and will be argued on April 22nd. The bill is on hold until June and the decision by the Supreme Court should hit in about June. If there is not a positive decision enabling the statute to go forward, it will have a bad impact on domestic violence prosecution.

Ms. Sheedy discussed AB 1771, a domestic violence registry, authored by Assemblymember Fiona Ma. The bill would create an internet site that would list people convicted of felony domestic violence or two misdemeanor domestic violence convictions. She stated that there is a lot of well intentioned domestic violence legislation that isn't really good domestic violence legislation because much more so than any other subject matter there's a huge issue of unintended consequences in this particular field so many people think that's true with that particular bill for a number of reasons. She stated that there are a lot of domestic violence victims charged and convicted of domestic violence because domestic violence victims who get arrested will enter a plea, for example, to a misdemeanor charge to get out of jail and get back to their children - it will list their name and date of birth which may put them at risk down the road because the information is on the internet. Additionally, it is not very clear what the point of doing this is, just to have an internet listing. There are a lot of issues being raised. Another example is AB 2190 authored by Assemblymember Bill Emmerson, which says that law enforcement should notify Child Protective Services that substantial evidence exists to support a finding that the child has been exposed to secondary abuse by witnessing domestic violence. That's another bill, which is well intentioned but can cause the children to be taken away from the women because they were victimized.

AB 2052 - authored by Assemblymember Ted Lieu. The bill allows victims of domestic violence and stalking to be able to terminate rental agreements upon establishing that they have a protective order or some other documentation; they can terminate the rental agreement after the end of that month despite what the agreement says. This was something that was raised in prior legislation and defeated. Ms. Sheedy stated that this bill is a very important protection for domestic violence victims.

AB 2306 – authored by Assemblymember Betty Karnette. The bill pertains to a provision of law - people who were convicted prior to 1996 of either murder or violent felony couldn't enter evidence on what was then called Battered Women's Syndrome. The Legislature made a remedy for those people to be able to file a writ of habeas corpus so that the evidence could be entered and a new trial requested. That statute will expire in 2010; there are about 34 cases left of women who have that issue but have yet to get counseled to do this. Cases have taken 5 years and thousands of hours of time most of them pro bono – that is the level of effort involved even before the writ can be filed. The bill will extend the statute 10 more years.

Commissioner Córdoba thanked Ms. Sheedy for highlighting the bills. She asked Ms. Sheedy to send Ms. Hawkins the analysis of those bills along with her recommendations so that the Legislative Committee can consider them and take a position, at the next meeting.

- B. Carol Tantau, Chair, City of Los Angeles Domestic Violence Task Force – Work of the Task Force and how strengthening the partnership between the Task Force and the Commission can benefit the women of the City

Ms. Sheedy gave the presentation in place of Ms. Tantau who could not attend the meeting.

Ms. Sheedy stated that she is the head of the Legislative Issues Committee. She and Ms. Tantau are on the Domestic Violence Task Force. Ms. Sheedy urged the Commissioners to invite Ms. Tantau back. She stated that Ms. Tantau has done phenomenal work as the chair of the task force. The task force is made up not only of people in government but also community members, mostly service providers and people with extensive expertise in the field of domestic violence, who were appointed by their Councilmembers. She stated that since Ms. Hawkins has taken over there has been a lot of contact and a lot of resources that have been made available to the Commission by working together and someone from the Commission has attended the task force meetings. She has been working with Commission staff member Julie Heifetz, making sure City employees are trained on the Domestic Violence Workplace Policy. She stated that the task force looks forward to working with the Commission. Ms. Sheedy stated that she will get some legislative rating information for the Commissioners and try to keep them apprised.

Commissioner Córdoba stated that she appreciated Ms. Sheedy's offer of collaboration. She stated that speaking as chair of the Legislative Committee, they are trying to streamline the analysis of bills and look to community partners and other partners who have expertise in different areas, to provide guidance. Commissioner Cordoba stated that she looks forward to working together.

C. Peace Over Violence - Safety of women and what local CBO's are doing to prevent violence against women and young girls and foster awareness

Emily Austin, Prevention Services Manager at Peace Over Violence, discussed Denim Day in L.A., April 23, 2008. Also, April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. For ten years Peace Over Violence has lead a sexual assault awareness day, Denim Day. She gave some background on how this day started. In Italy in 1998, a woman was raped by her driving instructor. The instructor was tried and convicted of rape. The instructor appealed the conviction all the way to the Italian Supreme Court. The judge overturned the conviction stating that the woman's jeans were too tight so she must have helped take them off, so it was consensual sex, not rape. In response to this, the women in the Italian Parliament wore jeans to work in protest. When California and the nation found out about this protest, women started to wear jeans to protest the idea that clothing could denote consent. Ms. Austin trained 250 students from LAUSD who will be doing activities in April. Peace Over Violence is also launching Denim Day in the USA. She encouraged everyone to visit her organization's two websites, Denim Day in L.A. (www.denimdayinla.org) and Denim Day in the USA (www.denimdayintheusa.org) to help to get this information out into the communities.

Ms. Hawkins stated that the Commission is part of the planning committee for Denim Day. One of the things the Commission is doing is having a message about Denim Day put on employee pay stubs in April. Also, letters will be sent to Department General Managers on how they can be a part of the 10th anniversary. YWAR schools will be participating.

D. The Domestic Violence Prevention Collaborative (L.A. Urban League, MALDEF, and APALC) – how local organizations are working together to address domestic violence in ethnic communities

Jacquelyn Horton presented on behalf of the Los Angeles Domestic Violence Prevention Collaborative, which is a partnership between the Los Angeles Urban League, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), MALDEF and the Verizon Foundation. The collaborative has committed to providing education and advocacy about domestic violence in minority communities. She acknowledged Ms. Adrienne Lamar of the Jenesse Center who helped her get started in this work. The collaborative tries to address teen dating violence in minority communities. They have a campaign called Live the Good Life that was started by students she trained to advocate and educate on teen dating violence issues. The students created informational cards to distribute at their schools and they plan to expand the campaign. The Urban League works with Crenshaw High School, so one of their main initiatives for next year is to make this campaign part of the curriculum. The collaborative will be pushing to implement this in their local area schools. Ms. Hawkins asked Ms. Horton to talk about the public service announcements that the three agencies created. Ms. Horton stated that one of things the

Verizon Foundation wanted them to do was to create and air culturally sensitive public service announcements aimed towards youths. They also plan to create some online focus groups that will be of interest to youths. Ms. Hawkins commented that the cards would be a good resource to give to YWAR students.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jenifer Cuerspeckman, Westside Domestic Violence Network.

The network is a collaboration network of agencies in Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and the Westside formed about 13 years ago out of the acknowledgement that agencies did not speak to one another, law enforcement, schools, DCFS, and that there was no safety net for the families that they profess to serve. One of the issues raised that they have been focused on for the last year or two is the problems that a lot of victims of domestic violence are facing in the family court system. They developed a family court advocacy project, which is dedicated to looking at this system and the experiences of battered women and children in the system. She gave a brief background on this project. The network had a public forum that they invited the community to and out of that came they found that women and children could be in criminal court, children's court, and family court all at the same time and the court systems do not talk to each other either. Some women expressed that even their criminal court records; their police reports were not allowed to be admitted in family court because the judges would say that it was biased. The network ran two focus groups to hear the women and what their experiences were. What they came to learn is nobody talked about domestic violence, no one asked about it. Attorneys specifically asked the women not to talk about domestic violence because the judges didn't like it and it would work against them.

Ms. Cuerspeckman stated that the network wants to have a Court Watch Program to gather data. This is meant to be a collaborative effort to look at the legal system, gather data and write a report and make recommendations, then they would have something to bring to the table that would really strengthen their argument because it would be based on sound data. She welcomed all to come to their June 20th conference.

President Fogel stated that the Commissioners wanted to hear from Ms. Cuerspeckman again to let them know the progress that she is making.

V. LEGISLATION

Discussion of Commission action on the following bills:

S.1843-Fair Pay Restoration Act- This bill was introduced on 07/20/2007 and introduced by Senator Edward Kennedy. S.1843 seeks to amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1964 to clarify that an unlawful practice occurs each time compensation is paid pursuant to a discriminatory compensation decision or other practice. Staff recommends support.

H.R. 4014-The Insurance Non-Discrimination for Survivors Act

This bill was introduced on 10/31/2007 by Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and has 58 co-sponsors. H.R. 4014 seeks to prohibit employers or insurance companies from basing hiring or coverage decisions on an individual's history of abuse.

Legislation Status: Referred to the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection on November 1, 2007.

Staff recommends support.

H.R. 4015-The Job Protection for Survivors Act-

This bill was introduced on 10/31/2007 by Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and has 59 co-sponsors. H.R. 4015 provides job protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Legislation Status: Referred to the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions on January 15, 2008.

Staff recommends support

H.R. 4016-The Unemployment Insurance for Survivors Act

This bill was as introduced on 10/31/2007 by Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and has 58 co-sponsors. H.R. 4016 provides unemployment insurance to those who are separated from their employment as a result of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. This measure provides unemployment benefits to individuals terminated due to circumstances stemming from domestic abuse (i.e. medicalization) while seeking new employment and a safe place to live. Legislation Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on October 31, 2007. Staff recommends support

Motion to support S.1843, H.R. 4014, H.R. 4015, and H.R. 4016 was unanimously approved.

California State Board of Education Policy Recommendation

A policy proposal is currently before the California Department of Education (CDE), which recommends that the State Board of Education (SBE) adopt the draft Health Education Content Standards for California. These standards comply with the California comprehensive sexuality education laws.

Staff recommends support

Commissioner Córdoba stated that she made the recommendation to the Commission as the Executive Director of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice. She stated that her organization is part of a statewide coalition that is supporting the proposed policy before the State Department of Education, a policy that is being considered by the State Board of Education. What is being considered is the adoption of Health Education Content Standards that govern all of the public schools in California from grades K-12. The coalition is urging the State Board of Education to adopt these standards so that they are reflective in particular of SB 71, which states that any school district that provides sexuality education must provide it in a way that is comprehensive, culturally and linguistically appropriate, medically accurate, etc. She strongly recommended support for the policy. If the Commission agrees to support the policy she will submit a letter on behalf of the Commission expressing support; it will be submitted to the State Board of Education tomorrow. The State Board is taking a vote on March 12th.

Motion to support the policy was unanimously approved.

President Fogel thanked Commission Córdoba for the work she has done on this issue. President Fogel informed everyone that legislation is considered at each meeting as it becomes relevant and input from the community is welcomed.

VII. DISCUSSION ON MATTERS FOR COMMISSION ACTION

A. Approval of Revised Commission By-Laws

Consideration of Revised By-Laws previously distributed to the Commissioners

President Fogel stated that the by-laws were discussed at the last Commission meeting. Commissioners received the revised copy with all the recommended changes.

Commission President Fogel gave an overview of the changes made:

- Elimination of the position of Executive Secretary
- Clarification of staff duties in terms of maintaining attendance records and reporting
- Sending all materials via e-mail and hard copies available upon request only
- Change Committee structure to have up to three Commissioners rather than requiring three Commissioners on a committee

Motion to adopt the revised Commission By-Laws was unanimously approved. Commission President Fogel thanked staff that worked on the by-laws.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Kellie Hawkins reported that the Commission's Budget Proposal will be submitted to City Council, Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, Office of the City Administrative Officer, and the Mayor's office. The Mayor's office has already seen a draft of the budget proposal. Ms. Hawkins stated that they will aggressively seek external funding collaborations with local universities and colleges as well as local community-based organizations. As stated at the last meeting, a grant writer will be starting March 15th and will be looking at 4 or 5 grants for the Commission. Ms. Hawkins will be traveling to Sacramento on March 20th for the day to attend the California Budget Project's Conference which will talk about how the State budget cuts will impact everyone across the board, particularly women. She will be meeting with the Executive Director of the State Commission on the Status of Women to brainstorm. She thanked Commissioners who attended the YWAR Healthy Relationships Conference, for their support.

Ms. Hawkins reported the following Staff activities:

- Participated in the Human Trafficking Awareness Press Conference held at the National Council of Jewish Women.
- Working with Councilmember Zine's office to coordinate the Pioneer Women Awards, which will take place March 28th at City Hall. A breakfast reception will begin at 8:30 a.m. Presentations will be held in Council Chambers. Commissioners will be receiving invitations for the event
- Working with the Attorney General's office. They are very interested in working together and bringing more information into the YWAR schools
- Human trafficking training is being conducted for City employees; it has been going very well
- Meeting the Fire Department's recruitment team every week to look at ways the Commission can have a voice on recruitment
- Looking at the pregnancy and child care policy protocols in the Fire Department as it relates to CEDAW
- Looking at safety in the workplace issues taken from the CEDAW gender analysis survey
- Updating the department's emergency plan. In case of a citywide emergency, to provide women with resources that relate to housing or any type of assistance they might need
- Working with Eve Sheedy tracking the domestic violence bills. The California Partnership has been a great resource for the Commission as it looks at what bills to monitor

Ms. Hawkins stated that she has asked staff to look at two or three policy recommendations and legislation to track from week to week. This is how the Commission can build its policy portfolio and support the Legislative Policy Statement. Commissioners received the report by Abby Leibman about the Commission. She stated that the report is a resource; it can make a difference with the work that the Commission does.

In April, the Commission and Peace Over Violence will be sponsoring self-defense classes. The Commission will also be working with the organization, Shields for Women's Self Defense, which will also be giving classes

Ms. Hawkins stated that a calendar of Commission events will be sent to the Commissioners.

VI. REPORT BY COMMISSIONERS REGARDING ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATED IN SINCE LAST MEETING

Commissioner Córdoba reported that she had the opportunity to do an interview on a morning show on Univision about the YWAR Conference. She stated that her organization is in the midst of its Reproductive Justice Leadership Training Program and just completed two regional trainings with young Latinas. They have trained about 55 young women on policy advocacy skills, communication skills, as well as what reproductive justice looks like for Latinas. They are going to be following up and taking them to Sacramento, which is related to the Commission's goal of enhancing the ability of young women to become advocates for issues that they really care about in their lives. She invited all in attendance to the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom annual advocacy day, called Reproductive Freedom on Day on March 25th. She stated that this is a great opportunity to connect

with advocates from all over the state on reproductive health issues. This year's theme highlights the impact of the proposed budget cuts on women's reproductive health and women's health overall and, in particular, the MediCal program.

Commissioner Buckland reported that currently at the Women's Law Center they are doing three Title XIX class actions involving girls' softball facilities. Also, she is doing a lot of television snippets about Women's History Month.

President Fogel reported that she has been working with the Los Angeles County Office of Women's Health. The Women's Health Summit is implementing recommendations that came out of that summit. They are looking at intersections, in particular, of cultural competency and how the medical profession is trained from frontline staff to physicians and nursing staff, to think about cultural competency, not only racial and ethnic diversity but women's disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity but how medical professionals are trained to listen to patients. She is planning a trip to Ethiopia and Rwanda and will be meeting with a women's organization that has teamed up with a law school in Kigali, Rwanda.

Commissioner Wilson reported that she attended the YWAR Conference. She stated that it was important for her to see what Commission programs look like. She commented that the energy and talent in the room was very striking. Commissioner Wilson stated that she was very busy during February, African American History Month. She received an honor by a group called Our Author Study Club that for the last 55 years has launched African American History Month; they launch the Month at City Hall. She received the Mary McCloud Bethune Award at their Black History Month Luncheon. She stated that Ms. Hawkins attended. She stated that at the end of March she is going to give a talk at the Organization of American Historians on a woman historian named Darlene Clark Hines, a black woman who founded Black Women's History as a field of study.

Commissioner Córdoba stated that as a follow up to the last meeting, she recalled that the Commissioners were going to identify the priorities areas for the policy agenda. President Fogel stated that Commissioners were going to finalize the platform of Commission policy objectives by the April meeting. She stated that it was her understanding that the Legislative Policy Committee was going to reorganize into the four areas and then bring them back to the April meeting. Ms. Hawkins will set up a meeting or conference call during the week of the 18th. President Fogel stated that she leaves on the March 25th and would like to meet before she leaves.

Ms. Hawkins thanked friends and staff for attending the meeting.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The April Commission meeting was moved to April 11 at 11:00 a.m.

Commission President Fogel announced that Wednesday, March 12, is the End Violence Against Women Conference at the California Endowment.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

President Fogel adjourned the meeting.