

# Vision & Voices

NEVADA WOMEN'S LOBBY **A VOICE FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES**

*The Organization Dealing with Issues Concerning Women, Children and Families*

## VIEW FROM THE LEDGE

Bobbie Gang, NWL Lobbyist

How sweet it is! 2005 was probably the most successful legislative session for NWL issues in our nine sessions of lobbying since 1989.

Our success is due to a large progressive majority in the Assembly and somewhat more receptive members of the Senate this session. It started with Governor Guinn's budget adding funding for so many needed services for women, children, the disabled, the elderly, and our schools. The state was flush with revenues and that helped move bills out of the money committees. The strong leadership of our friends in both houses moved women and children's issues through the session.

A great deal of our success is owed to the spirited, knowledgeable and committed women on our steering committees who worked to strategize and lobby our important issues. Over 160 bills were on our list. We worked with our partnering organizations, and took the lead on specific bills where needed.

This session had many twists and turns. First, property tax relief was resolved by the end of March; then attention turned to Nevada's rosy economic picture and how to use the surplus of funds. The tax rebate bill was controversial before the session started with a compromise reached in the last hours of the session. Following Governor Guinn's plan for \$300 million in rebates to citizens who paid 2004 automobile registrations, democrats pushed for and won more refund dollars for lower income people (\$75 minimum), and for seniors (\$75).

This session almost ended on time, but a few critical bills were still in play at 1 a.m. on July 7 when the session ended. A few hours later, they went into a special session to consider 12 bills including money bills. Weary legislators worked through the night, ending the special session just past noon.



Nevada Legislative Building, Carson City

## NWL LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

### Pharmacy

One of the most controversial bills this session was the Canadian Drug Importation Bill, supported by NWL, opposed by the pharmaceutical lobby, and threatened with a veto because the federal government outlaws importation. This bill was held up but was passed in the special session, with assurances that drugs imported from Canada are as safe as those purchased in the U.S. The state will

license Canadian pharmacies that meet Nevada standards and list them on the website of the NV Office of Consumer Health Assistance. Although the federal government considers importation of drugs illegal, they have not prosecuted individuals or states currently importing drugs. It will be up to the consumer to decide whether to use Canadian drugs. Savings can be as much as 50%.

NWL also worked with AARP to support a requirement that drug companies report large gifts they provide to physicians in marketing their drug products. The bill never moved out of the Senate Commerce Committee.

### Education

Full-day kindergarten was a high profile issue from the beginning with funding earmarked at \$72 million. This passed in the special session with only \$22 million provided for at-risk schools.

Statutes to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment in public schools were reinforced by requiring school districts to adopt methods for reporting incidents of harassment and intimidation, and to train school personnel. Assemblymen Parks and Hardy accomplished this by merging the best of their two bills.

### Children

Child support enforcement was high on NWL's list for active lobbying, and we supported two important bills:

- \$150,000 was appropriated for an audit of child support collection and enforcement.
- We lost a bill extending the sunset date for the Committee on Children, Youth and Families.

NWL strongly opposed a bill establishing joint custody as in the best interest of the child in child custody proceedings. In the end a compromise rejected the joint custody presumption but kept a list of factors judges must consider in determining best interest of the child.

Another bill adopted provides that children placed in state custody will be placed with siblings when possible.

Health

125,000 more pregnant women will qualify for Medicaid under a waiver authorized this session, allowing coverage for women up to 185% of poverty.

Funding for mental health services, triage centers and Mental Health Courts was requested in several bills, and more than \$14 million for these programs was approved in AB 175.

Domestic Violence

Legislation was passed prohibiting compromising of criminal charges when a civil case involves domestic violence cases.

The Nevada Council on Domestic Violence was created in AB219 which also requires an evaluation of domestic violence counseling programs in rural areas.

End of session "Pork bills" included funding for many programs NWL supported: an Office of Minority Health, a non-emergency referral phone system (2-1-1), Medicaid coverage for children aging out of foster care, an audit of child support enforcement, a pilot program to teach English to pre-K children, the review of complaints regarding health, safety, welfare and civil rights of children under care of a governmental entity or private facility. Funding for these programs alone amount to over \$2 million.

A complete listing of bills tracked by NWL is at [nevadawomenslobby.org](http://nevadawomenslobby.org).

**NWL'S LOBBYING TEAM**

Over the years, NWL has brought "women's issues" to the forefront at the legislature. NWL's lobbying has grown from a few issues around low income women to the more than 160 bills we tracked in 2005. Bobbie Gang has managed this transition with integrity, professional excellence, heart-felt passion and near super-human tenacity. She is a totally dedicated and very effective advocate for Nevada families.

This session, Bobbie enjoyed the able assistance and inspiring enthusiasm of interns Donna Becker and Andrea Wicker from UNR's School of Social Work. NWL is proud and deeply appreciative of the hard work and dedication of this outstanding lobbying team.

**SAYING "NO" TO YOUR Rx**

In the final days of the Nevada Legislature, an amendment prohibiting a pharmacist from refusing to fill valid prescriptions was cut from SB 163. The amendment addressed a growing trend among pharmacists to deny some prescriptions, including birth control, according to their personal beliefs.

Planned Parenthood Mar Monte lobbyist Pat Elzy says, "The amendment really came down to stopping one medical professional from having the legal ability to override the medical judgment of another professional. It allowed plenty of "outs" for a pharmacist who did not want to fill a script, but it did require that a concerned pharmacist consult with a prescribing physician instead of embarrassing or humiliating a patient at the pharmacy counter."

Currently, Nevada's pharmacy law is silent on a pharmacist's duty to fill a prescription, leaving it wide open for interpretation, and refusals could affect access to antibiotics and drugs for HIV/AIDS and other conditions.



If you or anyone you know has been denied health care services at a pharmacy, please contact

Pat Elzy at (775)688.5560 extension 277. The more refusal incidents documented, the better the argument for the 2006 legislature.

**EQUAL RIGHTS: ONE MORE BARRIER REMOVED**

A policy prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation was adopted in the special session. This was included in a bill to expand the powers of Nevada Equal Rights Commission (NERC).

As this bill was processed, the NERC provisions were severely limited, but NWL fought to keep the public policy statement regarding public accommodations. We worked with ACLU, and with the help of R&R lobbyists, to pass this policy statement. As the end of the session drew close, Senate Government Affairs Committee Chair Hardy stripped everything out of the bill except the public accommodations piece.

NWL's Principles of Unity direct us to work to remove barriers of race,

class, age, gender, religion, physical ability and sexual orientation.

Next session we want to move beyond the policy arena and add this prohibition to the public accommodations statute, providing enforcement and penalties for violations. A comment was made by a member affected by this policy: "I look forward to sitting at a table in which I can enjoy the appetizers, the entrée and the desserts of equality."

**NEVADA CHILD SUPPORT - TIME FOR A CHANGE**

Donna Becker, social work student and single mom, knows first-hand that Nevada's child support system is broken. As she told legislators in her testimony for AB 386, she is owed over \$45,000 in back child support and is receiving nothing.

Becker said Nevada courts issued a bench warrant in 2001 against her ex-husband's non-compliance, making him subject to arrest, but Becker can find no agency willing to take action. Potential enforcements through driver's license application, employers, credit restrictions and other means have brought no payments to help support her young son and daughter.

As Assemblywoman Barbara Buckley noted in her testimony supporting AB 386, new penalties for non-compliance have been added in the past decade, but with no increases in per case funding. Buckley also noted that Nevada's poor collection means a loss in federal dollars Nevada could be receiving.

Obviously something is wrong in Nevada when, as Becker reported, 65 percent of children are not receiving their court-ordered child support. She also noted:

- 135,921 Nevada children are supposed to receive child support
- \$889 million in child support is owed in Nevada

Although AB 386 did not pass, the audit of Nevada's child support enforcement will go forward, and Assemblywoman Buckley plans to assure that work on this system continues. NWL will be monitoring progress on the audit and improvements in Nevada's services to parents like Donna Becker.

## NEVADA'S FOSTER CARE

During this session a number of bills affected foster children. NWL celebrates the extension of medical coverage for Nevada's foster children to include the ages of 18 to 21 to assist them with their transition into adulthood. Additionally, AB 369 ensures a foster child's civil rights are not violated when they are incarcerated for psychiatric purposes.

Unfortunately, other bills did not fare as well. AB 43, the "foster children's bill of rights," died. It was interesting to listen to testimony against this bill. The idea that children might have "rights" seemed to be an alien concept to some. AB 35, giving foster children the right to have a comprehensive transition plan in place when leaving foster care, was amended to include only language enabling her/him to obtain a driver's license. Additionally, no money was allocated to help foster children with their college tuition.

Under AB 566, a bill introduced late in the session, a consultant will compile information, take and investigate complaints, and report to the next legislative session on facilities housing children in state custody. This will be the only outside oversight of these children, as the proposed continuation of the Legislative Committee on Children, Youth and Families failed when Senator Cegavske refused to bring it up for a vote in her Legislative Operations and Procedures Committee. That Committee was responsible for much of the progressive legislation introduced on behalf of foster children during this last session. Much credit goes to Assemblywomen Buckley, Giunchigliani, and Leslie; Senators Carlton, Mathews, and Wiener; and former Senator Rawson for their advocacy on behalf of foster children in the four years of this committee's existence. They set in motion a restructuring of service delivery to foster children in general as well as in the delivery of mental health services to children. It is most unfortunate that this committee will not continue.

The Department of Human Resources, which oversees child welfare and thus foster children, has a new name: The Department of Health and Human Services.

## U. S. SUPREME COURT APPOINTMENTS

Who would be our ideal U.S. Supreme Court appointee? At NWL we pondered this question and came back to the Principles of Unity guiding our organization. Yes, we would be glad to have justices who adhere to these principles:

□ □ □ □

...We are dedicated to equity, non-violence and reproductive choice. The lives of all people are inherently valuable and worthy of respect and dignity; therefore, we actively work to remove barriers of race, class, age, gender, religion, physical ability and sexual orientation.

Beginning with our own actions and language, we promote non-violence in all aspects of personal, economic and organizational relationships.

We support every women's right to reproductive choice and self-determination.

□ □ □ □

As our first female Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, steps down, it is clear she has not always followed these principles, but she has influenced some vital decisions. According to People for the American Way, "With Justice O'Connor providing the swing vote on critical 5-4 decisions regarding privacy, reproductive rights, affirmative action, government neutrality toward religion, and more, we cannot overstate the profound impact her replacement could have on the direction of American law and society.

The most we can hope for from President Bush would be a centrist like Justice O'Connor. The worst would be someone with extremist views who would roll back the advances that have been made in civil rights, civil liberties and religious freedom.

Justice O'Connor's replacement is the perfect example of how crucial one member of the Judiciary can be. It is important to remember that while the Supreme Court Justices are extremely influential, the power of the Judiciary extends to our own Nevada Supreme Court, and our District, Municipal and Justice Courts as well. We must not forget that since our Judges in Nevada are elected, it is our responsibility to remember their power as well.

## WOMEN IN LAS VEGAS HISTORY - 100 YEARS

The Triad Tower project celebrates the role of Las Vegas women in shaping the city's first 100 years, and is part of the Las Vegas Centennial Celebration this year. The exhibit can be viewed during business hours through August 24 at the Sprint building, 330 Valley View Blvd.

The four local women pictured here worked together to create the ceramic tower, sponsored by Women of Diversity Productions. Denise R. Duarte, lead artist, states, "The Triad Tower was created to highlight the contributions of women in our world. Women's impact encompasses the private and public aspects of life and includes our environment."

The three-paneled Tower is surrounded by the Wall of Women, featuring brief biographies and photos of 100 women who influenced Las Vegas history. Included there are NWL's lobbyist, Bobbie Gang, and steering committee members Lori Lipman Brown and Arley Ann Goris. For details, see [womenofdiversity.org](http://womenofdiversity.org).



Triad Tower project artists from left to right: Lois Dohra, Sofia Lenz, Denise R. Duarte and Cyd Madsen.

## CALENDAR

- August 20, Reno Gay Pride Parade, Join us at 9 am by the NWL banner in Wingfield Park to march to the Sands Hotel, NWL:(775)329-7560
- Through August 24, Women in Las Vegas History - the First 100 Years, Triad Tower and Wall of Women, Women of Diversity Productions, Sprint Building, 330 Valley View Blvd., womenofdiversity.org
- August 26, Women's Suffrage Day, watch for events
- September 26, 27, 28, Breaking Down Barriers: Building Community, Statewide Domestic Violence Conference, Reno, katy@nnadv.org, (775)828-1115

## NWL CONTACTS

### North

Vicki LoSasso ..... (775)329-7560

### South

Beth Naccarato ..... (702)366-9190

Voicemail ..... (702)615-2383

Email NVWL@aol.com

Web Site nevadawomenslobby.org

## IT'S NOT TOO LATE

You can still become a 2005 NWL member and help support the work of the Nevada Women's Lobby. We need you! Please use the form on the right.

Thank you to all of you who have already joined and helped us have such a successful state legislative session. As you can see, there is still more work to be done.



**WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE DAY:  
AUGUST 26**

## PLEASE JOIN US!

Send to: Nevada Women's Lobby  
Northern Region  
P.O. Box 5565, Reno, NV 89513  
Southern Region  
P.O. Box 46292, Las Vegas, NV 89114

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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### Dues:

- Individual \$40
- Living Lightly \$15
- Sustaining \$100
- Circle of Empowerment \$250
- Organization \$75



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- August 26, Women's Suffrage Day, watch for events
- September 17, 9:30 am, Property Tax Proposals, League of Women Voters Las Vegas, Las Vegas Social Club, breakfast and meeting, Stewart & Main; reservations required, lww@lwwiasvegasvalley.org
- September 24, NWL Membership Meeting, Las Vegas, save the date and watch for a flier announcing details
- September 26, 27, 28, Breaking Down Barriers: Building Community, Statewide Domestic Violence Conference, Reno, kathy@nnadv.org, (775)828-1115

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City \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (night) \_\_\_\_\_

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### Dues:

- Individual \$40
- Living Lightly \$15
- Sustaining \$100
- Circle of Empowerment \$250
- Organization \$75



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