

Our History & Accomplishments

Founding of the Commission 1964

- ❖ The Vermont Governor's Commission on the Status of Women was an outgrowth of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, established by President Kennedy in December, 1961
- ❖ In response, Vermont Governor Philip Hoff established the Vermont Governor's Commission on the Status of Women by executive order on November 23, 1964



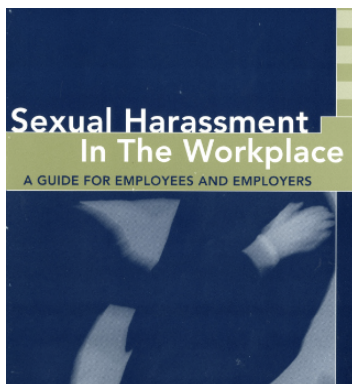
1970's Making Strides

- ❖ Successfully argues to lift restrictions prohibiting the names of wives from being listed in the telephone book. Agreement is reached that allows husbands and wives to be listed free of charge. Vermont is first in the nation to secure this right
- ❖ Successfully advocates for revocation of a Department of Education rule calling for suspension of pregnant girls from school
- ❖ Champions legislation amending Vermont's income tax law to allow childcare credits produces booklet to help police officers and hospitals respond in rape cases



Broadening the Scope 1980's

- ❖ Successfully advocates for passage of regulations requiring insurers provide maternity coverage on the same terms and conditions under which other illnesses are covered
- ❖ Distributes federal funds to domestic violence prevention and support programs throughout the state
- ❖ Holds "59-cent Hearings," public forums about Vermont's gender wage gap
- ❖ As a result of the Commission's work, law enforcement officials begin reporting rape as rape and not lewd and lascivious conduct, setting the stage for funding programs for rape victims
- ❖ Endorses civil rights for gay and lesbian Vermonters
- ❖ Becomes the Governor's Commission on Women through Governor Kunin's 1984 Executive Order



1990's Progress



- ❖ Effectively advocates for legislation requiring insurance companies provide coverage for mammograms
- ❖ Spearheads, along with the State Labor Council, an amendment to Vermont's Parental and Family Leave Act allowing for short-term family leave, the first such legislation in the country
- ❖ Helps secure passage of insurance coverage for prescription contraceptives
- ❖ Convenes Harassment in Education Task force to address harassment in schools, work that results in passage of a new law mandating schools develop policies regarding harassment of students. This policy, along with a resource directory, is distributed to every school in Vermont.
- ❖ Creates a model workplace sexual harassment policy in partnership with the Human Rights Commission, Attorney General's office and Department of Labor, and distributes 15,000 copies of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers and Employees, coauthored with the Attorney General's Office
- ❖ Conducts voter registration drives, develops and distributes voter educational materials, and holds leadership in public life panel discussions
- ❖ Convenes a task force that helps to pass regulations providing women enrolled in managed care insurance plans direct access to OB-GYN care without referral
- ❖ Takes a leadership role in passing the Gender Equity in Education Act
- ❖ Holds hearings about women's health, poverty, child care, and women in prison at the State House
- ❖ Develops and distributes materials to help women understand managed care health plans



The New Century 2000's

- ❖ Successfully advocates passage of the Equal Pay Act, ensuring employees who do the same job receive the same pay, regardless of gender
- ❖ Establishes the Vermont Women's History Project documenting the contributions Vermont women have made to our state's rich history
- ❖ Successfully advocates for passage of the Unlawful Employment Practices Act, ensuring that employees can disclose and discuss their wages without fear of discipline, discharge, or retaliation.
- ❖ Collaborates with the Vermont Attorney General's office and Vermont Business and Professional Women to create *Equal Pay: Your Rights and Responsibilities as an Employer and Employee*

- ❖ Works in collaboration with the Secretary of State's Office to establish the Safe At Home Address Confidentiality Program, a free mail forwarding service assisting victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who have relocated in an effort to keep their perpetrators from finding them
- ❖ Works in coalition with women's groups to pass legislation allowing emergency contraception to be dispensed by pharmacists without a prescription
- ❖ Successfully advocates for legislation that makes sexual assault by an immediate supervisor of a person under supervision of the correctional system a felony
- ❖ Ensures nursing mothers have a private place and time to express breast milk for a nursing child at their workplace through advocating for the Nursing Mothers in the Workplace law
- ❖ Conducts annual statewide e-surveys, *What Teen Girls Say*, of Vermont middle and high school girls in collaboration with the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains
- ❖ Votes to support civil unions and freedom to marry legislation
- ❖ Advocates for increasing child care subsidies for low-income Vermonters
- ❖ Rather than through Governor's Executive Order becomes an independent state agency, the Vermont Commission on Women under Act 142 in 2002
- ❖ Works with other children's advocacy groups to pass universal Pre-K legislation
- ❖ Participates in creation and serves as an advisor of the Vermont Women's Business Center, a partnership project of Capstone and SBA, providing training, access to financing, and support to more than 6,000 Vermont women starting up and/or growing their businesses



Work Continues

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- ❖ Publishes *Women in Public Life* report featuring data about women serving as lawmakers, on state boards and commissions, and in other leadership positions
- ❖ Produces *Workplace Laws Employees and Employers Need To Know*, flyers to educate employers and workers in Vermont about their rights and responsibilities under the new equal pay law
- ❖ Works in coalition with other groups to pass an Act Relating to Equal Pay. This law makes Vermont the first state in the country to guarantee employees' right to request flexible working arrangements.
- ❖ Coordinates and co-sponsors the *Incarcerated Women's Initiative, Then and Now: Vermont Summit on Women in Corrections*, examining issues facing women in corrections and ideas for next step policy recommendations
- ❖ Invites Vermont employers to sign on to the Vermont Equal Pay Compact to learn about and commit to concrete steps to help close the wage gap between men and women in our state
- ❖ In coalition with powerful partners Vermont Women's Fund and Vermont Works for Women, launches Change the Story, a multi-year initiative to align policy, program and philanthropy to significantly improve women's economic status
- ❖ Joins the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FaMLI) Coalition supporting time to bond with or care for a newborn, recover from serious long-term illness or injury, or care for family members with a serious long-term illness or injury
- ❖ Is recognized by the General Assembly for ability to provide effective and collaborative public education by an appropriation of \$125,000 to launch *Workplaces For All*, a campaign and website informing Vermonters about laws related to and best practices for preventing sexual harassment and workplace discrimination
- ❖ Responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting research and analysis to the Women's Legislative Caucus, and creating a data dashboard, *The COVID-19 Crisis and Vermont Women*, providing a COVID-19 resource page, getting the word out about economic recovery grants for women and minority owned businesses, and kicking off the 2021 legislative session by presenting an event examining how the pandemic impacts economic aspects of women's lives, especially for women of color in our state.

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- ❖ Files an amicus brief in Federal District Court in Vermont in the first case interpreting the Vermont Equal Pay Act
- ❖ Edits, updates and improves *The Legal Rights of Women in Vermont* handbook with the help of Vermont Law School Students
- ❖ Serves on the Governor's Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence task, the first of its kind in the nation
- ❖ Hosts three forums: Gender Identity and Harassment, Racial Equity, and Socio-Economic Class with the goal of developing equitable programs for Vermont youth as a member of the Vermont Girls Collaborative, a coalition of organizations that provide services and programs to Vermont girls
- ❖ Sponsors Lilly Ledbetter's speech at St. Michael's College
- ❖ Creates *Listen, Talk and Keep Talking*, tools and tips for parents when confronted with sexist language or imagery
- ❖ Partners with the Vermont Attorney General's office, the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence and other advocates to address domestic violence as a public health and safety issue in the workplace



*The Legal Rights
of Women in Vermont*
VERMONT COMMISSION ON WOMEN
VERMONT



ADVANCING WOMEN
POWERING THE ECONOMY

