



WLC working for State Family Leave Income Reforms to make Family Leave More Affordable

The WLC is working closely with the National Partnership for Women and Families, and Maryland Legislators, to advance state legislation that will expand eligibility for unemployment insurance to parents who take leave under the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act at the birth or adoption of a child. This effort is part of a nationwide campaign to make family leave more affordable.

Maryland is one of a handful of states that are close to introducing or

implementing this legislation. See HB983, SB167. We have recently received calls from California and Illinois where family advocates are anxious to learn more about Maryland's bills.

The FMLA requires employers to allow new parents to take up to twelve weeks of time off work to be with their new children. The FMLA does not, however, provide family leave income to offset lost income once any paid leave that the employee is permitted to use is

exhausted. The benefits of the FMLA are therefore limited to those who can afford to take leave-without-pay.

This cutting edge reform would be of benefit to thousands of Maryland's families – but would be extraordinarily beneficial to lower income women and families who would otherwise be unable to take advantage of the FMLA's parental leave provisions.

WLC Plans for "Girls Can Do Anything"

The Women's Law Center is hosting "Girls Can Do Anything," a panel discussion and breakfast for parents and girls to kick off "Take Our Daughters to Work Day®" on Thursday, April 27, 2000 from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. in the Charles Room, Belvedere Hotel, Baltimore.

One of this years' outstanding panelists will be Kim Knapp, Artemis Self-

Defense and Aikido. Kim is a 3rd degree blackbelt in Aikido, as well as a professor of Economics and Women's Studies. As we go to press, other speakers are pending confirmation.

Tickets for the breakfast are \$20 for WLC members and children, and \$25 for non-members. See page 11 for a registration form and more details.

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Message from the Executive Director

The WLC is a small non-profit that is active in policy matters at the state and local levels, as well as in the national arena. Among many initiatives, we are working closely with the National Partnership for Women and Families and state legislators to develop support for new legislation that would create an innovative mechanism to offset lost income for Marylanders who take advantage of the Family and Medical Leave Act's provisions. As the article in this newsletter describes, this legislation would benefit thousands of Maryland families and is on the cutting edge of a national reform effort.

We continue to provide an array of innovative legal services in five separate projects designed to both enhance and influence the concept of legal services for women and families. In FY 99, the WLC served over 6,350 clients.

Our work in the Maryland General Assembly gives us the opportunity to have a statewide impact in our reform efforts. Presently, our efforts concentrate on Family Law and women's policy issues. It is very gratifying to be able to tell you that legislators, as well as government and community leaders, have told me of their respect for the WLC's well reasoned positions in advocating for reform in law and policy.

The WLC is working hard to develop new funding mechanisms so that we can continue to innovate and influence the development of Maryland's laws and policies, even when our positions may not be consistent with the politics of the moment. This fall the WLC launched its Women's Law Center of Maryland Endowment

Fund to enhance and support important new work on policy issues affecting women.

We are also working to create a closer connection with our members and to reach out to new members. Thank you for your encouragement, participation, and support. Thanks to your many and diverse contributions, the Women's Law Center of Maryland is making Maryland a better place for women and families.

WLC Welcomes...

Jessica Morgan joined WLC in October as the Operations Manager, responsible for handling financial operations, membership, events, information systems, and general operations. Jessica has a B.A. in Political Science from UMBC. She previously worked as the Assistant Executive Director of the MD Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and is a Board Member of the Baltimore Chapter of NOW.

Gwen Lubbert is our newest staff attorney, joining the WLC in January. During December, Gwen worked with us as a contract attorney on some of our direct service projects. Gwen is working primarily in the Protective Order and Advocacy Representation Project and also staffing some of our direct service projects. Gwen is a recent honors graduate of UB Law School.

Tara Boyd joined the WLC in February as our new Administrative Assistant. Tara is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Women's Studies at Towson University at night and plans to pursue a law degree in the future. Tara is a graduate of UMBC and has worked as a research assistant with the Baltimore Women's Health Study and has intern experience in public policy.

WLC Works with Baltimore County Grandmother to Have Grandson Enrolled in School

Catherine Brennan, then Kaufman Center Staff Attorney, assisted a Baltimore County woman with her fight to enroll her grandson in Baltimore County Public Schools. The woman – who has raised her 13-year-old grandson for most of his life – contacted the Women’s Law Center after the Baltimore County Public School system decided that it would not allow her grandson to enroll. BCPS made this decision because the grandmother did not have legal custody of her grandson.

With the WLC’s assistance, the grandmother presented a hardship case for enrollment to BCPS. She

highlighted the fact that her grandson has lived with her for most of his life, had attended BCPS for years and had a special educational program that would be disrupted if he were not enrolled. She also pointed to the fact that his mother’s last known address was her Baltimore County address. The BCPS finally relented, and allowed the child to enroll just before school began in August.

Under BCPS guidelines, a child who is domiciled with her or his parent or guardian in Baltimore County can attend BCPS. A “nonresident”

student, a child who is domiciled with her or his parent or guardian outside of Baltimore County, cannot attend BCPS without written permission from the superintendent or his designee. Such a waiver of the usual school policy can be granted in certain situations including for a child in a Baltimore County foster home or residential institution, a foreign student in an approved school exchange program with the proper visa, or a child who lives with a friend or relative “as a result of a serious family hardship.” BCPS granted the child a hardship waiver.

The following is a paid advertisement.

VOTE RIGHT ON MARCH 7TH

VOTE FOR JUDGE KATHLEEN COX & JUDGE ALEXANDER WRIGHT, JR. CIRCUIT COURT FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

We need your help in this contested race, which raises important concerns about judicial elections. Our opponent’s campaign recently urged voters not to support the “Sitting Judges,” without ever addressing their credentials or their performance on the job. Rather, voters are urged to vote against the Governor’s appointees, falsely claiming:

“The Governor has been widely criticized for routinely selecting judges based on political affiliation and other improper factors having nothing to do with experience and ability.”

Strong, concerted support for Judges Cox and Wright is needed to combat this type of inaccurate and negative campaigning. If you can help in any way (polls, signs, getting out the vote), please call and volunteer at (410) 683-8376. REMEMBER TO VOTE!

Welcome New Members

Jen Albany

Cathy Brennan

Angela Eaves

Janet Eveland

Michael Green

Suzanne Hood

Mary Kramer

Lois Fenner McBride

Stephanie Rice Davis

Kathleen Shemer

Everett Sillers

Yolanda Sonnier

Michael Spodak

Kim Ward

Caren Williams

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Suzanne Farace

Michael Green

Roann Nichols

Margaret Oliver

Cecelia Paizs

Barbara Baer Waxman

Ted & Mary Jo Wiese

Kathleen Shemer

Over \$100 Donors

Margaret Bernstein

Kristine Howanski

Jamey Weitzman

Annual Meeting Inspirational for All in Attendance: Chief Judge Bell and Kathleen Shemer Honored

This year's Annual Meeting was a rewarding and inspiring experience for all in attendance – a combination celebration and tribute, reunion, and networking meeting for WLC members and friends, old and new.

The Honorable Robert M. Bell received the Seventh Annual Rosalyn B. Bell Award for his outstanding achievements in Family Law. Judge Bell, the Chief Judge of Maryland's highest court, was introduced by Professor Barbara A. Babb of the University of Baltimore School of Law. Babb described Chief Judge Bell's visionary and courageous leadership in

implementing the Family Courts in four of Maryland's largest jurisdictions.

Kathleen F. Shemer received the Fourteenth Dorothy Beatty Memorial Award for her many contributions to advancing women's rights while she served as the Executive Director of the WLC for over 16 years. Former Board member Claire Smearman introduced Shemer, describing Kathleen's extraordinary commitment and determination, and many groundbreaking accomplishments, in leading the WLC through much of the eighties and nineties.

WLC Opens Montgomery County Protective Order Project in Partnership with House of Ruth and the AOC

The newest office of the Protective Order Advocacy and Representation Project, dubbed Domestic Violence Assistance or DVA, has opened in Montgomery County. DVA is staffed by Women's Law Center Supervising Attorney Andrea Levy, a veteran of the POARP Office in the Baltimore City Circuit Court, and Legal Advocate Maricruz Bonfante, who speaks both English and Spanish fluently, and is a staff member from the House of Ruth.

The project is housed

in the new Family Division offices in the Montgomery County Circuit Court. In addition to the Family Division staff, DVA works closely with staff throughout the courthouse including staff from the Sheriff's, State's Attorney, and Legal Aid offices.

During its initial months of operation, Andrea and Mari have had an exceptionally high case load. This is attributed to strong planning and outreach as well as to the great need for protective order representation.

Women's Law Center of MD Joins with Consumer Groups to Expose Payday Lender's Practices

The Women's Law Center of MD joined with MaryPIRG (Maryland Public Interest Research Group) and national groups to document the predatory lending practices of payday lenders in Maryland. Research conducted by the WLC demonstrated that Maryland's payday lenders charge interest rates of 415% to 858% APR. These interest rates violate Maryland's usury laws according to a recent Attorney General's opinion. When asked about their lending rates, payday lenders typically gave bi-weekly lending rates rather than the annual percentage rate (APR), thus obfuscating the incredibly high cost of their loans for consumers.

Payday lenders exploit low income individuals and

families who have limited access to basic banking services. These individuals and families can quickly become trapped in perpetual debt. The Women's Law Center research is included in the report entitled "**Show Me the Money**", which was released on February 1, 2000 by U.S. PIRG and the Consumer Federation of America. At the press conference held to announce the report's publication, Denise Davis, WLC Executive Director, joined representatives of statewide and national consumer groups to urge that usury laws be enforced against payday lenders. Meanwhile, the payday lending industry is reportedly seeking legislation that would exempt them from Maryland's usury laws.

Show Your Clients You Care— With WLC Tribute and Memorial Cards

My clients matter to me as people as well as customers—and I want them to know that! I have found the perfect way to communicate that message by sending the Women's Law Center's Tribute and Memorial cards. Whether its cause for celebration or sadness, I send a card to my clients letting them know that I have made a contribution to the Women's Law Center in their honor.

The contribution is built right in to the cost of the box of cards, so no further check writing or mailing is necessary. I strongly recommend these attractive cards to all of the WLC's professional businesswomen and men.

Liz Caplan, C.P.A.
WLC Treasurer
Caplan and Company, P.A.

The WLC Endowment is off to a good start, thanks to the following generous contributions!

Under \$100

*Laila Atallah
Paul Blumental
Winifred Borden
Betsy Cunningham
Karen Czapanskiy
Kathleen Shemer
Julie Sweeney
Mary Kim Ward
Phyllis Winston*

\$100 and up

*Linda Barclay
Breezy Bishop
Jennifer Burdick
Marianna Burt
Louise Carwell
Marla Hollandsworth
Jessica Kaufman
Dorothy Lennig
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Katherine Madzellan
Dolores Maminski
John & Clare Miller
Jaqueline Mintz
Shirley Parry
Ria Rochvarg
Lynn Sassin & Nate Braverman
Joan Sills
Gusty Taler
Gwen Tromley
Jane Wilson*

\$500 and up

*Peter Angelos
Elizabeth Caplan
Denise Davis & Jeanne Bilanin
Kathleen O'Ferrall Friedman
Jane Murphy
Sally Gold & Elliot Zulver
Jeannette Karpay*

\$1,000 and up

*Susan Elgin
John & Carol Fantom
Nancy Gregor
Francine Krumholz
Claire Smearman
Barbara & Michael Spodak*

Legislative Update from Annapolis

CIVIL RIGHTS

HB 47 - Antidiscrimination Act

Prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation with regard to public accommodations, housing, and employment; making specified remedies and procedures regarding discrimination applicable to discrimination based on sexual orientation; making specified exemptions from specified provisions of law that prohibit specified discrimination applicable to provisions of the Antidiscrimination Act regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation; and defining sexual orientation.

HB 875 - Crimes - Gender and Sexual Orientation Crimes - Prohibitions

Prohibiting a person from harassing or committing crimes against another person or institution, or damaging the property of another person or institution, because of that person's gender or sexual orientation or because of the institution's contacts or associations with a person or group of a particular gender or sexual orientation; defining the terms harass and sexual orientation; etc.

SB 374/HB 1099 - Divorce and Annulment - Removal of Religious Barriers to Remarriage

Requiring a party who files a complaint or counter-complaint for an absolute divorce or annulment to file, on the request of the other party, an affidavit stating that the affiant has taken all steps solely within the affiant's control to remove all religious barriers to remarriage by the other party; and prohibiting a court, if an affidavit is requested, from entering a decree for an absolute divorce or annulment until the affidavit is filed.

HB 919 - Protection of Marriages

Specifying that a marriage between two consenting adults is valid in the

State; and providing for the construction of the Act.

HB 225 - Law Enforcement Officers - Vehicle Laws - Race-Based Traffic Stops

Requiring that information concerning an individual's race be included on the individual's driver's license; requiring law enforcement agencies to report information on traffic stops to the Attorney General; requiring the Attorney General to report on traffic stops and race to the General Assembly, the Governor, and law enforcement agencies; requiring law enforcement agencies to adopt policies regarding race-based traffic stops; authorizing the Governor to withhold State funds from law enforcement agencies; etc.

Preliminary analysis: local government mandate

HB 226 - Law Enforcement Officers - Racial Profiling

Prohibiting a law enforcement officer from using race or ethnicity as the sole reason to initiate a criminal investigation; creating a civil penalty for the Act; etc.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

SB 429 - Abortion After Viability - Prohibition - Penalties

Prohibiting the performance of postviability abortions unless necessary to save the life of the mother; and establishing penalties for performing postviability abortions.

SB 758 - Abortion - Minors - Parental Notification

Prohibiting a physician from performing abortions on specified minors until 48 hours after the physician gives written notice to the minor's parent or guardian; authorizing a physician to perform abortions on minors under specified circumstances without giving notice to the minor's parent or guardian; authorizing minors to seek a waiver

of the parental notification requirement from a judge in the Family Law Division of a circuit court of Maryland; prohibiting a circuit court of Maryland from imposing any filing fees on minors; etc.

HB 891- Parental Rights Act of 2000

Altering specified conditions, under which a minor has the same capacity as an adult to consent to medical treatment, to make them apply to those minors over the age of 15 years; repealing a specified exception to a provision of law that authorizes an attending physician or specified medical staff to give specified information to specified persons about treatment needed by or provided to specified minors; etc.

HB 1127 - Maryland Aborted Children Exploitation Prevention Act

Prohibiting a person from engaging or participating in the exploitation of aborted children; prohibiting the use of specified facilities for the exploitation of aborted children; prohibiting the use of specified funds for the exploitation of aborted children; establishing a cause of action for violation of the Act; defining specified terms; making the provisions of the Act severable; and generally relating to exploitation of aborted children.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

HB 1233 - Task Force to Study Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Treatment

Establishing a Task Force to Study Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Treatment; specifying the duties of the Task Force; providing for the membership and appointment of the Task Force; providing for staffing of the Task Force; requiring the Task Force to report to the General Assembly on or before December 31, 2000; and providing for the termination of the Act.

Legislative Update from Annapolis

HB 279/SB 211- Responsible Gun Safety Act of 2000

Smart gun legislation -- Prohibiting a firearms dealer from selling, renting, or transferring in the State any handgun manufactured after December 31, 2001, unless the handgun has an integrated mechanical safety device or other incorporated design technology designed to prevent children and other unauthorized users from discharging the handgun; establishing a Commission on Personalized Handgun Technology; establishing a Firearms Violence Reduction Council; etc.

HB 606/SB 675 - Domestic Violence - Protective Order - Surrender of Firearms

Altering a protective order for relief from abuse, that orders a respondent to surrender to law enforcement authorities any firearm in the respondent's possession for the duration of the protective order, to require the immediate surrender of the firearm; requiring a court to determine whether a respondent owns or possesses a firearm at each protective order hearing; etc.

SB 224 - Family Law - Domestic Violence - Possession of Firearms

Requiring the surrender to law enforcement authorities of firearms in a respondent's possession on issuance of an ex parte order and on issuance of a protective order; requiring law enforcement authorities to take specified actions upon the issuance of an ex parte order and a protective order; requiring a law enforcement officer to take specified actions upon the expiration of an ex parte order and a protective order; and providing immunity from liability for law enforcement authorities related to storage of the firearm. Preliminary analysis: local government mandate

SB 781/HB 595 - Domestic Violence - Temporary Ex Parte Order - Additional Relief

Authorizing a court in an ex parte proceeding for relief from abuse to order the respondent to surrender particular firearms under specified circumstances; authorizing a court in an ex parte proceeding to order the respondent to refrain from possessing any firearms under specified circumstances; requiring a law enforcement officer to provide specified information to a respondent when a firearm is surrendered and to provide for the safe storage of the firearm; etc. Preliminary analysis: local government mandate

SB 155 - Sexual Offenses - Polygraph Examination of Alleged Victims - Prohibited

Prohibiting persons involved in investigations or prosecutions of specified sexual offenses from requiring alleged victims of the offenses to submit to a polygraph examination; providing exceptions for alleged victims who request taking a polygraph examination or who previously made a specified false statement, report, or complaint regarding specified offenses; defining terms; etc.

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

HB 524 - Banking Institutions - Basic Banking Accounts and Basic Share Draft Accounts

Requiring specified banking institutions to make low cost banking services available to consumers by offering a basic banking account or a basic share draft account; establishing the rules, terms, conditions, and fees of the accounts; providing that an account holder who violates a specified condition is subject to a specified fine; authorizing a banking institution to require specified information from account holders; authorizing a banking institution to require account holders to comply

with specified rules; etc.

HB 312 - Family Law - Child Support - Secondary Education

Establishing that a child support order for a child who has attained the age of majority and is enrolled in secondary school shall continue in effect until the child graduates from or is no longer enrolled in secondary school, marries, or attains the age of 19; etc.

SB 153 - Family Law - Child Support

Requiring that an order awarding child support remain in effect until the child marries or attains the age of 18 years; establishing a specified exception for an unmarried child who is enrolled in at least 4 units of credit in a program at a secondary school, or in an alternative program at an accredited college or an approved vocational, technical, or postsecondary school; permitting a court to modify child support awards as circumstances require; etc.

OTHER BILLS TO WATCH

HB983/SB167 - Unemployment Insurance Eligibility for Benefits - Birth or Adoption of Child

HB 396 - Family Law - Child Support Guidelines

HB 441 - Peace Orders - Eligibility

HB 522 - Family Law - Joint Legal Custody

HB 87 - Family Law - Alimony - Grounds for Divorce

HB 678/SB 318 - Child Support Arrearage - Distraint, Seizure, and Sale of Obligor's Vehicle

HB 679 - Child Support Guidelines - Tutoring and Gifted and Talented Programs

WLC Addresses Eastern Shore Conference on Domestic Violence

Cathy Brennan, former Kaufman Center Staff Attorney, represented the WLC when she spoke to about 30 participants of the “*Domestic Violence in the Workplace Conference*” sponsored by the Mid-Shore Council Against Domestic Violence and the Women’s Law Center of Maryland. Brennan’s presentation – **Legal Issues for Employers** – focused on how employers should consider and evaluate domestic violence from a legal perspective, including employee confidentiality, enforcement of protective orders on the job, termination of the domestic violence victim and sex discrimination, employer liability, sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, security arrangements, sensitivity training, and recruiting and hiring domestic violence survivors.

One part of the presentation that generated discussion was the issue of termination of the domestic violence victim and sex discrimination. “According to most statistics, victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly female, while perpetrators are overwhelmingly male,” Brennan said. “Employers that have a blanket policy of terminating victims of domestic violence may face

liability under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”

Title VII prohibits workplace discrimination motivated by the sex of the employee. An employee may prove her case under Title VII using a theory of liability that the employer policy to terminate domestic violence victims has a disparate impact on women. In addition to this theory of liability, Title VII’s prohibition against sexual harassment may create liability for employers, particularly where a fellow employee is the abuser.

The WLC seeks members to sit on its Judicial Selections Committee. The Committee interviews candidates for the bench at the trial and appellate level and submits recommendations to the local judicial nominating commissions and to the Governor. As a member of the Committee, you will have the opportunity to have an impact on the quality of the State’s judges and ensure their awareness of issues facing women.

The Committee meets upon the request of applicants when positions become available. Interviews are typically conducted in Baltimore City on weekday evenings.

To be a member of the Judicial Selections Committee, you must be a lawyer, a member of the WLC, and committed to its purposes and principles, and you must attend Committee meetings. Call Jackie Mintz (410-576-6562) or Wendy Kronmiller (410-757-

WLC Creates New Endowment for Women’s Policy Reform

This fall, the Women’s Law Center Board of Trustees created the **Women’s Law Center of Maryland Endowment Fund**. The Board dedicated the creation of the fund to Kathleen Shemer, the WLC’s former Executive Director who recently left her position after 16 years of service. Members and friends attended the kick off event held at the home of Board member Barbara Spodak and her husband Michael on September 9, 1999. Members have contributed and pledged generously on September 9 and as part of their annual WLC membership contributions. The Board has set an ambitious goal to raise \$1,000,000 for the fund over the next two years and is

developing a strategic fundraising plan.

The Women’s Law Center has long sought to find new ways to fund policy reform efforts aimed at advancing women’s rights into the new century. The WLC Endowment Fund will underwrite the WLC’s efforts to innovate and influence the development of laws and policies affecting women, even when our positions may not be consistent with the politics or funding priorities of the moment. “We all know that the political and funding climates can change. The WLC Endowment will assure there will be a voice for fairness for Maryland women even in difficult times”, said WLC Board esident Marla Hollandsworth.

Women's Law Center Joins NOW to Fight Father's Rights Bill

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. joined the National Organization for Women to urge Maryland members of Congress to vote against The Fathers Count Act of 1999.

The bill, H.R. 3073, would funnel millions of dollars over the next five years to local and national organizations, many of them likely to be father's rights groups and right wing religious organizations. For example, promoting marriage is a required part of eligible program services. This bill would have a devastating effect on women and children because in some cases, marriage to a violent or irresponsible person is what caused the mom and kids to be in poverty to begin with – yet only groups who will actively pursue marriage as a goal in itself can receive and use these federal funds to promote their agenda. In recent news, Vice President Gore has endorsed most of the provisions of the bill.

This bill comes at a time when welfare-to-work programs are both limited and underfunded in helping custodial parents become economically independent so they can support their children. The rationale seems weak for prioritizing federal assistance to non-custodial parents when the need is far greater for custodial parents, although either could qualify for help under recent revisions to the bill. The overwhelming majority (84%) of single-headed households with children under 18 are maintained by women.

The Fathers Count Act would authorize over \$150 million in grants to organizations that will do all three of the following:
“(1) promote marriage through counseling, mentoring, disseminating information about the advantages of marriage, enhancing relationship skills, teaching how to control aggressive behavior, and other methods;
(2) promote successful parenting through counseling, mentoring, disseminating information about good parenting practices, training

parents in money management, encouraging child support payments, encouraging regular visitation between fathers and their children, and other methods; and (3) help fathers and their families avoid or leave cash welfare . . . And improve their economic status by providing work first services, job search, job training, subsidized employment, career-advancing education, job retention, job enhancement, and other methods.”

The Fathers Count Act could direct over \$150 million in federal dollars to private organizations which have been leaders in the so-called men's rights movement. The “father's rights” movement refers to loosely knit organizations which have sprung up in the wake of tougher enforcement of child support orders and whose goals are to remove physical custody from the mother and award custody to the father (thereby negating his child support obligations). Unfortunately, custody is sometimes awarded to parents who are documented batterers or child sexual abusers. The National Organization for Women receives thousands of letters and calls from women who have lost custody, often after blatant violations of due process, false allegations and biased testimony. Locally, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. hears case after case in which women lose custody of their children to a father who simply did not want to pay child support.

These men's groups have organized effectively at the national level to convince key members of Congress and Vice President Gore, who has taken a leadership role on this issue, that they are respectable and responsible entities. Several national “fatherhood” organizations have close ties to fathers' rights groups and have among their membership many extremist activists. These activists maintain numerous websites and chat rooms on the Internet which spout hatred towards women and counsel men on how to get out of child support obligations.

The Fathers' Count Act purports to help poor under- and unemployed fathers -- many of whom may be absent parents -- by providing parenting training, maintaining child/access visitation centers, counseling on how to control aggression and anger, become a better marriage partner, improve their credit records, and meet child support obligations. Undoubtedly, these are worthy goals. A question remains, though, whether any of the men's custody groups who have been instrumental in writing this legislation are appropriate entities to provide such services. It is doubtful that they would be effective counselors in assisting fathers on how to meet child support requirements.

H.R. 3073 demonstrates insufficient appreciation of the pervasive problem of domestic violence, as Congress, in promoting marriage (as the bill specifies), may place more women and children at risk. Right wing religious groups backing this bill have an agenda of promoting marriage at all costs, regardless of the risks some marriages would pose to the safety of women and children.

Another provision in the bill would also allow a state to cancel child support arrearages in certain situations; other aspects could undermine state efforts to collect past due child support payments. Other changes to state and federal child support enforcement programs need to be more carefully evaluated.

In addition to these provisions that harm women and children, H.R. 3073 may not survive a constitutional challenge for gender discrimination. Even though a section was added -- at the request of women's groups -- to say that both men and women are eligible to receive assistance, every other aspect of the Fathers Count Act indicates that programs are intended to help only men. Any bill tying federal benefits to gender would be unconstitutional as it violates equal protection guarantees

WLC Co-Sponsors Anti-Violence Rally

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. co-sponsored a rally on October 17 to commemorate the thousands of women, people of color, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered people assaulted each year in the United States and abroad.

The National and International Day Against Hate rally, co-sponsored with the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Baltimore, Inc., and Baltimore and Maryland NOW, comes one year after the brutal slaying of college student Matthew Shepard.

"Anti-gay hate crimes came to the forefront of America's consciousness with the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard," said GLCCB President Everett Sillers. "Unfortunately, that awareness has done nothing to stem the tide of violence against LGBT communities, as well as women and communities of color."

According to statistics produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigations, crimes against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are a serious national problem. In 1996, anti-gay hate crimes accounted for 11.6 percent of all hate crimes statistics collected, up from 8.9 percent in 1991. The number of anti-gay hate crimes reported suggests an unacceptable amount of bias-motivated violence against gays and lesbians, said then WLC Staff Attorney, Cathy Brennan, who spoke at the rally. "The rally will give advocates an opportunity to come together and take a

stand against violence," she said.

Brennan noted that the Hate Crimes Act introduced in 1999 by Delegate Sandy Rosenberg, who spoke at the October 17 rally, would have provided enhanced penalties for crimes motivated by anti-gay or anti-woman bias, but that the House Judiciary Committee, which considered the bill, stripped the bill of the language meant to cover gender.

"There is a dearth of information regarding gender-based hate crimes," Brennan said. In a study by the Center for Women Policy Studies, it concluded that women often are victims of crime because they are women and the pervasiveness of such violence does not make it less a hate crime. The federal hate crimes statute does not include gender, and there are no federal statistics that reflect the number of gender-based hate crimes. "The General Assembly needs to pass a law that will

punish anti-woman bias," Brennan said.

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, an umbrella for the main local and state organizations serving victims of anti-gay hate crimes, 2,529 reported incidents of hate crimes in 14 major cities across the United States were recorded in 1996. This represents a 6 percent increase in hate crimes reported from 1995.

FEMINIST EXPO 2000

FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

MARCH 31 - APRIL 2, 2000

AT THE STATE-OF-THE-ART

BALTIMORE CONVENTION CENTER

ON THE INNER HARBOR IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

- ◆ Thousands of feminists of all ages.
- ◆ More than 350 speakers, celebrities and performers.
- ◆ Hundreds of delegations from around the world—*Spanish and French translations in selected sessions.*
- ◆ Innovative Exhibit Hall showcasing hundreds of women's organizations.
- ◆ Book signings by your favorite feminist authors.
- ◆ Co-sponsored by more than 420 organizations—and growing.

"You deserve to be there."

—Ellie Smeal



Produced and organized by the
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Women's Law Center Merchandise

Order Form

WLC T-Shirts

The front pocket displays the WLC logo and the back reads, "Advocates for Women and Children since 1971. Children's T-shirts read, "Small Injustices Count Too!" Adult shirts come in beige with a purple design, or purple with a white design. Children's shirts are purple with white printing. Adult shirts are on sale for \$15.00 each and children's are on sale for \$10.00 each. Adult sizes are M, L, and XL. Kids sizes are 6-8, 10-12, 14-16

WLC Memorial and Tribute Cards

The WLC offers beautiful tribute and memorial cards. The message in the cards expresses that the WLC is the grateful recipient of a donation from you to honor the memorial event. Boxed sets of 10 cards are available for \$30. The box gives you the convenience of having the cards on hand as they are needed. See *testimonial article on page 5 of this newsletter.*

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Item	Color	Size	Amount	Enclosed
Adult T-shirt	_____	_____	\$15 each	\$_____
Child T-shirt	_____	_____	\$10 each	\$_____
Tribute/Memorial Cards	_____	_____	\$30 each	\$_____
Total Enclosed				\$_____

"Girls Can Do Anything" Breakfast

Registration Form

Name: _____
Organization/Firm: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
List Additional Registrants for Nametags: _____

Ticket and Sponsor Costs	Amount	Enclosed
WLC Member Parent and Children	\$20 each	\$_____
Non-member Parent and Children	\$25 each	\$_____
Tables of Ten	\$225	\$_____
I want to make a contribution to sponsor scholarships for children to attend		\$_____

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.
305 W. Chesapeake Avenue
Suite 201
Baltimore, MD 21204

**Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Baltimore, MD
Permit No. 6257**

Save the Date!

April 27, 2000

7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m
Belvedere Hotel

Girls Can Do Anything Annual Breakfast

An annual panel discussion and breakfast for girls sponsored
by The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.
to kick off

Take Our Daughters to Work Day®

Return your registrations to: WLC, 305 W. Chesapeake Avenue, #201, Towson, MD 21204
See article on cover for details. Registration forms are located on page 11.