

LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

Jean Bryant, Chair

1. CEDAW: Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

A CEDAW Resolution was submitted to and approved at the 2006 District 11 Conference. The document prepared by Zonta International in March 2003 was disseminated to District 11 clubs, with instructions about where Zontians could get more information about CEDAW.

2. ERA: Equal Rights Amendment

An ERA Resolution sponsored by Zonta Club of Tallahassee to District 11 was submitted to and approved at the 2006 District 11 Conference.

District Efforts:

January 2007: All District 11 Zonta clubs were sent suggestions regarding what individual clubs could do to mount an ERA ratification effort in their state. The email included information about www.4ERA.org & www.equalrightsamendment.org, web sites that have information about the ERA and resources that members can use in their advocacy. Clubs were urged to sign up with 4ERA to obtain regular updates about the ERA effort. The following compilations were disseminated to clubs: basic facts about the ERA; quotations that can be used to justify the ERA; and an ERA press release announcing the unanimous adoption of the ERA resolution by delegates to the District Conference in September 2006. Clubs were urged to adopt their own resolutions and to build coalitions with other groups to support the ratification effort.

March 2007: District 11 clubs were sent a script and list of "talking points" that members could use to call legislators in their states (prepared by the Chair of Miami Commission on the Status of Women) and a fact sheet about the ERA. I learned of several individuals who were in contact with the Atlanta-based 4ERA organization, but have not had feedback from clubs, except for some in Florida. The Press Release regarding District 11's support for the ERA was sent to www.4ERA for posting on its website.

Florida ERA Efforts: All Florida clubs were sent several updates regarding the status of the ERA bills in the Senate and House and suggestions/requests for specific actions. Lists of key Senators and Representatives with contact information for each and identification of past and present co-sponsors were email as well. I gave presentations on the ERA to the Zonta Club of Jacksonville and to an inter-city meeting in Sarasota, sponsored by the Sarasota Zonta Club. I shared ERA information and advocacy tips with a Zontian who led an ERA session at Area 6 meeting.

RESULTS: Opponents blocked committee hearings, thus killing both House and Senate bills.

3. Violence Against Women: Florida Bill to Combat Female Genital Mutilation:

At the request of the Florida Senator who has sponsored the ERA bills in the Senate and House the past two sessions, we sent out a quick request for Florida Zontians to call or email the appropriate House committee chairs who had not given the bill a hearing.

RESULT: Success!!!! Members responded, and both the House and Senate passed the bill HB1441 and SB 894 were approved and the Governor signed the bill into law in June!

IVAWA – International Violence Against Women Act

Disseminated information about the IVAWA and attachments received from Elba Pereyra, Zonta International Legislative and Awareness and Advocacy chair to ALL District 11 clubs in June, 2007. Forwarded excellent questions and suggestions about IVAWA strategy from Darla Letourneau, Sanibel-Captiva club, to Elba.

RESULT: Elba sent us information about the sponsors (ZI is not a co-sponsor as of now) and their contact information. As soon as we have more information, we can share that with District clubs.

PLANS: I hope to improve communication about ERA and CEDAW among District clubs by creating a questionnaire that individual clubs can use to update me on their participation (or lack thereof) in the CEDAW or ERA effort, reasons for the degree of their involvement, and suggestions/requests for information, etc. that clubs feel they need.