

THE WOMEN'S LAW CENTER OF MARYLAND, INC.

DIRECT SERVICES

EDUCATION

ADVOCACY

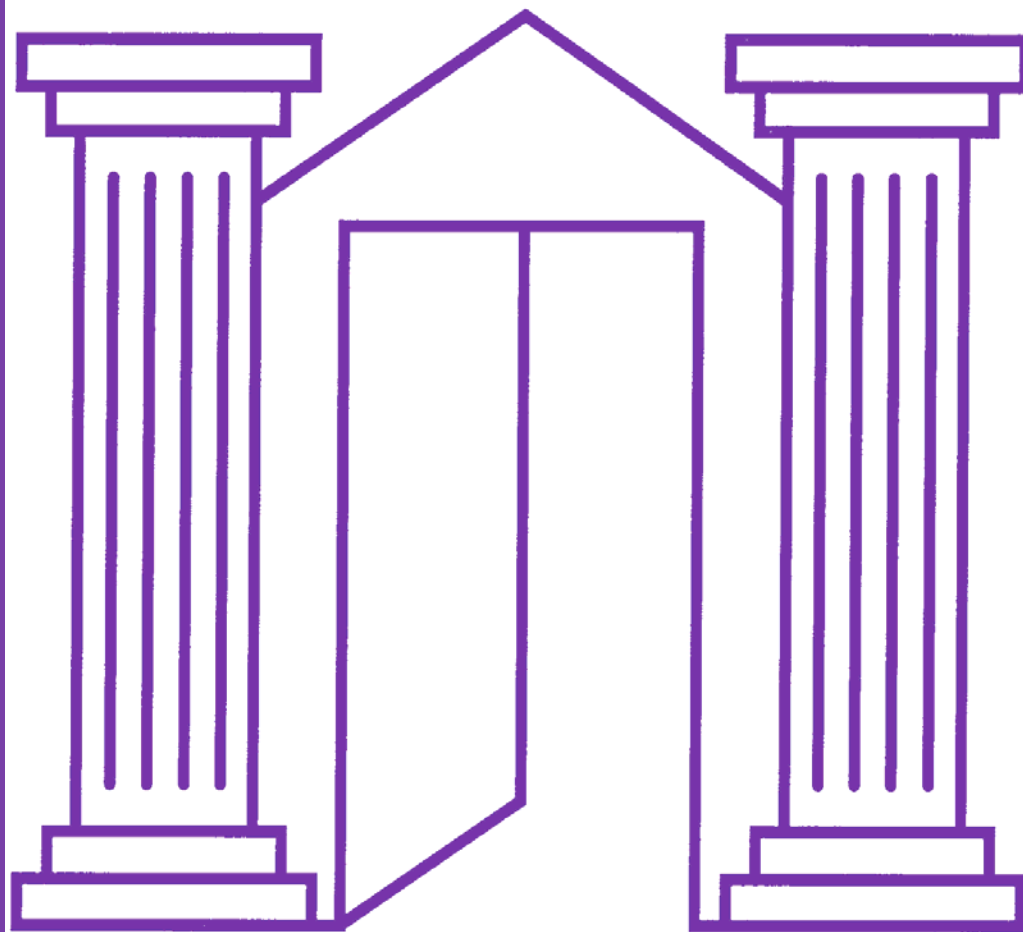
RESEARCH

LITIGATION

POLICY ANALYSIS

JUDICIAL SELECTION

LEGISLATIVE ACTION



2010 ANNUAL REPORT

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.
305 West Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 201, Towson, MD 21204
Phone (410) 321-8761 Fax (410) 321-0462
admin@wlcmd.org <http://www.wlcmd.org>

THE WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

Advocating for the legal rights of women in Maryland since 1971

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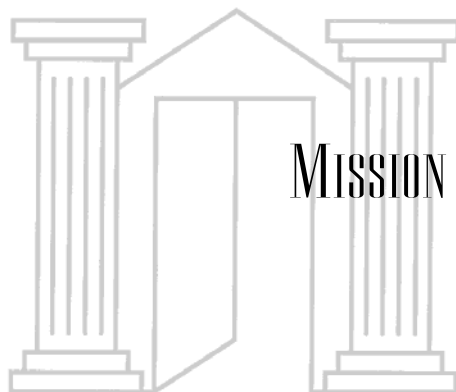
Ellen Hare

Meghan Vince

Legal Advocates

D. Crystal Mack

Sarah Martin



VISION A legal system that provides justice and fairness to women.

MISSION

To serve as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women by advocating for the rights of women through policy analysis, advocacy, litigation, education, research, judicial selection, legislative advocacy and direct services. The Women's Law Center is a membership organization that offers opportunities for its members to support and participate in advocacy on behalf of women and families.

Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.

305 W. Chesapeake Avenue #201

Towson, MD 21204

Main Line: 410-321-8761

Fax: 410-321-0462

Email: admin@wlcmd.org

Website: www.wlcmd.org



FAMILY LAW HOTLINE

(800) 845-8550

Monday through Friday 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.

LEGAL FORMS HELPLINE

(800) 818-9888

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00 am to 12:30 pm

Thursday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

SPANISH LEGAL FORMS HELPLINE

(877) 293-2507

Leave a message and an attorney will return your call.

EMPLOYMENT LAW HOTLINE

(877) 422-9500

Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

First Thursday of each month from 5:00 pm. to 7:30 p.m.

LETTER TO OUR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

FY10 ANNUAL
REPORT

Dear Women's Law Center Supporter:

Each year, we write to tell you of the impressive accomplishments the Women's Law Center has made on behalf of Maryland's women. This year is no exception. We provided services to 831 victims of domestic violence, fielded over 9,100 calls on our Family Law Hotline, Legal Forms Helpline and Employment Law Hotline and co-counseled a successful appeal on behalf of a victim of domestic violence before the Court of Special Appeals. We worked in coalition to achieve the passage of landmark legislation protecting the victims of domestic violence from housing discrimination and providing new remedies for victims. We saw our Kaufman Alimony Guidelines used by a larger number of attorneys. We were pleased that our Alimony Guidelines and similar guidelines provided by other organizations were ratified in the Court of Appeal's decision by *Boemio vs. Boemio*. Lastly, we continued to serve as a voice for Maryland's women regarding numerous local and state issues.

What is particularly noteworthy about these accomplishments this year, however, is the economic climate in which we achieved them. At a time when the economy has forced funders to decrease their financial support of the Women's Law Center and individuals are harder pressed to make donations, the Women's Law Center has been able to continue to provide the level and quality of service and advocacy that our clients and members have come to expect. We are proud that we have been able to consistently produce positive results for Maryland's women at a time when many service providers have been forced to curtail services and cut programs.

We could not have done this without your support. The Women's Law Center relies on its members to make it possible for us to continue to serve as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. You have continued to make generous donations, volunteered in our programs, and shared our goals and our work with others. You are the reason we are able to consistently report legal, legislative and advocacy victories. At a time when many are turning inward, we appreciate that you have turned outward to work with us and to spread our message. We are grateful to you for your dedication to our mission. We hope that we can continue to call on you for financial support and your service as volunteers and ambassadors to the wider community on our behalf.

Best regards,



Leigh Goodmark
President



L. Tracy Brown
Executive Director

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Providing access to justice to women and children in need

FY10 ANNUAL
REPORT

The Women's Law Center's family law projects offer individuals free legal representation that is critical to achieving a successful outcome in court. Attorneys help clients gain safety, maintain custody of their children and establish independence from an abusive partner, regardless of their ability to pay. For the second year the Women's Law Center experienced a dramatic increase in demand for direct legal services, particularly domestic violence representation projects, which experienced a 20% increase in clients served from the previous fiscal year. All family law projects are administered through the Women's Law Center's **Bruce A. Kaufman Center for Family Law**.

PROTECTION ORDER ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION PROJECT (POARP)

POARP attorneys represented 769 victims of domestic violence, helping them to obtain protective orders and establish safety plans, and providing referrals to other agencies to ensure that clients are safe and secure. An additional 939 individuals received important information and referrals.

POARP provides free attorneys to victims of domestic violence seeking protective orders in the circuit courts in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County as well as the District Courts for Baltimore County and Carroll County. POARP offices are conveniently located at the courthouses where petitions for protective orders are filed. This project is funded through the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

MULTI-ETHNIC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (MEDOVI) PROJECT

MEDOVI provided legal representation in immigration hearings and supporting services to 62 clients, information and referrals to an additional 385 victims, and technical assistance to 29 professionals or organizations who work with foreign-born victims.

MEDOVI is a state-wide program that caters to the special, and often complicated, needs of foreign-born victims of domestic violence. To better serve this community, MEDOVI employs a Spanish-speaking Legal Advocate to expand services and outreach in the Hispanic community. Free interpreter services are available for those who do not speak English or Spanish. Support for this program is provided by Victims of Crime Act funds administered by the Maryland Department of Human Resources, United Way of Central Maryland, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

JUDICARE

Forty-one low-income Baltimore County residents involved in contested custody and divorce cases received free access to an attorney through Judicare.

Through this program, the Women's Law Center screens cases and places clients with experienced attorneys who provide their services for free to clients. The attorneys involved in this project agree to be paid a significantly reduced fee by the Women's Law Center to represent clients and to continue their services for the duration of the case, even if the payment cap is exceeded. When possible, additional cases that qualify for the project are placed with pro bono attorneys to stretch the funds allocated to the project in order to serve more vulnerable families. This project is funded by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

**IN AND OUT OF THE
COURT ROOM, OUR
PROGRAMS MAKE A
PROFOUND DIFFERENCE IN
THE LIVES OF
WOMEN IN NEED.**

POARP attorneys work closely with clients to help them understand the protective order process and their rights.

Clearly the services provided this year made a positive impact and filled a crucial need. Clients reported:

- **98%** would use POARP again if abused
 - **96%** would go to court again if they experienced domestic violence
 - **94%** said they felt safer after going to court with POARP attorneys
-
-

Women's Law Center direct legal services have a profound and lasting impact on clients. Representation projects for victims of domestic violence are designed to protect the safety, stability and rights of vulnerable individuals. On occasion the Women's Law Center will advocate for the rights of individual clients by accepting key cases with the potential to promote broad change or draw attention to issues at the core of its mission such as it did this year in the case of *Wardle v. Wardle*.

WARDLE VS. WARDLE

"The Court adopted our reasoning that his history of abuse merited the permanent injunction. It used strong language to characterize the husband's abusive treatment of his wife."

Laure Ruth, Women's Law Center Legal Director

Ms. Wardle sought the help of POARP in 2007 after suffering through years of abuse at her husband's hands including severe and permanent damage to her left ear. In a subsequent divorce proceeding where she was represented by private counsel, a trial judge granted to Ms. Wardle indefinite alimony, sole physical and legal custody of their three young children, a marital property award and payment of Ms. Wardle's COBRA insurance cost. Mr. Wardle appealed the trial judge's ruling as well as the judge's injunction against him abusing Ms. Wardle in the future.

Lacking resources for a lengthy and expensive appeal, Ms. Wardle turned to the Domestic Violence Center of Howard County Director of Legal Services Luanne McKenna who involved WLC Legal Director Laure Ruth.

In January 2010 Ruth and McKenna joined forces to argue before the Maryland Court of Special Appeals on behalf of Ms. Wardle, seeing the case as an opportunity to educate judges about residual issues threatening the stability of victims of domestic violence and their children.

"The most difficult issue for the judges seemed to be the grant of indefinite alimony to a relatively young woman, notwithstanding the large difference in education and in earnings between the parties, the young children and the permanent damage he inflicted on her," said Ruth.

The Maryland Court of Special Appeals demonstrated a clear understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence by upholding a lower court's decision that granted sole custody of the three minor children to Ms. Wardle.



MS. D. - A NEW US CITIZEN

In 2000, Ms. D entered the US from Senegal on a visitor's visa. She met Mr. H. and quickly fell in love. Two years into the relationship the unemployed Mr. H. moved into Ms. D.'s residence, refusing to contribute towards their joint expenses after finding a job. Regardless, Ms. D. loved and trusted Mr. H. and believed in their relationship.

Discovering that Ms. D. was pregnant in 2004, Mr. H. demanded that she get an abortion. When she refused Mr. H. began to abuse her, regularly beating, sodomizing and raping the expectant mother of his child. When the child was born, Mr. H. threatened to take away their son or have her deported if she listed his name as the father on the child's birth certificate. Finally, after years of promises, Mr. H. married Ms. D. but would only consent to a marriage by proxy ceremony.

Ms. D. found the courage seek help after four separate calls to the police. She obtained a protective order and was referred to MEDOVI. She then discovered that marriage by proxy is not recognized in Maryland therefore her marriage was invalid and that Mr. H. was already married to another woman. After research on the legality of the marriage, MEDOVI obtained a Battered Spouse Petition for Ms. D. arguing that despite the fact the couple was not legally married and that Mr. H. had committed bigamy, Ms. D. met an exception to the immigration law and was eligible to apply under VAWA for immigration benefits. Despite the lengthy and complicated process, MEDOVI helped Ms. D. obtain permanent residency (a green card). Ms. D. can now live free from fear of deportation, work legally and build a better life for she and her small child who was born a United States citizen.

"Words can not express how grateful I am to you for everything you have done for myself and my children. I deeply appreciate it from the bottom of my heart. This year will give me the chance to pull my life together and make a new start."

— A POARP client

EDUCATION

Empowering women with access to reliable information about their rights

FY10 ANNUAL REPORT

Access to reliable information is a powerful factor in attaining equality for women. The Women's Law Center educates women through a diverse selection of publications and one-on-one attorney consultations through three legal information hotlines. These resources equip callers with accurate information to enable them to make effective decisions and more successfully use the law to defend their rights. All family law projects are administered through the Women's Law Center's **Bruce A. Kaufman Center for Family Law**.

FAMILY LAW HOTLINE

Now in its 19th year of operation, this hotline gave 6,250 callers valuable information about family law issues.

The Family Law Hotline operates seven hours per day each weekday. Callers across Maryland receive answers to questions involving a broad range of topics relating to divorce, custody, visitation, child support, emancipation and name changes.

Funded by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation and the Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation, the Hotline is operated in partnership with the Legal Aid Bureau.

EMPLOYMENT LAW HOTLINE

Operating three and a half hours per week and one evening shift per month, this volunteer-staffed hotline served 482 callers.

Hotline attorneys answer nearly nonstop calls concerning a variety of employment-related issues including discrimination in the workplace, sexual harassment, wage and overtime violations, and family and medical leave. This hotline has proven to be an especially valuable resource in an economic recession with more individuals out-of-work and concerned about the financial security of their families. Many callers contact the hotline with issues regarding employers fighting unemployment claims. Funds for this project are provided by the Baltimore Community Foundation, the Marjorie Cook Foundation and the Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation.

LEGAL FORMS HELPLINE

The Helpline removed barriers to justice by enabling 2,375 Marylanders to more effectively handle their family law case without an attorney.

Legal Forms Helpline attorneys help callers choose and complete Domestic Relations forms and explain how to file the forms. Helpline attorneys impart valuable information and advice to help self-represented litigants better understand legal procedures pertinent to their situation and gain access to the courts. A separate toll-free number with access to a bi-lingual attorney is available for Spanish-speaking pro se litigants. The Helpline is funded through the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation.

PUBLICATIONS

Over 3,250 hard copies of our publications were distributed by the Women's Law Center and its partners while countless additional copies were downloaded from our website.

Publications include: *Your Money Matters: A Guide to Financial Independence for Women*; *Legal Rights in Marriage and Divorce* (Spanish and English); *Sex Discrimination in Employment* (Spanish and English); and *Battered – What Can I Do?* (Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Arabic and Vietnamese). Funds for publications in FY10 were provided in part by the Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation while printing costs were paid by the Maryland Commission for Women.

"The hotline allows for a person to make a quick phone call and get their situation assessed without needing to take two buses to get to a clinic or take off from work. It is a convenient and efficient way of providing brief advice to many people."

Hope Tipton,
Hotline Volunteer

RESEARCH, POLICY ANALYSIS, LEGAL REFORM & ADVOCACY

Working for equality through broad change

FY10 ANNUAL
REPORT

The Women's Law Center actively monitors the state's legal and legislative landscape to promote equality. Research and policy analysis findings are disseminated to educate advocates, policy-makers and litigants. This work as well as experience gained from clients and participation in coalition efforts determines the course of action for our legal reform projects. Amicus briefs are filed to help appellate courts understand the impact of key cases on the legal rights of women. Judicial selections interviews are conducted to ensure an impartial judicial system. Our work, multiplied by the grassroots support of our members and friends in the community, makes a true impact on issues that affect women in Maryland.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

The Women's Law Center actively participated in the legislative process to address issues impacting women's rights such as domestic violence, reproductive rights and equal pay.

- Monitored 87 bills, submitted written testimony on 57 bills and presented oral testimony on 42 key bills
- Involved members in the legislative process by sending 43 legislative alerts and posting action alerts on Facebook to galvanize grassroots action
- Provided administrative support that enabled the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women to be an independent voice for Maryland's women in the legislative process

KAUFMAN ALIMONY GUIDELINES

The only free downloadable alimony guidelines in the U.S. . The Kaufman Alimony Guidelines helps lawyers, judges and decision makers develop reliable advice for clients.

The Kaufman Alimony Guidelines has been downloaded by over 1,500 legal professionals in two years. The Guidelines provide a recommendation regarding whether alimony should be awarded, including an amount and duration. The Bruce A. Kaufman Center for Family Law, a project of the Women's Law Center, as well as private funders underwrote the development of the Guidelines to help achieve equitable results in divorce for Maryland's families.

AMICUS AND COALITION EFFORTS

The Women's Law Center joined forces with other organizations to provide decision makers with information and perspective on issues affecting women's legal rights.

The Women's Law Center submitted an amicus brief in *Boemio v. Boemio* regarding the use of alimony guidelines by judges. The Maryland Court of Appeals held that judges can refer to "legitimate and neutral" alimony guidelines, such as the Kaufman Alimony Guidelines, to help determine awards as long as the usage does not supplant or frustrate statutory considerations.

In addition, the Women's Law Center signed amicus briefs submitted by other organizations involving employment law and immigration policy as well as issues of lawyers' fees for legal services organizations. Staff participation in committees and coalitions helped facilitate policy changes that will positively impact the legal rights of women and increase access to justice.

JUDICIAL SELECTIONS

Deeply committed to promoting a system that is free of gender bias, the Women's Law Center interviews and submits recommendations regarding candidates for judicial vacancies.

One of our most active groups of volunteers, members of the committee conduct rigorous interviews employing an objective, confidential process. In FY2010, the Judicial Selections Committee interviewed 56 candidates for judicial openings.

COMPLIANT FILED

"Judge Russell's behavior shows women continue to face real challenges in the courtroom. While progress has been made, advocates must continue to work to ensure a justice system that is fair and unbiased," WLC Executive Director L. Tracy Brown.

The WLC and the House of Ruth Maryland filed a Judicial Disability Complaint against Judge G. Darrell Russell, Jr.'s citing lack of impartiality and bias. In March 2010 Russell offered to marry a defendant to an alleged victim in his courtroom, enabling the victim to invoke marital privilege. He married the couple later that day after a marriage license was secured. He then sentenced the defendant to 'a life married to her (the alleged victim).' The Maryland Judicial Disabilities Commission's decision on the complaint is pending as of November 2010.

VOLUNTEER & MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

FY10 ANNUAL
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Volunteers are the key to the Women's Law Center's success. From hotline attorneys to law students involved with the Students Supporting the Women's Law Center at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the University of Maryland School of Law, volunteers work side-by-side with staff to change lives. Committee members help plan and implement special events, promote the organization's activities and provide expertise and guidance for programmatic initiatives. The Women's Law Center welcomes all individuals who would like to do their part to promote equality through the legal system to take action as volunteers.

JUDICIAL SELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Rigorously working to promote a system that is free of gender bias and to increase access to justice, the WLC's Judicial Selections Committee conducted eight interview sessions with 56 candidates who applied for judicial vacancies in six jurisdictions or courts in FY10. Five additional recommendations were submitted to the Judicial Nominating Commission based on previous interviews.

The Committee carefully and objectively evaluates and ranks each candidate's legal knowledge and skill. Other attributes considered include character, accomplishments, demeanor, perspective on family and women's issues in the legal system, and demonstrated commitment to a judicial system free of gender bias. Substantive letters including the ranking and Committee observations are submitted to the individual applicants, the Judicial Nominating Commission and the Governor.

"The recommendations of WLC's Judicial Selections Committee are designed to maintain a well-qualified bench that is free of bias. Our volunteers seek to ensure that all Marylanders have equal access to justice and are treated with dignity and respect by the judiciary," commented Ginger Robinson, Judicial Selection Committee Chair and Board member.

One of our most active groups of volunteers, the all-member Judicial Selections Committee consists of attorneys who possess a wide range of legal experience. Members of the Students Supporting the Women's Law Center groups at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the University of Maryland School of Law are permitted to participate in interviews as a special perk for their involvement with the Women's Law Center. We thank and commend Committee volunteers for the extensive time and energy they dedicate to implementing this important aspect of the Women's Law Center's mission of protecting and promoting the legal rights of women.

VOLUNTEER PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



JUDICIAL SELECTIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ellie Dayhoff-Brannigan
Rebecca Caldwell
Liz Caplan
Renee Guckert
Barrett King
Holly Knepper

Francine Krumholz
Deepti Kulkarni
Patricia Mitchell
Amanda Owens
Alex Paradise
Ben Peoples

Kelly Powers
Ginger Robinson
Gusty Taler
Minda Thorward
Gwen Tromley

From our beginnings as a grassroots organization, members have been the core of the Women's Law Center. Our members challenge us and enable us to evolve with the changing times to make the most difference in the lives of Maryland's women and children. In turn, the Women's Law Center continually works to provide opportunities to keep members informed, involved and engaged. Last year, we introduced restaurant nights and expanded our delicious networking event, Wine & Chocolate. We honored the achievements of three remarkable individuals at our Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony. We co-sponsored events and conferences to provide educational opportunities for our members. In addition to social events, communication with members increased through e-newsletter messages about topics important to members, including legislative alerts, and we launched a Twitter account.

ANNUAL MEETING AND AWARDS CEREMONY

The Women's Law Center paid tribute to three individuals who have worked tirelessly to improve the economic situation of women in Maryland.

- **Lieutenant Governor Anthony G. Brown**, State of Maryland, who received the 17th Annual Rosalyn B. Bell Award
- **Glendora Hughes**, General Counsel, Maryland Commission on Human Relations, who received the 23rd Annual Dorothy Beatty Award
- **Louise Carwell**, Senior Attorney for Consumer Law, Housing/Consumer Law Unit of the Legal Aid Bureau, Inc., who received the Access to Justice Award



The 4th annual Wine & Chocolate gave members an excuse to eat dessert first. Scrumptious treats donated by some of Baltimore's premiere restaurants and chocolatiers were paired with fine wines at this pre-dinner networking event.

Several generous businesses hosted happy hours, restaurant nights or shopping days to benefit the Women's Law Center. These events are quickly becoming member favorites, offering an easy and fun way to support the WLC. Special thanks to FY10 hosts:

- Baltimore Pho
- Mad River Bar & Grille
- Tina's
- Little Havana
- Meli Patisserie & Bistro



Wealth, Health & Well-being Roundtable Discussion Series

Designed to open an intergenerational dialogue on feminist issues the roundtable discussion series examined an array of issues important to women and families. *Women and Health*, held in fall 2009, explored whether women's health is taken seriously. In April 2010 *Women and Well-being* examined issues women face in achieving a healthy work life balance.

"The discussions were lively, insightful and inspiring, covering such topics as women's roles in families, women's roles in law jobs, and women's roles in society, and covered not only issues of gender but also race and class," said Discussion Series Planning Committee Chair and Board member Professor Margaret Johnson.

Special thanks to *Wealth, Health and Well-being* sponsor Ober Kaler.

FINANCIALS

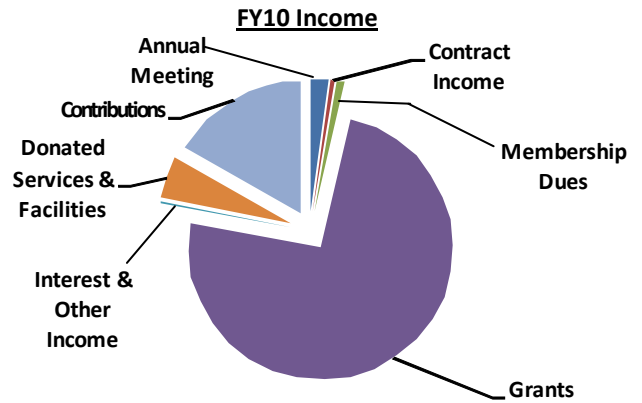
July 1, 2009- June 30, 2010

FY10 ANNUAL REPORT

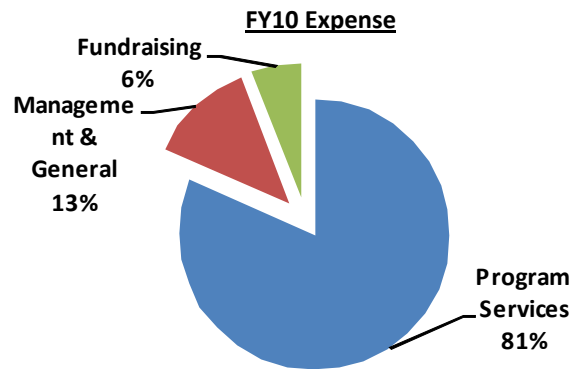
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets for the Year Ended on June 30, 2010 with Summarized Financial Information for 2009

Income	<u>2010</u>
Grants	\$ 739,881
Contributions	\$ 167,966
Annual Meeting	\$ 21,297
Contract Income	\$ 5,500
Donated Services & Facilities	\$ 50,755
Membership Dues	\$ 10,455
Interest Income	\$ 131
Other Income	\$ 3,038
TOTAL	\$ 999,023



Expenses	
Program Services	\$ 825,182
Management & General	\$ 127,896
Fundraising	\$ 58,882
TOTAL	\$ 1,011,960



Change in Net Assets	\$ (12,937)
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$ 893,617
Net Assets at End of Year	\$ 880,680

ASSETS	
Current Assets	<u>2010</u>
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 647,364
Grants Receivable, current portion	\$ 299,294
Contributions Receivables	\$ -
Prepaid Expense	\$ 7,930
Total Current Assets	\$ 954,588
Property and Equipment	\$ 14,642
Security Deposit	\$ 1,157
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 970,387

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	<u>2010</u>
Accounts Payable	\$ 1,527
Accrued Payroll Expense	\$ 27,678
Refundable Advance	\$ 60,502
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 89,707
Net Assets	
Unrestricted: Undesignated	\$ 650,249
Unrestricted: Board Designated	\$ 28,611
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 201,820
Total Net Assets	\$ 880,680
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 970,387

WOMEN'S LAW CENTER SUPPORTERS

We recognize and thank the following donors who supported the Women's Law Center in FY10 (July 1, 2009– June 30, 2010) through membership, contributions, in-kind donations, workplace giving, grants, event sponsorships and volunteer efforts.

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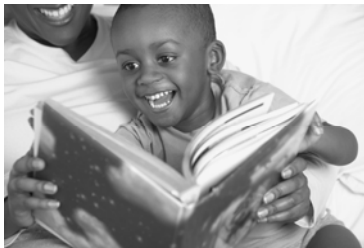
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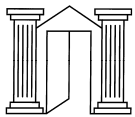
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