

March, 2024

Zonta USA Caucus

Advocacy Bulletin



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL
USA CAUCUS
EMPOWERING WOMEN
THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

The USA Caucus is a place for clubs and districts in the US to align on key issues and provides a platform for coordinated advocacy actions within the US.

Ending Child Marriage

Good news seems to be hard to come by these days, but it has been a great year so far for Ending Child Marriage in the US!

On January 23, Zonta members joined other advocates at the Washington state capitol, dressed in bridal gowns and chains to ask Washington legislators to pass HB1455 and end child marriage in WA. The legislators must have been listening. Last week, Gov. Jay Inslee signed legislation championed by Zonta, Unchained at Last, and the Washington Coalition to End Child Marriage to make the marriage age in the state 18, no exceptions. Washington is now the 11th state in the US to end child marriage!!!!

On January 31, Zonta USA Caucus Convener, Bobbee Cardillo, joined other advocates to testify at the House of Delegates Courts of Justice subcommittee considering a bill to end child marriage in VA. The bill has now passed the House as well as the Senate (with overwhelming support) and is headed to Governor Younkin's desk! Kudos to Bobbee and Virginia NOW and all the other people who worked so hard to make this happen. If you live in Virginia or know someone who does, Gov Younkin needs to be encouraged to sign the bill. Apparently, he cares a lot about the issue of human trafficking, so remind him of the connection between the two issues.

The New Hampshire Senate also passed a bill to end marriage before age 18, which is now



Photo above courtesy of Washington State Legislative Support Services via the Northwest Progressive Institute

in the House, bringing the Granite State one step closer to ending child marriage. New Hampshire residents ask your representatives to support the bill.

Earlier in 2024, Sen. Holly Thompson Rehder, Sen. Lauren Arthur and Rep. Chris Dinkins introduced SB767/HB2709 to end all marriage before age 18. in Missouri. SB767 was voted out of the senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence committee and awaits further action. HB2709 is pending in the house. Fingers crossed for MO.

Let's use these successes to pressure other state legislators. If your state still allows child marriage, use **ACT NOW**, a joint effort of Zonta and UNICEF, to send a message to your state legislators. State end child marriage leaders can work with staff to have the message customized for specific bill numbers and immediate action. Join state coalitions where they exist. Find the full toolkit **HERE**.

Equal Rights Amendment

The effort to have the ERA recognized and enforced as the 28th Amendment is in full swing! Among the major efforts, Zonta has been asked to use our strength in numbers to obtain signatures on the SIGN-4-ERA Petition, a national campaign led by Hunter College students. The petition calls on Congress to recognize the fact that the ERA has already been ratified by the necessary 38 states and should be recognized as the 28th Amendment to the Constitution. The petition has a goal of well over a million signatures with close to 100,000 so far.

The Campaign is an easy way to get members, friends and colleagues involved in getting the ERA across the finish line. The Caucus asks that you sign the petition [HERE](#) or use the QR code below, and use the [toolkit](#) to share the petition with others and encourage them to sign and share it themselves. Consider printing cards with the QR code and info to place in public places such as bathrooms. Add the QR code to your phone to access easily.

Although you may have signed other petitions for the ERA, this petition is different, as it involves a concentrated effort to have advocates' signatures all in one place. Check out the map [HERE](#) to see how many signatures your state has. Zonta's goal is to help **double the number** in each state in the next two months. **PLEASE SIGN AND SHARE WIDELY!**

A related effort, [Mayors for the ERA](#), was conceived by former NY Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and her students at Hunter College to engage mayors to sign the petition. Determine if your clubs and members have relationships with a mayor,

and ask them to approach their own mayor (and/or other mayors they know) about taking a photo with them as the mayor signs the electronic petition. If the photo is submitted to team@sign4era.org, they will write a press release and get it out to local news entities, if the mayor agrees.

March is Women's History Month. Learn of great [ways](#) your club can celebrate the month and support the ERA at the same time.

H.J. Res. 25/S.J. Res.4 affirms ratification of the ERA and removes time limit for passage. Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley has filed a discharge petition to bring HJ Res 25 to the House floor for a vote. The Discharge Petition has 204 signatures from House members and needs 218 to move to the floor for a vote. If it gets to the floor, it has a good chance of passing and moving back to the Senate for a vote there. [Ask your representatives](#) to sign the discharge petition if they have not done so particularly these [Democrats](#) and [Republicans](#).

H.J. Res. 82/S.J. Res 39 states that the ERA has already been validly ratified and is enforceable as the 28th Amendment and calls on the Archivist to certify and publish it without delay. Contact representatives on the [Outreach list](#) and ask them to sign.

Are you outraged that women still don't have equal constitutional protections? **Let's dial the volume up and literally shout for the Equal Rights Amendment** with a first of its kind petition that can be signed with your voice. Scan the QR code below, follow the prompts, and shout. You'll get a signature badge to share on social along with #ShoutForEquality



Violence Against Women

February 6 was International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM. US federal law prohibits performing or conspiring to perform FGM, and 41 states have state laws against FGM. However, while other girls in the US are spending spring break with their family or friends, during this time and other school holidays, some girls are sent by their family to visit an “auntie” or other relative across the globe where they are cut. Read one girl’s [story](#) and learn about [Operation Limelight USA \(OLLUSA\)](#), which was created to educate and provide outreach on the health, criminal, and immigration consequences of FGM.” Learn more about FGM: [“However Long the Night”](#) by Molly Melching, provides a fascinating look into the complex rationale for FGM in some cultures and the need for those close to the practice to decry it in order for the practice to end.

Operation Lady Justice, a Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives issued their [Final Report to the President](#), with useful information for clubs working on the issue.

Strategies for Advocacy

The Caucus had an excellent speaker at the last meeting discussing pragmatic strategies for advocating on women’s and girls’ issues, especially when addressing a primarily white, male audience. Sara Beth Myers is the founder of Advocates for Women’s And Kids’ Equality (AWAKE), an issues-based nonprofit that advocates for the advancement of women and children in Tennessee through education and policy change. Watch her excellent [talk](#) (Passcode: c9hn%uW2) and share with your clubs. It is a half hour well spent.

As area meetings approach, please ask your Area Directors to urge members to [sign up](#) for Fast Action Fridays, actually send them AND make “Voter Voice” a recognized contact so that FAF’s don’t go to spam. **FAF’s are the EASIEST, FASTEST ways to participate in Zonta Advocacy.**

Climate Action

The Zonta Intercontinental Think Tank started in 2022 in order to facilitate communication between Zontians in different countries. Members learn from a range of speakers how, globally, behaviour in one part of the world has a negative impact on other parts of the world, and discuss issues in break-out rooms.

The Think Tank meets on the third Sunday of each month at varying times to facilitate participation by members in different time zones. Zonta Says NOW’s presentation to the NGO CSW 68 forum will replace the March meeting. The presentation explores the theme of How Gender-equal Climate Action Works to End Poverty: the Zonta Story. If you are registered for CSW, you can register for this presentation [HERE](#). You can also watch [recordings](#) of previous Think Tanks.

The Zonta USA Caucus established the first **national** Zonta Says NOW Think Tank. Don’t miss the next Caucus Climate Think Tank on April 21 at 4 pm CT which will address Preparing for Warm Weather Climate Disasters. Watch for registration details.

The Caucus Climate Committee is planning “10 Days of Climate Action” in April with daily posts for social media on climate issues. Details will be coming soon.

Upcoming Presentations

On March 16, ZI will present [Women in All Workplaces, Striving for Opportunities and Equity](#) at 12 pm EST on Zoom. The Caucus Leadership in Education, Work, and Government Committee will host the first of a series of webinars, this one entitled, “She Should Run.” The webinar will feature a speaker and a panel of Zontians who are elected officials and will be held on April 28 at 4pm CT. Come and be inspired, learn about running a campaign, and maybe be motivated to consider running for public office yourself. Be on the alert for registration info to come.