March, 2026

Zonta USA Caucus Advocacy Bulletin

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL USA CAUCUS

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.

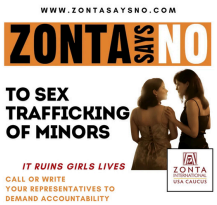
Ending Violence Against Women

Human Trafficking

Zonta Clubs across the USA, and around the world volunteer and advocate for survivors of trafficking and violence while we attempt to address root cause. Zonta's signature campaign. ZontaSaysNO to Violence Against Women includes Zonta Says NO to Sex Trafficking and especially to Sex Trafficking of minors. Join us in calling on our representatives to demand transparency and accountability. Message your representatives and the House Judiciary Committee as follows:

Dear Rep: We are appalled at the uncovering of years of cover up of the Epstein trafficking of minors. No one has been held accountable, but the evidence is clearly in your hands. We at Zonta demand that all perpetrators be held accountable and prosecuted. No one is above the law." Read more **HERE**. Also, please sign a **petition** to demand transparency from the Department of Justice.

World Without Exploitation is dedicated to creating a future where sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation are eradicated and survivors are supported with dignity and justice. Their legislative priorities focus on advancing policies that protect individuals from exploitation, target demand, and ensure comprehensive, survivor-centered care. Read **stories of survivors** and find information on state **legislative priorities and model legislation,** as well as **state-by-state information** on the current state of laws related to trafficking.



View and share this simple but impactful **video** on the meaning of consent. Thanks to Nancy Pranke for sharing "Tea and Consent."

There is growing recognition that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence than women without disabilities. This increased risk is driven by factors linked to discrimination, stigma and other barriers that people with disabilities encounter, alongside the gender discrimination that all women face. For instance, a review of seven violence prevention interventions reported that women with disabilities were twice as likely to experience intimate partner violence as women without disabilities, likely an underestimate. Check out a **Checklist to Support the Inclusion of Women with Disabilities in Research on Violence Against Women**.

A new **report** by Equality Now and the Sexual Violence Prevention Association documents how U.S. law enforcement, tech platforms and policymakers routinely fail survivors of online sexual exploitation and abuse. Read more in a Ms. Magazine **article, "Raped, Recorded, Shared—Then Abandoned by the System: 'Once It's on the Internet, It's Out There'."**

Model Legislation

Many issues around violence against women are dictated by state law which varies greatly from state to state. Iif your state has a positive bill you would like to share, please send it to Denise Parrish, and we will include it in the bulletin and on the Caucus website.. Let's share the good laws in our communities so Zontians in other states can consider working to have similar laws passed in their state.

Equal Rights Amendment

Zonta was the first organization to endorse the ERA and is playing a major role in supporting a fun activity to push for recognition of the Amendment. In 1916, two women drove from NY City to California and back--10,500 miles--and became the first women to do so at a time when there were no highways and very few paved roads -- all for suffrage. They travelled in a small Saxon car and stopped in cities and towns across the US, giving speeches, organizing supporters, and doing press interviews.

During March, 2026, Women's History Month, Sign4ERA, is launching a national tour "Driving the Vote for Equality" to bring attention to the need for the ERA by re-enacting the cross country drive for women's suffrage. The group will collect signatures on the Sign4ERA national petition, engage Mayors for ERA, and more. The author of **"Driving the Vote for Women"** will be driving the car (photo right) through American cities and meeting with local officials and community members to re-invigorate the push for recognition of the ERA. Read more in an **article** in Ms. Magazine.

Zonta clubs in cities along the route of the Tour are supporting it and the push for ERA recognition. In many cities, especially in Texas and the Southeast US, Zonta members are the primary organizers of the stop. This tour is an incredible opportunity to step up locally in your community to leadership in the national Fight for the ERA and bring visibility to Zonta and your club. Find a draft of cities to be visited HERE. If your club is along the route and you have not become involved contact **Therese Hartwell** or **Katherine Cleland.**

You are also encouraged to **make an ignition donation**, which is badly needed, to support the effort::

$25-SPARK: Provide materials for organizers
$50-FUEL: Help activate one community stop
$100-ROAD POWER: Visibility + press
$250 — GOLDEN MILE
$500-ACCELERATION
$1,000 – FULL STEAM AHEAD to more stops

For specifics about events along the tour route, check out the tour **website,** which is due to be live on Saturday, February 28.

One of the main reasons for the tour is to help get ONE MILLION signatures on the Sign4ERA Petition by the November mid-term elections **Regardless of whether the car will visit your city, you can take part in the effort by signing the petition and asking others to do so. You can sign yourself and gather other signatures using this Zonta-specific link or the QR code below or print the written petition found HERE and mail in written signatures to the address on that form.**

Other ways you can help:

1. Find out about ERA NOW and other ways to support the Equal Rights Amendment **HERE.**
2. **Become a Sign4ERA Amplifier**. You will need to answer a few questions and are then asked to follow @sign4era on FB and @sign4era2024 on Instagram and like, comment and share a post daily if possible. Pick your favorite post for your friends or group. Click the share (usually below the post) and then write a short intro and click "post" to add to your "feed" or even better, to a FB group, with a request to take action.
3. Use the **carousel, blog post and captions** from the ERA Coalition to share and amplify the anniversary of Virginia's passage of the ERA completing the required number of states.
4. If you are organizing or participating in the March 8 Women's Marches or March 28 No Kings events across the US, collect signatures for the ERA using the written petition or the QR code referenced above. Please share widely with others participating and bring your own clipboard to your local event.

Child Marriage

In 2026, **Ohio** will be a top priority state for ending child marriage. The Ohio coalition held Advocacy Days and a press conference recently, coordinated by Unchained at Last. Ohio HB 670 has now been referred to the Judiciary Committee. No action on SB 136. The coalition will hold an email campaign soon. Contact **Rosanne Dunlap** for more.

In **Kentucky,** HB174 and SB156, were introduced, both of which would ban all marriage before 18. HB174 is awaiting action in the house Families and Children committee, and SB156 is awaiting action in the senate committee on Committees. Watch Kentucky Sen. Julie Raque Adams' testimony **HERE.**

In **Colorado,** Zonta Foothills Club member, Lisa Lesniak, secured sponsors in the state house and co-sponsors in the senate for a bill to end child marriage. The senate bill passed out of committee and has been referred to Appropriations. Members of the Zonta Foothills and Denver clubs attended the hearing to show support for the bill. Opposition from one organization hinged on the buzzword of the day "agency" for children and the idea that children are entirely capable of making decisions impacting the rest of their lives at age 16 or 17 and from a senator saying "her parents were children when they got married, lived a very happy life, were great parents and look at how I turned out".

Unchained at Last is supporting bills to end child marriage in **KS,** where 14 bi-partisan co-sponsors introduced **HB2473** and **OK** where **SB504** passed unanimously out of the Senate Judiciary Committee and is awaiting action in the Senate. The group is also supporting pending legislation in **Arizona**, **Hawaii, North Carolina, South Carolina** and **Wisconsin**, even though these bills are less likely to pass. In addition, Unchained is pushing for changes in weak or harmful bills in **SD**, **NE** and **IL** Looking ahead to 2027, Unchained anticipates that **MD, ND**, **MT**, **CA** and **TX** will be priorities. Please share with clubs in these states. If you or others you know live in one of the states above and want to be involved, contact. **Becca Powell** or **Katherine Cleland.** If your state is not one of those being targeted and you would like to begin working on the topic, contact Katherine Cleland for guidance. And see the Caucus **website** for information and resources on ending child marriage.

CSW

The 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will take place at UN Headquarters in NY March 9-19. As a UN NGO with General Consultative Status, ZI is invited to participate in the annual CSW. Learn more about CSW and how you can and why you should participate **HERE.** It is not too late to **register** to participate in CSW, either in person or virtually. Registration is free and provides access to the full schedule of NGO events. Parallel Events are now available on the NGO CSW Whova platform. And find other helpful CSW links **HERE.** If you are attending NGO CSW events in person, you will need access to a QR code to be allowed into the room. This QR code is on the Whova App and you MUST download or print it to enter the events.

Pamela Morgan previously hosted a CSW70 Orientation which is available on the ZI CSW70 **webpage** along with additional materials:

🎥 **Orientation Recording**

📊 **Orientation Slides from past CSW's**

📄 **ZI CSW70 Written Statement**

Find out more about participating in CSW as a Zonta member and sign up for CSW70 updates **HERE.** You can also **join the Zonta CSW70 WhatsApp Group** to ask questions, network with other Zontians attending CSW70 both in person and virtually, make plans to meet others in NY and find Zonta updates.. And find a list of sessions presented by Zonta or Zontians, as well as the US Women's Caucus and Unchained at Last **HERE.**

In preparation for CSW70, the US Women's Caucus prepared a series of very short **"Justice for Women Briefs"** on various topics. Past USWC President Susan Lee has prepared a concise **summary** of all the briefs that will be sent to the US Mission at the UN and Congressional leaders.

REGISTER for a Zonta President's Reception on Mar 9, 6-8 pm for those attending CSW in person.

Climate Justice

The **Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery**, features art by Zonta artists from around the globe and is accepting submissions for the 2026 gallery now **HERE.** Most Zontians who submit artwork are not working artists. Some are seamstresses, quilters or photographers; some write poems or sing or submit club gender-equal climate action projects. Learn more by watching this **video** and share the video and the flyer on the next page with your members and others. Contact **Julie Trone** if you have any questions.

Zonta Says NOW to Climate Justice Committee has prepared a **Zonta USA Statement on Women and Environmental Justice In Alignment with the U.S. Women's Caucus Priorities for CSW70.** The Committee, along with the USA Caucus and the International workgroup will also present a one-hour virtual presentation on March 12 for the CSW70 titled 'Women and Sustainable Decision Making'.

Do you need reliable and trusted resources to create a Zonta Says NOW project or program to increase awareness within your club or community? Consult this **updated resource list**, and contact **Julie Trone** for additional help.

Register for the next Intercontinental Zonta Says Now Think Tank May 10, 6:00 AM ET, hosted by Zontians from Europe and Africa, **HERE.**

The current administration is moving to immediately dismantle the National Science Foundation's National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), one of the nation's leading weather and climate research institutions. NCAR is at the forefront of earth science research, strengthening the weather and climate predictions that we all rely on. NCAR's work enables air quality monitoring, forecasts of droughts and extreme precipitation events, commercial flight air turbulence research, and improved hurricane intensity and associated flood risk forecasts—the kind of events we are experiencing more often and with greater severity. NCAR's work helps keep us safe from the worsening impacts of climate change. Please **tell Congress** to protect NCAR now.

Women's Health

A recent **article** in Pro Publica, discusses the danger that state abortion bans pose to women with high-risk pregnancies, often because of underlying health issues.. According to the article, each year hundreds of thousands of pregnant women have chronic conditions that put them at an elevated risk of long-term complications and, in some cases, death. If they live in a state that has banned abortion, their options are now severely limited, sometimes denying them basic health care. The article describes a woman who went through pregnancy with uncontrolled blood pressure and died as a result and a woman who died when she was refused her usual treatment for her heart condition (shocking her heart) because she was pregnant, although other experts indicated that the procedure is safe during pregnancy.

In a shocking move, TN has filed HB570 which would restructure the state's criminal code in a way that would allow homicide charges—including first-degree murder—to apply in cases involving "unborn children." In Tennessee, first-degree murder is punishable by life imprisonment, life without parole, or, in certain cases, the death penalty! Read more **HERE.**

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In 1928, Dr. George Papanicolaou developed the "Pap" test to identify cervical cancer cells before they became fatal. At the time, the disease killed around 40,000 women a year in the US. But the campaign launched to educate the public about the test failed to reach Black women, due to medical biases, until OB/GYN Dr. Helen Dickens made it her mission to ensure that Black women had access to both services and information. **Read** about Dr. Dickens' valiant efforts and learn more about the history of racial health disparities in the US..

Read an interesting **article** on menopause in which the author addresses misinformation and conflicting information about menopause, as well as the impact of factors such as poor access to health care, toxic work environments, unsafe neighborhoods and socioeconomic hardships on the experience of menopause.

Calling all Zontians!

VIRTUAL ART GALLERY 2026

Open for submissions

We welcome your expression. You don't have to be an artist to make a difference in the world for women and girls.

Celebrate creativity through your eyes. Use your artistic voice.

Be inspired by these entries in the 2025 Virtual Art Gallery.

Together to Heal the World
by Stefania Scaranati

Sea Turtle
by Theresa Eckdom

The Trees Spark
by Jill Darby

The 2026 Collection will be launched on Earth Day (22 April). Find out more at **zontasaysnowvir tualar tgaller y.org**