

**Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**August 28, 2008, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.**  
**Room 412A, State Capitol Building**

The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women met in Room 412A of the State Capitol Building on August 28, 2008. Chair Chris Morriss called the meeting to order at 1:40 p.m.

**Commissioners Present:** Fern Bowling, Patty Bryant, Bob Darcy, Lee Denney, Lyn Hester, Kathryn Jones, Rebecca Kennedy, Lou Kerr, Lou Kohlman, Valeska Littlefield, Joyce Martin, Chris Morris, Jilda Motley, Jennifer Paustenbaugh, Mary Walker

**Commissioners Excused:** Sally Frasier, Catherine Haynes, Denise Kinzie, Debbe Leftwich, Pat Martin, Bernice Mitchell, Anita Norman, Pam Peterson, Patricia Presley, Ginny Wilson

**Commissioners Absent:** Toni Calvey, Vicki French, Claudean Reynolds, Margaret Swimmer, Valerie Thompson

**Advisory Council Members Present:** Glenda Carlile, Deena Fisher, Kay Martin, Jan Peery, Heather Simon, Latasha Wilson, Adeline Yerkes. Tya Smith (Staff).

**Visitors Present:** Erin Brockman, ecapitol.

**Women's History Moment:** Lou Kohlman noted that this week marked the anniversary of passage of the Nineteenth Amendment: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." This amendment was intended to give the vote to women. It was proposed on June 4, 1919 and ratified on August 18, 1920. Women activists pressed hard for this. One group protested in front of the White House for eighteen months. On January 9, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson announced his support of the amendment. The next day, the House of Representatives narrowly passed the amendment but the Senate refused to even debate it until October. When the Senate voted on the amendment in October, it failed by three votes. In response, the National Woman's Party urged citizens to vote against anti-suffrage senators up for election in the fall of 1918. After the 1918 election, most members of Congress were pro-suffrage. On May 21, 1919, the House of Representatives passed the amendment by a vote of 304 to 89, and 2 weeks later on June 4, the Senate finally followed, where the amendment passed by a vote of 56 to 25. It was ratified on August 18, 1920, upon its ratification by Tennessee, the thirty-sixth state to do so. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby certified the ratification on August 26, 1920. This story was told movingly in the movie "Iron-jawed Angels".

**Roll Call:** Secretary Lou Kohlman called the roll and noted that sixteen (16) Commissioners, six (6) Advisory Council members, and 1 guest were present. The Commissioners present constituted a quorum.

**Minutes** of the Retreat, June 27, 2008 Meeting: The Minutes were approved as amended.

## **Reports**

**Chair:** Chair Morris reported that the new website is up at [www.ocsw.ok.gov](http://www.ocsw.ok.gov). It is not yet updated but will be soon. She asks Commissioners to send in ideas for the website. Bob Darcy wondered whether we could put a blog or comment link on our website. Lyn Hester noted that many blogs import viruses, and it might be feasible to have a link to a blog elsewhere. Adeline Yerkes noted that ok.gov does not allow blogs but has a webboard link option.

The Chair reported on the Executive Committee meeting held earlier in the day. She announced that the Executive Committee recommends holding three Town Hall-type meetings, one done by each topical committee, during the course of the year. The goal is to start small and start building, with simple, informal meetings. She asks the Health Committee to start planning the first one, on the Healthy Bones topic.

**Vice Chair:** Vice-Chair Mary Walker will co-chair the Hall of Fame this year with Joyce Martin. The same qualifications and eligibility requirements will apply. The nomination form will be posted on the Commission website. The Commission will accept nominations by PDF file, email and regular mail, and ensure every received form is acknowledged. A single person may nominate no more than three candidates for the Hall of Fame. The Website will include all the Hall of Fame inductees, so they will not be re-nominated. There will be a Hall of Fame Committee meeting at 10:00 a.m. before the September Commission meeting. Please let Commissioners Martin or Walker know if you have a particular interest or area of expertise that you'd like to help with. The proposed date is March 26, 2009. The deadline for nomination forms is November 9. Nomination forms will be sent to legislators, government officials, and other state leaders. A maximum number of honorees has not been set.

**Secretary:** Lou Kohlman updated Commissioners on the county-by-county survey project. She talked with several commissions at the NACW conference who have published such surveys. They uniformly recommended starting with a simple by-the-numbers description of state services for women by county, working with available numbers. Other Commissions noted that often, they discovered statistics of interest to women were either not kept at all or not kept consistently by county. These discrepancies often served as starting points for more in-depth studies following the numbers survey. As a result of these discussions the Commission's county-by-county project will be designed with an initial simple numbers survey of this type. This, combined with the Topical Committees' priority issues and recommendations, will form the first of our projected Commission reports on the current status of Oklahoma women. She urged Topical Committees to continue using the issues template to prioritize issues, formulate statements of the problems posed, and suggest recommendations.

**Advisory Council Chair:** Jilda Motley thanked all the Advisory Council members for their work last year, and the outstanding job they've done. She noted that the previous

Advisory Council co-chair, Fern Bowling, has been appointed to the Commission. Chair Morris appointed Adeline Yerkes as the Advisory Council co-chair. This person helps Commissioner Motley, gives Advisory Council reports when she is not present, and helps with the Women's History moment, which alternates with the Leadership Committee. The Advisory Council will be updating the Advisory Council records this year.

**NACW Representative:** Bernice Mitchell sent a written report as NACW Board Member which was distributed at the meeting. It is attached as part of the Minutes. She noted we won a Bronze Certificate for our work on Project Bones. Mary Walker noted one important thing she learned was that Commissions can collaborate or partner with other organizations to reach more people, without having to do everything themselves. She also learned the importance of publicity and urged the Commission to better publicize our activities. She learned that if a Commission's funding is in jeopardy, the answer is to educate legislators so they know what we do and why, and that this fits within our mission. Jennifer Paustenbaugh, who was instrumental in putting together the Oklahoman Supplement for Women's History Month, described this project, which won the NACW Outstanding Achievement Award this year. This is the second time the Commission won this award. The project was directed to children in grades 3 – 8, part of an Oklahoman classroom project. We hope to continue this project and turn it into an exhibit, which can travel statewide in multiple locations and expose more people to the contributions Oklahoma women are making. Tya Smith noted that Bernice Mitchell was re-elected to the NACW Board and is highly regarded on that Board. She thanked Commissioners for the opportunity to attend. She noted that Oklahoma is well-represented among state commissions, and was inspired by the work that other small staff members have done for their commissions. Lou Kohlman seconded the others' reports. She described some of the differences between other commissions and ours, and activities done by others which our Commission could do with the resources we have.

**Financial Report:** Marilyn Capps was not present. Commissioners were provided the budget for FY 08 and a projected budget for 09.

**Business – Topical Committees:** The Commission broke into topical committees to discuss this year's activities.

**Leadership Committee:** Chair Lou Kohlman reported on the breakout session. The Committee plans to host the Kate Barnard Luncheon in February this year, after Session has begun, rather than in January. The Committee proposes holding an occasional series of topical lunches, inviting legislators or other outside speakers to speak on issues of interest to the Commission. These lunches would be informal, held before Commission meetings. The Committee would find a venue and speaker, and buy the speaker lunch, but attendees would pay for their own lunches rather than having the Commission subsidize the entire event. Commissioners indicated interest in this proposal. The Committee will continue to work on the county-by-county project along with other interested Commissioners and Advisory Council members. The Committee continued to discuss our issue priorities and ways to showcase those. The Committee will host a Listening Tour meeting in either Enid or Woodward in April or May of 2009.

**Women's Health Committee:** Chair Adeline Yerkes reported on the breakout session. The Committee will begin with domestic violence and child abuse, as well as adverse childhood events. During November the Committee will host a rural forum for women, with osteoporosis as the theme. They propose hosting this at Francis Tuttle and opening it, possibly through videoconference, to women in the surrounding counties. The Chair noted that this would be separate from the regular Commission meeting, so the Committee may plan this whenever they wish.

**Women Incarcerated Committee:** Chair Rebecca Kennedy reported on the breakout session. The Committee has information which can be turned into a public relations handout. They continued the Retreat discussion, recognizing the problem of incarceration of women is complex, involving cultural oppression, domestic violence and drug abuse, and is not easily solved. The Commission's Task Force drew attention to this problem. The Committee discussed the goal of identifying solutions and programs that are working in Oklahoma. They want to get a second legislative task force funded, during the next legislative session if possible, and want to devise strategies to draw attention to this issue with that in mind. They have a model which talks about these issues, through preventative measures as well as assisting women already in the system and helping their children. The motto is, "\$50 and a bus ticket won't buy you a better Oklahoma

**New Business:** Lou Kohlman presented a proposal from the Oklahoma Academy to sponsor their October Town Hall on prison and criminal justice issues. This Town Hall includes sections on women's incarceration, alternative courts and sentencing, and re-integration, all of which are of interest to the Commission. Sponsorship would include recognition on Town Hall materials as well as an opportunity to present Commission information regarding the Women Incarcerated Task Force findings. She also encouraged individual Commissioners and Advisory Council members to attend the Town Hall. Bob Darcy moved that we authorize \$250 to support the Oklahoma Academy Town Hall on Criminal Justice and Incarceration, pending financial review by OPM. Mary Walker seconded. The motion passed with no opposition, Lou Kohlman abstaining. Lee Denney did not participate in the vote.

**Announcements:** Latasha Wilson will be on an internship in Austria. Jan Peery has been nominated for the Journal Record's Top Fifty Women of the Year. Mary Walker received the Professional Staff Award for Academic Excellence, voted by her peers. Lyn Hester announced that the Integris Women's Health Forum will be held in late September.

**Next meeting:** The next meeting will be on September 25, 2008, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m, in Room 108 of the State Capitol.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

**Motions:**

Bob Darcy moved that we authorize \$250 to support the Oklahoma Academy Town Hall on Criminal Justice and Incarceration, pending financial review by OPM. Mary Walker seconded. The motion passed with no opposition, Lou Kohlman abstaining. Lee Denney did not participate in the vote.

**Events and Activities:**

Hall of Fame planning has begun. The event will be March 29, 2009. The first planning meeting will be Thursday, September 25, at 10:00 a.m. before the regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

The Leadership Committee will host the Kate Barnard luncheon in February.

The Health Committee will host a rural forum for women, with osteoporosis as the theme. They propose hosting this at Francis Tuttle in November and opening it, possibly through videoconference, to women in the surrounding counties.

The Leadership Committee will host a Listening Tour meeting in either Enid or Woodward in April or May of 2009. The Committee will plan occasional informal topical lunches in the coming months.

The Women Incarcerated Committee will devise strategies and activities with the goal of generating a Legislative Task Force on identifying programs that work to (a) lower the incarceration rate of women in prison and (b) reintegrate women from prison into society.

The Commission will continue to pursue the county-by-county survey project.