

# UNITED WAY OF SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA

## PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Kim Sport, Chairman



The 2016 Regular Legislative Session convened March 14th with its final adjournment June 6th.

United Way of Southeast Louisiana's (UWSELA) **2016 Public Policy Legislative Agenda "United Against Poverty"**, served as a key strategy in our new Blueprint for Prosperity which serves to advance our objectives to eradicate poverty and to assist those on the cusp of poverty or **ALICE**--- Asset Limited, Constrained, Employed report. **ALICE** is a term to describe residents across Louisiana who are working hard, yet still struggling to make ends meet. **ALICE** has low-paying jobs, little or no savings, and is one emergency from falling into poverty. Our "United Against Poverty" Public

Policy Agenda reaffirms UWSELA's positions previously taken in the 2014 and 2015 Louisiana Legislative Sessions.

**THANK YOU** to UWSELA staff, volunteers and collaborative partners who advocated and gave public testimony during this session, we couldn't do it without YOU!

**SPECIAL THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO OUR 2016 LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS:** Gov. John Bel Edwards, First Lady Donna Edwards, Sen. "JP" Morrell, Sen. Ronnie Johns, Sen. Danny Martiny, Rep. Helena Moreno, Rep. Malinda White, Rep. Robert Billiot, Rep. Walt Leger, Rep. Chris Leopold, Rep. Joe Lopinto, and Sen. Karen Carter Peterson.

Information on all bills can be found at the Louisiana State Legislature's website:

<http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/BillSearch.aspx?sid=current>

## 2016 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

### EDUCATION

UWSELA supported in this legislative session with regard to education a smart start and a strong finish agenda to maintain current state funding levels to support high quality early childcare education. UWSELA worked in partnership with the Coalition for Higher Standards to maintain high quality educational standards for K-12.

The two early education legislation bills below create a crime for operation of a child care center without a license and establish penalties for illegal operation.

#### ACT 411 (HB 197) by Representative Steven Pylant

**CRIME:** Creates crime of failure to properly operate a child day care center.

#### ACT 659 (HB 361) by Representative Steven Pylant

**CHILDREN/CARE:** Provides penalties for persons operating early learning centers without a valid license.

# FINANCIAL SECURITY

UWSELA was successful in this legislative session to maintain the state funding match of 3.5% for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

UWSELA advocated for an increase in the EITC, an increase in state minimum wage and equal pay for women, but were unsuccessful. These bills were among the most important policies we could support to assist our financially struggling families, **ALICE**—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed from falling into poverty.



*Governor John Bel Edwards testified at Labor & Industrial Relations Committee in favor of SB 254, the Louisiana Equal Pay Act authored by Sen. “JP” Morrell and for SB 269 which calls for an increase in the state minimum wage, authored by Sen. Karen Carter Peterson.*

## HB 1

**APPROPRIATIONS:** Provides for the ordinary operating expenses of state government for Fiscal Year 2016-2017.

*UWSELA supported the following legislation although we were unsuccessful:*

## HB 397 by Representative Helena Moreno - FAILED

**EMPLOYMENT:** Provides relative to equal pay for women.

## HB 450 by Representative Helena Moreno - FAILED

**EMPLOYMENT/WAGES:** Provides for pay equality.

## SB 254 by Senator Jean Paul “JP” Morrell – FAILED

**EMPLOYMENT:** Provides that the Louisiana Equal Pay Act be applicable to men and private employers and requires government contractors to verify equal pay practices.

## SB 269 by Senator Karen Carter Peterson – FAILED

**EMPLOYMENT:** Provides for an increase in the state minimum wage.

# HEALTH

Governor John Bel Edwards enacted legislation that provides greater insurance coverage for breast reconstruction following mastectomy. The legislation, introduced by Rep. Helena Moreno, strengthens the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 in the state by requiring that rights afforded under the 1998 federal law are upheld by all health insurers in Louisiana. It also clarifies that all stages of breast reconstruction are medically necessary and should not be excluded from coverage. The legislation mandates that all health insurance plans in Louisiana notify enrollees of this benefit in the annual explanation of benefits.

## Breast Cancer Treatment Alternative Insurance

### ACT 145 (HB 694) by Representative Helena Moreno

**INSURANCE/HEALTH:** Provides relative to required coverage for reconstructive surgeries following mastectomies.

## Medicaid Expansion

UWSELA worked in close partnership with Governor John Bel Edwards and Medicaid Expansion is finally here. June 1, 2016 marked a milestone for a healthier Louisiana as people can finally begin to enroll in the state's Healthy Louisiana Medicaid Expansion program. This historic development was made possible by the Executive Order signed by Governor Edwards on January 12, his first full day in office. Medicaid expansion will alleviate the state's budget shortfall and allow more than 300,000 residents of Louisiana to gain better access to health care. The Department of Health and Hospitals projects that Medicaid Expansion could save up to \$180 million dollars in the upcoming fiscal year. Expanding Medicaid will strengthen the state's economy and put people to work. Louisiana will be the 32nd state to adopt the Medicaid expansion program.

## Domestic Violence

The Center for Disease Control reports that, apart from deaths and injuries, physical violence by an intimate partner is associated with a number of adverse health outcomes. One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, but more than half of women on welfare are abuse survivors. Abused women often miss work or perform poorly due to partner sabotage. Economic abuse – preventing a partner from getting or keeping work – often co-exists with other forms of domestic violence. This leads to a vicious cycle: Abuse harms its victims financially, but victims don't leave their abusers because they don't believe they can support themselves. UWSELA has supported over 50 changes to laws assisting victims of domestic violence in the 2014 and 2015 sessions and will supported the following legislation in the 2016 session:

### ACT 124 (HB 624) by Representative Helena Moreno

**WEAPONS/FIREARMS:** Provides with respect to the reporting of certain judicial proceedings regarding the possession of firearms.

### ACT 452 (HB 931) by Representative Malinda White

**CRIME:** Amends provisions of law regarding domestic abuse battery.

### ACT 426 (HB 135) by Representative Terry Landry

**WEAPONS/FIREARMS:** Provides for the reporting of information concerning persons prohibited from possessing firearms.

### ACT 399 (HB 590) by Representative Chris Leopold

**CRIME:** Provides with respect to prior bad acts in domestic violence and cruelty to juveniles cases.

### ACT 387 (SB 320) by Senator J.P. Morrell

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** Provides for designated seating in a courtroom for Domestic Violence for victims, victims' families, and witnesses that do not require them to be in close proximity to defendants, defendants' families, or witnesses for defendants.

## OTHER ISSUES

### Louisiana Institute for Children in Families

UWSELA working in close partnership with the Louisiana Institute for Children in Families were successful in advocating for **SB 468** by Senator Ronnie Johns.

### ACT 395 (SB 468) by Senator Ronnie Johns

**ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:** Prohibits establishments that sell alcoholic beverages from employing persons under twenty-one years of age for certain purposes.

### SR 107 by Senator Ronnie Johns

**SENATE:** Designates the month of May as Foster Care Month.

### HR 130 by Representative Walt Leger III

**SPECIAL DAY/WEEK/MONTH:** Designates May as Foster Care Month in Louisiana.

### HCR 94 by Representative Robert Billiot

**CHILDREN/FOSTER CARE:** Extends the Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care to study public policy and financing options for youth aging out of foster care.

## Juvenile Justice Reform

UWSELA worked in close partnership with the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights and the Louisiana Youth Justice Coalition and were successful in advocating for Senate Bills 301, 302, 303 and 324 authored by Senator J.P. Morrell. UWSELA will be participating in a ceremonial bill signing with the Governor.



Senator J.P. Morrell

### ACT 499 (SB 301) by Senator J.P. Morrell

**JUVENILE JUSTICE:** Creates the Juvenile Justice Accountability and Cost Effectiveness Act of 2016.

### ACT 617 (SB 302) by Senator J.P. Morrell

**CRIMINAL PROCEDURE:** Creates the Safe and Fair Return Act of 2016.

### ACT 500 (SB 303) by Senator J.P. Morrell

**EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY:** Provides for educational programs in juvenile justice facilities.

### ACT 501 (SB 324) by Senator J.P. Morrell

**JUVENILE JUSTICE:** Raises the age for consideration as a juvenile in the criminal justice system and creates the Louisiana Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Implementation Committee.

Representative Malinda White from Bogalusa recognized organizations that helped with flood relief efforts including United Way of Southeast Louisiana and our Area Councils in our seven parish region during the regular legislative session of the House with a Resolution offering thanks. (Pictured left to right: Charlotte Champagne, Rep. Malinda White and Charmaine Caccioppi)



### HR 177 by Representative Malinda White

**COMMENDATIONS:** Commends All Hands Volunteers and the groups that worked under its direction in response to the Louisiana floods in the parishes of Washington and St. Tammany.

### HR 200 by Representative Malinda White

**COMMENDATIONS:** Commends All Hands Volunteers and the groups that worked under its direction in response to the Louisiana floods in the parishes of Washington and St. Tammany.