

United Way of Southeast Louisiana Creates Year of Domestic Violence Legislation



June 2nd was the last day of the 2014 legislative session. History was made this session as Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal signed seven bills into law aimed at stopping domestic violence. These bills make up the most aggressive package ever introduced and passed by the state legislature to address the issue. We have a lot to be proud of this legislative session!

The United Way of Southeast Louisiana (UWSELA) Public Policy Committee Chair Kim Sport, along with UWSELA Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Charmaine Caccioppi; Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence Executive Director Beth Meeks and New Orleans Family Justice Center Director Mary Claire Landry, worked as a team “United Against Domestic Violence”.

The United Way staff researched domestic violence homicides across the state and prepared books for the legislature and press: <http://www.unitedwaysela.org/advocate/656012UWBookCombined.pdf>

UWSELA was mentioned well over 40 times by the media during the Legislative Session. We received 17 statewide and 12 national newspaper editorials in support of domestic violence. We were involved in 15 interviews with radio and TV stations, including four group domestic violence presentations.

More than 50 meetings were held with Sheriffs, District Attorneys, Judges, Members of state and national organizations and key legislators to garner support for the United Way package of bills.

Kim Sport, United Way of Southeast Louisiana President and CEO Michael Williamson and Charmaine Caccioppi were honored as champions by the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the New Orleans Family Justice Center for their advocacy work.

A heartfelt thank you to Rep. Helena Moreno and Sen. J.P. Morrell for sponsoring our Domestic Violence Bills.

We had a unanimous passage of all bills in every committee and floor vote and thank the Louisiana Legislative Senate and House Chairs for their support: Senators Nevers, Claitor, Martiny, Kostelka, Perry, Alario; Representatives Leger, Abramson, Landry, Ponti, Talbot, Billiott and Lopinto.

We thank advocates who gave testimony in Committee Hearings: Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Weber, Jefferson Parish Sheriff Newell Normand; DA Leon Cannizzaro; Judge Bernadette D'Souza, Judge Pam Baker, Judge Nancy Konrad, and former Jefferson Parish Superintendent of Schools Barbara Turner Windhorst.

We thank the Louisiana Sheriff Association, the Louisiana District Attorney Association and St. Landry-Evangeline United Way for their support and the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus for their historic endorsement of our Domestic Violence bills.

Meetings were held with the Louisiana's Protective Order Registry (LPOR); Kevin Moran, Mike Bailey and Beth Chatelain of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the National Rifle Association (NRA); Gayle Benson; and Ochsner Health System and thank them for their expertise and recommendations.

Special thanks to Governor Jindal for signing these important bills, Policy Director, Stafford Olivia Palmieri, and his staff.

We thank the amazing House and Senate Legislative Staff for meeting with us several times to ensure our bills were in the appropriate posture and for attending Committee hearings ready to answer any and all questions about the legislative intent of the current law vs. proposed law including Kelly Fogleman, Greg Riley, Tina Vanichchagorn, and Robert Singletary. We also thank Diane Merritt, Sherrill Roussel and Lori Hutson for their dedication.

We thank everyone for their support, especially the members of United Way of Southeast Louisiana's Women's Leadership Council, whether it was attending committee hearings, making telephone calls, or sending emails. Your support will save the lives of countless domestic abuse victims. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!