

SOUTHWEST WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

January-March 2019

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

This past year, the staff and board at the Southwest Women's Law Center have been hard at work cultivating our values. This year, we plan to continue to create opportunity for women to realize their full economic and personal potential by: eliminating gender bias, discrimination and harassment; lifting women and their

families out of poverty; and ensuring that all women have full control over their reproductive lives through access to comprehensive reproductive health services and information.

With a new state and federal delegation in our state, we have exciting and impactful work to continue in 2019. From an invigorating and dedicated new staff, to intersectional legislative priorities, we hope you keep up with the assiduous endeavors of SWLC!.

[Please support this work through a tax deductible charitable donation.](#)

WE'VE MOVED!

After twelve years of sharing space with the ACLU, we now have our own office. Come see us in our new space!

128 Quincy NE

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What have we been up to?

Throughout the duration of the New Year, we have been fully committed to taking advantage of the proactive legislative session. The Southwest Women's Law Center remains committed to supporting policy that will benefit the lives of girls and women across New Mexico. As an active member of the community, we stand in support of any proactive pieces of legislation that promotes our values, however, we are primarily responsible for two pieces: the Pregnant Worker Accommodation and Paid Family Medical Leave. We have also been hard at work staffing our office through a major transition! We are happy to announce two new additions to our family here at the law center; Terrelene Massey and Sydney Tellez. Terrelene is our new Executive Director, and Sydney is the newly created position, Policy Advocate. We are delighted to be staffing our office for a successful year.

Terrelene Massey holds a JD from the University of New Mexico School of Law, and a Master of Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public



Affairs. She is licensed to practice law in New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. Terrelene most recently served as the Executive Director of the Navajo Division of Social Services. She was appointed by the President of the Navajo Nation, and confirmed by the Navajo Nation Council. She served in this capacity from May 2015 to January 2019. Prior to her appointment with the Navajo Nation, Terrelene was employed as an attorney at Johnson Barnhouse & Keegan, LLP, in Albuquerque. She also served as a staff attorney at New Mexico Legal Aid, Inc., where she provided legal services to low income clients regarding federal Indian law, family law, and tribal law matters. Terrelene previously worked as the Tribal Liaison for the New Mexico Human Services Department where she managed tribal related projects impacting Native American health and human services programs. Terrelene also served as the Associate Director of Honoring Nations at the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, Harvard University, where she co-authored reports and case studies evaluating tribal sovereignty programs and governmental best practices. Terrelene is originally from Pinon, Arizona and is a tribal member of the Navajo Nation.

Sydney Tellez has been working within the political and advocacy community for two years. A graduate from the University of New Mexico, lifelong New Mexican, and Chicana, she is passionate about subverting systems of oppression that have worked to marginalize and disenfranchise generations of New Mexicans. Sydney believes that intersectional advocacy and policy is crucial to building and sustaining strong communities in the face of adversity. Her passion for culture and community is intertwined with a strong desire to increase and develop leadership opportunities for young people, especially young people of color. An Emerge New Mexico graduate, Sydney believes in empowering and equipping all women with the tools and support to advocate for their healthcare, quality of life, culture, and civil liberties. In her free time, Sydney enjoys the arts, especially performance art, and uses her multifaceted skills to increase revenue and funds for various community non-profits.

WORKING ON ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU:

HB 196: Pregnant Worker Accommodation Act

This legislation will ensure that pregnant workers are protected from discrimination, while also reasonably accommodated through the course of their pregnancy. While the Equal Employment Opportunity Act protects discrimination based on gender, the federal law leaves many loopholes. The federal law only requires employers to accommodate pregnant women if they also accommodate someone with a similar need who isn't pregnant. Employees are often forced to leave their jobs, forced into unpaid leave, or denied promotions when a simple accommodation could allow them to continue working. Also, the federal law only applies to businesses with over 15 employees, while New Mexico is considered a small business state. HB 196 passed House Judiciary and is headed to the floor next. However, the bill remains unscheduled as both chambers are experiencing a backlog of bills waiting to be heard.

HB 213: Paid Family Medical Leave



Terrelene Massey, new Executive Director

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This legislation aims to establish a Paid Family Medical Leave program in the state for ALL employees. While the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is in place, it only requires covered employers to provide employees with unpaid leave for qualified medical and family reasons. This bill would mandate into state law that all workers in New Mexico, including self-employed workers, have access to medical leave that is more expansive and broader, such as covering the care of family members, and would accommodate new parents with time to bond with their newborns. With our state's high rate of working poor, a comprehensive Paid Family Medical Leave program would be a great fit for New Mexico. HB 213 has been unsuccessful passing through House Commerce and Economic Development. The bill sponsors are currently working on the next steps for advancing this legislation.

On February 6th, the New Mexico House of Representatives passed **HB 51, Decriminalize Abortion**, by a vote of 40-29. HB 51 repeals a section of NM state law, enacted before the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Roe v. Wade, that made performing an abortion a crime. This is the first time that the NM House of Representatives has passed legislation expressly supporting abortion access. HB 51 is sponsored by Reps. Joanne Ferrary, Georgene Louis, Deborah Armstrong, Eliseo Alcon, and Sen. Linda Lopez.

New Mexico is one of only eight states in the United States that still has a criminal abortion statute on the books. The law has been unenforceable and deemed unconstitutional since Roe v. Wade. If the U.S. Supreme Court weakened or repealed Roe, New Mexico's criminal statute could become enforceable. If in effect, the law would criminalize providing abortion, making it a fourth-degree felony.

On February 18th, The House of Representatives passed **HB 89, Contraceptive Equity Bill**, by a vote of 24-20. HB 89 is sponsored by Representative Deborah Armstrong. Meaningful access to family planning creates health, social, and economic benefits for mothers, newborns, families, and communities. We must maintain and expand access to affordable contraception so that all New Mexicans can prevent, plan, and space their own pregnancies.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The SWLC is part of a coalition working to repeal an outdated statute to permanently protect access to reproductive health care, including abortion in New Mexico. With the future of abortion access at stake, we must repeal out-of-date, anti-abortion language in the criminal code of New Mexico. Please sign this [petition!](#)

You can help us continue this vital work to support New Mexico women and families by donating to the Southwest Women's Law Center. Thank you for your continued dedication and support!

[Please support this work through a tax-deductible charitable donation!](#)