

# WOMEN'S LAW PROJECT

Western Pennsylvania Edition

Safeguarding Rights, Creating Opportunities

Late Fall 2011

Violence Against Women • Reproductive Justice • Gender Equity  
Title IX • Economic Justice & Health Care Reform

## We've Had Enough Rally in Harrisburg

Harrisburg, PA -

On September 27th, Pennsylvanians for Choice, a reproductive rights coalition convened by WLP, organized the **We've Had Enough** rally to tell our state to stop passing new restrictions on abortion and start solving women's real problems. We've had enough of the legislature ignoring our calls for more jobs, more education funding, and more investment in our communities. We've had enough of politicians putting women's health at risk instead of focusing on the issues that matter most.

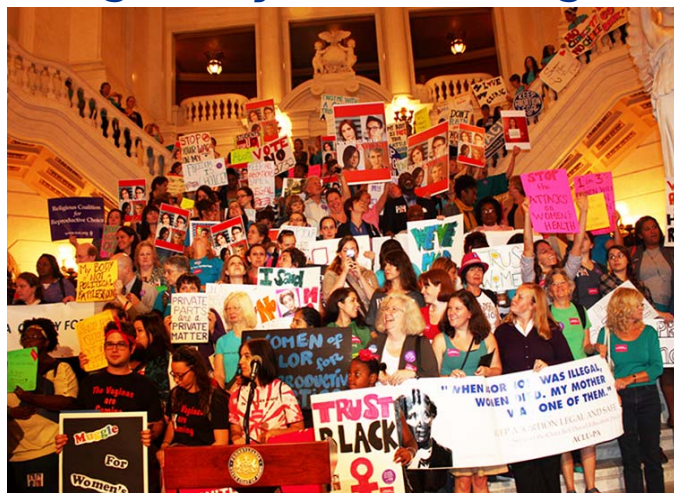


Photo credit: Ann Belser

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## Advocacy in Action:

### Young athlete's fight for equity in PPS



The Women's Law Project provided legal assistance to Charlotte Murphy, now a fifth-grade student at Linden Elementary School, who took the fight for gender equity into her own hands when her school disbanded the Linden girls' basketball team in the middle of its season.

Struck by the injustice of losing her team when the boys' basketball team was allowed to play, Charlotte wrote to Superintendent Linda Lane, charging a violation of "title nine." The nine-year-old requested and won a meeting with the Superintendent, who assured her that the team would be restored the following year and pledged renewed efforts to ensure that girls and boys would be treated equally in all aspects of the PPS athletic program.

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### WLP leads new definition of rape by the FBI

"Although long overdue, we are pleased that the FBI has vetted this extensively with their local and national law enforcement advisors and a clear consensus is emerging that a more accurate definition will better inform the public about the prevalence of serious sex crimes and will ultimately drive more resources to apprehend sexual offenders."

*Carol Tracy, Executive Director*

*October 19, 2011*

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## Rape Definition (cont)

A decade ago, the Women's Law Project began a campaign to change the definition of rape used by the FBI in its Uniform Crime Report (UCR). On behalf of 90 state-based sexual assault coalitions and national organizations concerned with violence against women, the WLP wrote to FBI director, Robert Mueller, that the current definition, unchanged since 1927, was narrow, outmoded, steeped in gender-based stereotypes, and seriously understated the true incidence of sex crimes. The September 27, 2001, letter to Mr. Mueller went unanswered — until now.

Almost ten years to the day that the letter was written, and one year after Carol Tracy testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee that the limited definition used in the UCR did not reflect current state criminal statutes and misled the public on the extent of sex crimes, Erica Goode reported in *the New York Times* that the FBI subcommittee considering the matter recommended that the 80-year old definition of rape be expanded from covering only vaginal-penile penetration by force to include penetration of other orifices by body parts or objects regardless of gender and without consent.

The WLP's campaign was bolstered this year by a Ms Magazine / Feminist Major-



Carol Tracy testifies before a Subcommittee of the US Senate Judiciary Committee on the failure to report and investigate rape cases (9/14/10).

Photo by: Jay Mallin.

ity initiative that resulted in over 140,000 emails being sent to the FBI and in testimony supporting the change from Susan Carbon, the Director of the Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, before the FBI advisory committees. Although the proposal is subject to approval both by a full advisory board (which meets in December) and by FBI Director Robert Mueller, police officials and advocates—including the WLP—are optimistic. The import of this potential change, as described by Carol Tracy in the *New York Times* is that "The public has the right to know about the prevalence of crime and violent crime in our communities, and we know that data drives practices, resources, policies and programs...It is critical that we have accurate information."

## Executive Director Carol Tracy Receives First Sadie Alexander Leadership Award

On October 5, 2011, Carol Tracy, in the company of many colleagues and friends, accepted the Sadie Alexander Leadership Award from the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations.

The Commission recognized Carol for her 30 years of work "to combat discrimination in all forms, to make systems responsive to the needs of women, and to create and influence public policy to create a safer, fairer society for women and their families." Twenty of those thirty years have been at the helm of the Women's Law Project.

"This was the inaugural Sadie Alexander Award, and these are very broad shoulders for me to stand on," Tracy explains. "Sadie was a civil rights activist in the 40s and 50s, when work was much harder and more dangerous than anything I have done. I regard it as an honor and a responsibility."

Other distinguished honorees at the event included community activists, corporate leaders, rising young leaders and others who were working on many fronts to combat discrimination and promote inter-group harmony.

## In the News...

The Women's Law Project has been catching headlines with its groundbreaking work:

### RAPE DEFINITION

**New York Times** — 9/28/11

**Erica Goode**

*Rape Definition Too Narrow in Federal Statistics, Critics Say.*

**New York Times** — 10/20/11

**Erica Goode**

*Support for Move to Broaden Definition of Rape.*

**Feminist Majority Blog** — 10/20/11-5:19pm

*FBI's UCR Subcommittee votes unanimously to recommend change on rape definition*

### GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette** — 11/8/11

**Eleanor Chute**

*City schools chief wants single-gender classes to end*

**Pittsburgh Tribune Review** — 11/8/11

**Jodi Weigand**

*Single-sex classes to be shelved*

**Feminist News** — 11/11/11

*Pittsburgh Public School to End Single-Sex Classes (www.feminist.org)*

**ACLU Blog** — 11/11/11

*Following ACLU Demands Pittsburgh Ditches Single-Sex School Plans*

### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

**Philadelphia City Paper** — 6/9/11

*http://www.citypaper.net/blogs/nakedcity/State-Senate-passes-abortion-amendment-that-some-call-public-health-catastrophe.html*

**Pittsburgh City Paper** — 11/5/11

*http://www.pittsburghcitypaper.ws/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A101272*

For more about our program work, to read the recent news and to stay up-to-date on critical issues, visit:

[www.womenslawproject.org](http://www.womenslawproject.org)

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Twitter, and please subscribe to the WLP Blog at:

[womenslawproject.wordpress.com](http://womenslawproject.wordpress.com)

## We've Had Enough Rally (cont)

In the first six months of this year alone, Pennsylvania lawmakers have spent one-third of their voting session days at the Capitol focusing on one issue: restricting women's access to safe, legal abortion. While Pennsylvanians continue to face high unemployment rates and cuts to education and social services, some of our elected officials are trying to avoid the real issues by repeatedly attacking women's rights. The worst threat? Senate Bill 732, legislation that could close nearly all of Pennsylvania's free-standing abortion care facilities by regulating them out of existence.

More than 400 advocates gathered in Harrisburg from across the state to say they'd had enough. Amid the amazing drum circle provided by local Pittsburgh artists, Abafazi, our supporters attended lobby visits, signed post cards, and wrote letters in opposition to SB 732. Among the speakers: Ellie Smeal (Feminist Majority Foundation President), Dr. Parker (a healthcare provider), Sarah Trombler-Gimple (a young advocate who shared her personal story), Rev. Dr. Beverly Dale (author, speaker, and faith advocate), and La'Tasha Mayes (founder of New Voices Pittsburgh: Women of Color for Reproductive Justice). Speakers rallied the group with chants of "We've Had Enough," and urged attending Senators and Representatives to reject SB 732. Efforts to defeat this bill continue.

If you'd like more information on the We've Had Enough campaign and press coverage, visit: [www.paforchoice.org](http://www.paforchoice.org) and [www.wevehadenoughpa.org](http://www.wevehadenoughpa.org).

### Update: Title IX in Pittsburgh Public Schools



Charlotte's victory at Linden clearly demonstrates the importance and the power of advocacy. Still, Title IX compliance in PPS is a work in progress.

Fully three years ago, WLP pressed for and won a district-wide audit of high school athletics which revealed serious disparities in athletic opportunities and unequal treatment of female athletes. In

April 2011, a year after the audit results were announced, the school district unveiled a plan for correcting the deficiencies revealed by the audit. Despite this progress, girls continue to be shortchanged in athletics. Thanks to the support of the FISA Foundation, WLP can keep up the fight to end sex discrimination in school athletic programs.

In related news, months of negotiations between the Women's Law Project and ACLU of Pennsylvania with Pittsburgh Public Schools have produced an agreement to eliminate gender segregation at Westinghouse Academy, a grade 6-12 public school, and to take affirmative steps to prevent gender stereotyping discrimination in city schools. For more information, visit:

[www.womenslawproject.org](http://www.womenslawproject.org).

## New Staff

### DOMINIQUE JOHNSON

Program Associate

Dominique joined the WLP in August. She works on issues ranging from Title IX to reproductive rights to LGBT discrimination and is advancing WLP's efforts to grow digital communications. Dominique brings a long history of social activism, grassroots organizing, and public policy experience. A graduate of Emory University, she is completing a Masters degree in Communications.



About her decision to join WLP: "Moving to Pittsburgh, I wanted to make sure I could continue some of the important women's rights work I've been doing most of my life. WLP was such a perfect fit for me and where I am professionally, I couldn't possibly pass up the opportunity! Being a part of this wonderful, family-like environment confirms that I made the right choice to come here."

### TARA PFEIFER

Staff Attorney

In November 2011, Tara Pfeifer joined the WLP as a new staff attorney. She will be working in our western Pennsylvania office. This full-time staff position, a critical capacity investment for WLP, is made possible by the generosity of individual donors.



A graduate of Dickinson School of Law and the College of William and Mary, Tara combines a passion for women's equality with years of intensive litigation experience. Formerly an associate at Ogletree, Deakins in Philadelphia and Cohen & Grigsby in Pittsburgh, Tara will expand the Women's Law Project's capacity to bring impact litigation to advance reproductive rights, equity in athletics, LGBT rights, and much more. In Tara's words: "I am thrilled and honored to be joining the Women's Law Project and look forward to making significant contributions to WLP's vital work and mission."

## Board Member News

Ellen Doyle, Esq. and Tara Marks recently joined the WLP Board of Directors.

Ellen, a partner at Stember Feinstein Doyle & Payne, states: "I have long admired the great work of the WLP in advancing the rights of women. I'm thrilled to join its board."

Tara, a co-director of Just Harvest, comments: "I am so happy to be a board member of WLP. What an honor serving with members whose work I have admired for years."

Ellen and Tara join Judy Ruskowski and Jessie Beckett-McWalter as western Pennsylvania representatives.

We also thank Cathy Raphael, who recently rotated off the Board, for her dedicated and generous service to WLP.

### THANK YOU!



The WLP says a big thank you to those who supported us during The Pittsburgh Foundation's Pittsburgh-Gives Day of Giving on October 4th. We also want to say welcome to our new supporters!

## Save the Date! Rights to Realities 5 April 20, 2012

Carol E. Tracy, Esq.  
Executive Director

Terry Fromson, Esq.  
Managing Attorney

### Western Pennsylvania Office

Susan Frietsche, Esq.  
Senior Staff Attorney  
Tara Pfeifer, Esq.  
Staff Attorney  
Dominique Johnson  
Program Associate

## Support WLP in Your Workplace!

Designate the Women's Law Project  
(United Way Contributor Choice #9867631 and

Three Rivers CFC: #41408) in your 2011 workplace campaign.

Ask your employer about matching your gift to the Women's Law Project. You may be able to double or even triple your impact by participating in your company's matching gift program!

### SPECIAL CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

The Women's Law Project celebrates its 10th Year in Western Pennsylvania in 2012. We will also mark the 10th Anniversary of the historic Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision, *In re Adoption of R.B.F.*, recognizing second-parent adoption for lesbian and gay families. We need **YOU** to help make it a special year of celebration! Volunteer opportunities include:

**Rights to Realities 5 Host Committee** — Help us plan our annual fundraising event schedule for April 20, 2012. We need volunteers working on all aspects of the event: logistics, sponsorships, decorations, silent and live auctions and more. The committee meets every 6 weeks or so until the event.

**Second Parent Adoption Family Celebration** — We need volunteers to help plan all aspects of this summertime and family-friendly occasion.

If you would like to join one or both of these committees or have another way you'd like to contribute to the work of the Women's Law Project, please contact us at 412-281-2892 or by email: [infopitt@womenslawproject.org](mailto:infopitt@womenslawproject.org).

### MYRA BRADWELL FUND

Recognizing donors who make annual contributions of \$1,000 and more, the Myra Bradwell Fund honors Myra Bradwell, who passed the test for admission to the Chicago Bar in 1869 but was denied admission by the Illinois Supreme Court on the grounds that she was married. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Illinois decision on the basis that "the natural and proper timidity and delicacy" of women make them unfit for "many of the occupations of civil life." Ms. Bradwell published the *Chicago Legal News* until 1885, when the Illinois Supreme Court reversed its earlier ruling—and she became the first female lawyer in that state's history.

Membership in the 2011-2012 Myra Bradwell Fund closes on June 30th. To become a member, please contact us at 412-281-2892 or by email at: [infopitt@womenslawproject.org](mailto:infopitt@womenslawproject.org).

To read more about the Myra Bradwell Fund, please visit our website:  
[www.womenslawproject.org](http://www.womenslawproject.org).

*Donations made in Western Pennsylvania support the services in this region.*

### Women's Law Project

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*A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*