

WOMEN'S LAW PROJECT

Safeguarding Rights, Creating Opportunities

For Immediate Release
December 15, 2011

Contact: Carol E. Tracy
ctracy@womenslawproject.org
267-738-7784

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
David F. Abernethy, Esq.
Catherine T. Barbieri, Esq. (Chair)
Suzanne Sheehan Becker
Jessica Beckett-McWalter, Esq.
Stephanie Carter Bellamy, Esq.
Robin Coward, Esq.
Ellen Doyle, Esq.
Nancy O'Mara Ezold, Esq.
Dianne Coady Fisher, Esq.
Amy Frazier
Margaret F. Goldfarb
Carol Ann Kell
Vicki W. Kramer
Sophia Lee, Esq.
Carol A. Mager, Esq.
Tara Marks
Paul Messing, Esq.
Leslie Anne Miller, Esq.
Joann Mitchell, Esq.
Mary F. Platt, Esq.
Sarah E. Ricks, Esq.
Judith A. Ruskowski
Margaret Sadler
Carol E. Tracy, Esq. (ex-officio)
Thomas E. Zemaitis, Esq.

Women's Law Project Applauds FBI Director Mueller for Acting on Recommendation to Change Rape Definition

Philadelphia - The Women's Law Project applauds FBI Director Mueller for acting on the Policy Advisory Board's recommendation to change the UCR's archaic definition of rape.

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.

A little over ten years to the day that the letter was written, and one year after Women's Law Project Executive Director 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, FBI Director Robert Mueller on December 14, 2011 told the Senate Judiciary Committee that he approved the change. The new definition will define rape as, "Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim." The current definition only counts as rape when it is vaginal-penile penetration by force, thereby excluding rape of men and penetration of other orifices with objects or other body parts.

"We appreciate the thorough analysis and vetting process done by the FBI's advisory process. Police chiefs throughout the country have been consulted and agree. Now that we will have accurate data, we need resources appropriately allocated to fight this hideous crime" said Carol Tracy.

The Women's Law Project in May 7, 2011 renewed its request to the FBI's Criminal Justice Systems (CJIS) advisory process. A series of three meetings have taken place

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Carol E. Tracy, Esq.
MANAGING ATTORNEY
Terry L. Fromson, Esq.
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
Dabney Miller
SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY
Susan Frietsche, Esq.*
STAFF ATTORNEY
Amal Bass, Esq.
STAFF ATTORNEY
Tara Pfeifer, Esq.*
BUSINESS/FINANCE MANAGER
Jane Whittaker
IT DIRECTOR
& PROGRAM MANAGER
Barbara Burgos DiTullio
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
Dominique Johnson*
PROGRAM ASSISTANT
Quanisha Smith
ACCOUNTANT
Grace Knight
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Kathy Eisenberg

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.

- More -

MAIN OFFICE

Sheridan Building
125 South 9th Street, Suite 300
Philadelphia, PA 19107

215.928.9801 t • 215.928.9848 f
www.womenslawproject.org
info@womenslawproject.org

* WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE

The Arrott Building
401 Wood Street, Suite 1020
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

412.281.2892 t • 412.281.3054 f
www.womenslawproject.org
infopitt@womenslawproject.org

- Continued -

since August 2011 in which police chiefs and other high ranking law enforcement personnel have considered this request. The most recent meeting was of the CBIS Policy Advisory Board in Albuquerque on December 6th which voted overwhelmingly in favor of updating the UCR definition.

The WLP's campaign was bolstered by a Ms Magazine /Feminist Majority initiative that resulted in over 160,000 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.

The Women's Law Project, a Pennsylvania-based public interest law center, embarked upon this campaign during the reform effort in led in Philadelphia in response to an investigative series done by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporting that the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) failed to investigate thousands of sex crimes. The PPD developed a non-UCR code, "investigation of person" that placed these crimes in a bureaucratic limbo, removed from public - and FBI - scrutiny.

###