

## **Report by the Nevada Commission for Women to the Sunset Subcommittee of the Legislative Commission**

**Date: April 21, 2016**

Senator Settelmeyer (Chair) and Assemblyman Trowbridge (Vice Chair) and members of the Sunset Subcommittee, my name is Richann Bender and I am a Board member and Vice Chair of the State of Nevada Commission for Women. As you may recall from when the Sunset Committee reviewed the Commission for possible termination, our mission per NRS 233I, is to study the changing and developing roles of women in society, including the recognition of socioeconomic factors that influence the status of women, and recommend proposed legislation. The commission is comprised of 10 Board members appointed by the Governor. As you can see from the board member bios provided, the appointments were finalized with representation in the north and the south in December 2015. JoAnn Elston was appointed by the Governor to serve as Chairwoman of the Commission. All of the women are very excited to serve on the commission and are eager to make a difference for the betterment of women in Nevada.

Our first meeting was held on February 25, 2016, using video conference to connect the members from Carson City to Vegas. Per our creation document NRS 233I, the Commission receives staff assistance from the Department of Administration, and we have been using their Public Works conference rooms to conduct our meetings. At our first meeting staff provided us with the information we will need to carry out our duties, and ensure compliance with Public Open Meeting Law. We are very grateful for the assistance of professional staff to help us organize and focus on the task of recommending proposed legislation for the upcoming Legislative Session.

In a report done by the Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington, D.C. entitled "Status of Women In The States" and the section "The Status of Women in Nevada, 2015: Highlights" it stated that "women in Nevada have made considerable advances in recent years but still face inequities that often prevent them from reaching their full potential." Nevada received poor grades in the following areas: Political Participation D-, Employment & Earnings D, Poverty and Opportunity D, Health and Well-Being D, Work & Family C-. Nevada women who work full-time, year-round earn 83 cents on the dollar compared with similarly employed men. If current trends continue, women in Nevada will not see equal pay until the year 2044. As you can see, our State has substantial work to end inequality, improve opportunity, and increase economic security for women and families.

Our second meeting was held on April 7, 2016. At this meeting we discussed the categories of interest of the Board members and reviewed potential topics the Commission may explore to develop meaningful legislation for the betterment of women. We received information from the Women & Children's Center of the Sierra, the Women's Research Institute of Nevada, UNLV, the Nevada Women's Lobby, the Nevada Equal Rights Commission, and the Make it Work Campaign. The Commission identified 5 topic areas it wants to learn more about at its next meeting.

Chairwoman Elston scheduled the next Board meeting on May 19, 2016, as a 3-hour retreat (open to the public) to allow more time to receive information about the 5 areas of interest which include: 1) Pay Equity; 2) Paid Leave; 3) Child Care Subsidies; 4) Domestic Violence safety connected to the forfeiture of firearms from convicted abusers; and 5) Ballot Initiative "Question 1" to require background checks on more gun sales and transfers. The retreat will be held at the Governor's Finance Office budget conference room in Carson City with video connection to the Governor's Office in the Grant Sawyer building in Vegas.

Due to the overwhelming amount of information, we appreciate the opportunity to do our due diligence and thoroughly review the relevant issues, discuss plans for the next Legislative Session, and ultimately conclude the meeting with a few specific priorities. In turn, we are mindful that our first deadline to submit a BDR is August, 2016. As fair warning, please know as we start to hone in on the legislation we want to propose or be a part of, we may approach some of you to ask for your assistance, guidance or support.

Another pending timeframe is June 30, 2016, because that's when four of our members' terms expire. Three intend to reapply, but the fourth, Chair Elston, has shared that due to family obligations, she does not intend to do so. This means the Governor will be appointing a new Chair this summer.

In conclusion, we appreciate the chance to provide you with this report – especially because we know it's because of your support that the Commission is active today. We look forward to working very hard to have a successful and meaningful first year for the Commission for Women. We also look forward to working with you and your constituents to raise the awareness of women's issues in Nevada. By addressing some of these issues we hope to contribute to the overall effort to enhance our State's status and improve the well-being of all of its citizens.