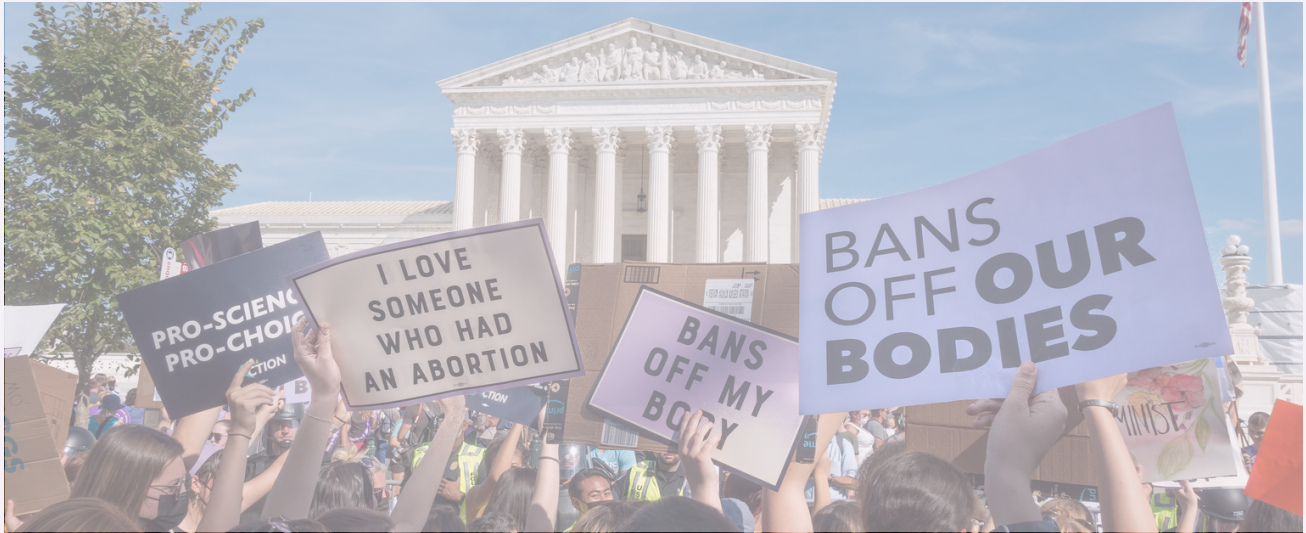


THE EMPOWERED VOICE

*The Official Newsletter of the Washington State Women's Commission
A Quarterly Recap*



Washington State Women's Commission's Response to Supreme Court's Decision Overturning Roe v. Wade

On June 24th, the Supreme Court issued an unprecedented attack on the rights of women when it overturned Roe v. Wade and the constitutional right to access abortion. The following is the statement issued by the Washington State Women's Commission in response to that decision:

This morning, the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade and the constitutional right to access abortion.

This catastrophic decision undermines decades of hard-fought gains and legal precedent securing our right to reproductive autonomy, agency, and freedom. It permits Mississippi's 15-week ban on abortion to go into effect, and gives other states the opportunity to further restrict or outright ban abortion.

Many women and pregnant non-binary persons will be forced to carry their pregnancies to term. But make no mistake—abortion bans and removing legal protections will not end abortion. Women in states with trigger bans will now be forced to have unsafe, prohibitively expensive abortions, or travel great distances out of their home state to access abortion care.

This is a direct assault on women's rights – the right to make decisions about our bodies, and our right to determine our futures.

By reinstating this enormous barrier to women's health, safety, and economic opportunity and security, a small minority are enacting control and harm upon all women in the United States. But let's be clear—this violation of fundamental rights will have the greatest harm on the most vulnerable in our community, and those with the least resources – women of color, immigrant women, LGBTQ+ identifying women, and women living in poverty.

*As previously stated by Governor Inslee, **abortion is still legal** in Washington State and pledged to provide a safe haven – welcoming and offering legal protection to all those who are seeking safe abortion, regardless of the law in the individual's home state.*

The Washington State Women's Commission stands with you in community and solidarity as we process this decision with collective grief, anger, and disappointment.

*...cont'd **at the WSWC website.***

WSWC Statement on Uvalde School Shooting

On May 25th, following the tragic school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, the Women's Commission issued the following statement:

As mothers and women who believe we all have a sacred duty to protect our nation's children, we are devastated by the deaths of 19 children and two teachers who were shot on May 24th in their Uvalde, Texas, classroom by a man who had easy access to a firearm. This tragedy includes the lives lost, the trauma inflicted on the Uvalde community, the fear of children across our country who ask, "Will this happen at my school?", and the despair of parents and caregivers who cannot honestly promise that it won't.

Americans are expected to carry on as usual, because gun violence in our country has become normal. How many lives must be taken before Congress enacts meaningful gun legislation? How long will the American people be held captive by the gun lobby and the politicians beholden to them? What about the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of our nation's children? Living in fear that you or your loved one will be killed at school, the grocery store, church, or walking down the street falls well short of freedom.

Inevitably, after a mass shooting the conversation is derailed to one of mental health. However, those suffering from mental illness are far more likely to be the victim of a crime than the perpetrator. This not only distracts from the real issue, but also vilifies the millions of Americans struggling with their mental health. Mental illness is not unique to the United States, but our rate of gun violence is. The only logical conclusion is that the United States irrefutably has a gun problem.

Thoughts and prayers are not enough—they never have been enough. It's time for action to protect our nation's children.



Olympia School District students' organized walkout on 6/1/22 in protest of legislative inaction to address gun violence in America.

Federal Gun Legislation Update:

We are heartened that Congress spent the month of June working on bipartisan gun safety legislation, which President Biden signed into law June 25, 2022. The legislation will work to enhance background checks for gun buyers under the age of 21, allows for examination of juvenile records and mental health records beginning at the age of 16, tightens the federal ban on domestic abusers obtaining firearms -- closing the boyfriend loophole, and strengthens laws against straw purchases and gun trafficking. The legislation also allocates funding for states to implement red flag laws, and strengthen mental health programs and school security measures.

While we are thankful for forward progress on gun safety legislation, we know the work is not complete. **It is important to continue reaching out to your Senators and Representatives in Olympia and D.C. to continue the forward momentum.**

"It's everywhere. Guns and violence are in every nook and cranny of America. Many children can get a gun quicker than they can get a book out of the library. That puts us all at risk."

~ Marian Wright Edelman

Washington State's Track Record on Gun Violence Prevention

WE WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR STRICTER GUN REGULATIONS

Gun violence has been and continues to be one of the top issues of the Women's Commission's safety committee. Our advocacy played a role in creating the laws outlined in the infographic below, which help to prevent gun violence.

In 2021, we supported legislation that prohibits the open carry of weapons within 250 feet of the state capitol grounds and public demonstrations—making Washington only the ninth state plus Washington D.C. to enact this type of law.

During the 2022 legislative session, our written testimony helped pass legislation that makes it unlawful to carry a weapon onto school property, and prohibits the manufacture, importation, distribution, selling, and offering for sale of large three capacity magazines.

We are grateful that Washington has created the Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention, which works with policymakers, public health officials, government entities, law enforcement agencies, researchers, community organizations and individual community members to support communities in implementing proven firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies.

Our vision is that every woman and girl is healthy, safe, prosperous, and empowered to achieve their full potential. We will continue to fight for the safety of the women of Washington State by advocating for stricter firearm laws and regulations.

Washington state has passed:

- ✓ A ban on high capacity magazines, ghost guns and bump stocks
- ✓ Universal background checks
- ✓ Extreme Risk Protection Orders
- ✓ 21+ minimum age to purchase semi-automatic weapons
- ✓ Creation of the Office of Firearm Safety & Violence Prevention
- ✓ Open carry regulations
- ✓ Unsafe storage liability

Your turn, Congress.



Event Recap: The Pandemic's Toll on Latinas

Thank you to all who joined our April 21st event, "The Pandemic's Toll on Latinas: A Conversation with Latina Leaders in Washington State."

We especially want to thank the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs for co-hosting the event, as well as our panelists, Antoinette Angulo, Policy Director at the Latino Center for Health; Mary Jo Ybarra-Vega, Outreach & Behavioral Health Coordinator at the Quincy Community Health Center; and Dr. Miriana Duran, MD, MPH, Research Coordinator at the Department of Health Systems and Population Health at the University of Washington School of Public Health as well as Data Analyst at the Latino Center for Health.

Our discussion centered around a study conducted by the Latino Center for Health and Sea Mar Community Health Centers which showed that the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted Latinas in Washington State. Latinas' intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, and immigration status have contributed to high job loss, financial instability, and severe mental and physical health repercussions.

Dr. Duran pointed out that a shocking 60% of Latino men and women reported a reduced income since the beginning of the pandemic, but a much greater percentage of women were unemployed or underemployed. Two major factors in this phenomenon have been Latinas' overrepresentation in low-wage and front-line work, as well as new childcare responsibilities placed more heavily on women than men.

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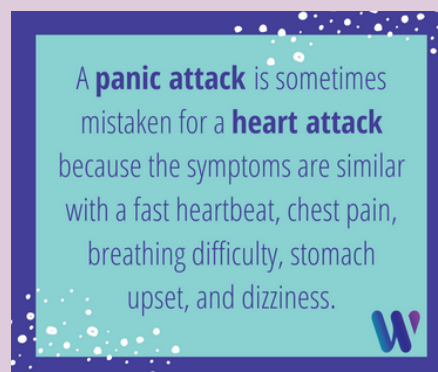
Mental Health Month

Part of being human is experiencing a spectrum of emotions: happy to hurt, love to loathing, peace to panic. However, sometimes our low moments start to feel more intense, and we need help beyond just a good night's rest or a day off. This is when it's time to examine our mental health, which involves examining how we are coping with stress, working productively, and contributing to our community. The Women's Commission participated in May's Mental Health Awareness month with a social media campaign outlining the signs of different mental health disorders and pointing toward resources.

Mental health disorders can include anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder,

depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, personality disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychotic disorders including schizophrenia.

...cont'd [at the WSWC website.](#)



3rd Quarter Plenary Meeting

WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON



Women's Commission, Staff and Commissioners, were thrilled to have the opportunity to travel the state once again allowing us to hear directly from constituents and organizations, in their respective communities.

We want to extend our appreciation to Mary Jo Ybarra-Vega for hosting us at the Quincy Community Health Center in Quincy, WA. Mary Jo organized an informative and inspiring day of learning for the Commission.



The Commission also had the opportunity to tour Stemilt Orchards in Wenatchee to learn about Eastern Washington growing operations. Thank you to Kyle and Jan Mathison for hosting us and giving the Commission an informative, industrial operation tour.

...cont'd [at the WSWC website.](#)

Meet Our New Commissioner

RIDDHI MUKHOPADHYAY

We are excited to introduce our new Commissioner, Riddhi Mukhopadhyay!



Riddhi is the Executive Director of the Sexual Violence Law Center and a member of the Washington Bar Association. She has worked and advocated for the rights of some of our most vulnerable populations—detained immigrants facing removal proceedings, involuntarily committed patients, incarcerated individuals with mental health issues, and now, survivors of sexual violence and abuse seeking legal protections. The work has allowed her to practice in several areas in both the criminal and civil context.

Through her work, she has learned about numerous, often intersecting issues different populations face, particularly women in these communities.

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ANHPI Heritage Month



May was Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (ANHPI) Heritage Month, and we were honored to collaborate with the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (CAPAA) to celebrate ANHPI women and communities across Washington State. Some of the women we highlighted included: Ruby Chow—the first Asian-American member of the King County Council; Emma Catague—the founding mother of the organization now known as API Chaya; Dori Peralta Baker—the current Yakima County Chair for the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition; Justice Mary Yu—the first Asian, first Latina, and first member of the LGBTQ community to serve on the Washington State Supreme Court; and Rep. Marilyn Strickland—one of the first Korean-American women elected to Congress in its 230-year history. Visit our Facebook page [here](#) to find each spotlight post.

Outgoing Commissioner Grace Huang

THANK YOU FOR FOUR YEARS OF SERVICE

Commissioner Grace Huang, J.D., joined the Washington State Women's Commission at its inception in 2018, at the urging of our first executive director, Michelle Gonzalez. As Grace finishes her allotted two terms, she says some of the most impactful experiences have been helping with our forum on domestic violence prevention, working with experts to create a model policy on workplace harassment for small businesses, and meeting and learning about the work of women across the state who have a variety of experiences and perspectives.

As Policy Director at the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, Grace brought incomparable perspective to her position as our safety committee chair. Grace has spent almost thirty years providing legal representation for victims of domestic abuse and advocating to improve domestic violence services. She began as a volunteer at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project where she helped women who she describes as amazing people who had lived through hell.



She noticed how few resources they had yet how strong they were, and she wanted to help them stop living in fear. Grace still works toward that goal on a larger scale today.

During her four years as commissioner, Grace has enjoyed interacting with the other commissioners and legislative advisors.

...cont'd [at the WSWC website](#).

2023 Strategic Planning Recap

As the women's Commission celebrates our 5th anniversary and contemplates this critical moment in time, we took the opportunity to gather in-person to re-center and revisit our vision, values, and strategic plan for the coming two years.

Thank you to Jamie Strausz- Clark with [3Si - Third Sector Intelligence](#) for facilitating this important dialogue.



PLENARY PUBLIC MEETING

FRI, OCT 7, 2022
9:00 – 11:00 AM PT



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