

September 14, 2002

TO: Ventura County Commission for Women  
From Diana Goodrow

RE: Association of California Commissions for Women 2002 Convention August 18-20, 2002 in Sacramento co-sponsored by the California Commission on the Status of Women.

I was delighted that I was able to attend the Convention and to represent the Ventura County Commission for Women. Meeting and networking with all the amazing representatives from 22 other Commissions through out on state was a special opportunity. I was particularly happy to connect with representatives from the Santa Barbara Commission for Women as well as the San Luis Obispo Commissions. They are very eager to continue our relationship on a regional basis. I have been in touch with them and will continue this networking opportunity. I hope our Commission will continue to meet with the women who represent these and other neighbor Commissions. to better serve the women we all represent.

The Santa Barbara Commission Chairperson Susan Keller and Commissioner Sonia Krock attended the recent meeting of the Women's Economic Justice Project which is planning International Women's Day at UCSB on March 8, 2003 Cecilia Fargo and I were also in attendance. More about that later.

The following are some of the highlights of the convention and my impressions:

On Sunday August 18, 2002 after the opening welcome to the Convention by Lorene Irizarry President of ACCW and Elmy Bermejo Chair of the California Commission on the Status of Women I attended the workshop led by Aileen Hernandez and Marilyn Fowler from WIN/CAWA. Both spoke about the need for Coalition Building. We need ways to connect with each other and make our voices heard. Our Agenda is the Platform for Action adopted by the Beijing Conference for Women in 1995. This has been a bad year for the world not just us. All issues are Women's issues. A very diverse structure is necessary across economic lines.

Some of the questions to be addressed:

1. How we do structure ourselves and involve young women?
2. We need to develop Legislative Councils
3. How do we use Media connections?
4. Identifying issues of concern.

How do we address the core issues of identifying leadership?

How do we identify and involve representatives from all the various ethnic and religious groups?

5. We need to look at our own area and see how we are doing:

In the area of Coalition Building.

Do we have a Human Rights Commission?

The San Francisco Commission was established to include subpoena power. It now has a staff of 10. It identified men as allies and it became a charter department.

6. Go to where the women are

Hold neighborhood meetings on a quarterly basis.

7. Commissions need to hold the Board of Supervisors and others government officials responsible for the Status of Women.

8. Do they look at us as an effective Commission?

9. Do we ask them on a regular basis what they expect of us?

10. It was suggested also that we meet with women on other County Commissions and

Department heads to network and build coalitions

11. When we hear or read about a woman being violently abused or killed do we ask what went wrong?

12; In order to develop trust with the communities we must identify our communities and connect

13. Go outside our zone of comfort.

Our meetings also included business meeting to address Association Matters

After our business meeting we attended a Reception and Commission Exchange Hosted and Facilitated by Mary M. Wiberg Executive Director of the California Commission on the Status of Women. and Midge Costanza, Special Assistant to the Governor on Women's Issues.

Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamonte welcomed us on Monday morning and discussed Title IX and the fact that women still don't have parity with men. He also raised concern about the turnover in the Legislature. There is a new member turnover in the Assembly of 1/3 every session. There is also a need for continuing education of legislators by groups like ours. We need to make our voices heard on the issues that are important to us. He urged our support of SB1301 Reproductive Privacy. Also to support organization that encourage and develop new leadership. ie Hope Leadership Institute where new Assemblywoman from Bakersfield Nicole Barra was mentored.

Senator Martha Escutia Chair of the California Legislative Women's Caucus representative urged us to inform male legislators about other issues with which they might not be familiar. She recommended that we:

1. speak up-write or visit elected officials

2. Vote-elect women

3. Network

4. Be involved with action that fights discrimination against women.

She also informed us that the Women's Caucus works on childcare, domestic violence, and incarcerated women issues. As a result of their work Childcare is secure in budget.

Women's Shelter magically found funds as a result of political action. The issue of battered women in jail is still being addressed.

Jenny Irwin from the Dept. of Labor discussed the close relationship with the Commissions for Women. She also brought up the problem of financial literacy for women and the issue of older women finding work, Disabled women only earn 47% of what men earn. She also emphasized the need to encourage young women into math, science and technology and set them on the path.

When there was a workers shortage in 1943 the Department of Labor developed a list of tips to employers telling them they should hire young married women and pick older women who have experience.

Our luncheon speaker was Senator Deborah Ortiz. Chair of the Women's Legislative Caucus a dynamic young woman who reminded us that this was Cancer Awareness month and urged us to work in our communities on this issue. She also is sponsoring a bill a Stem Cell Research bill. She urged us to encourage the Governor to sign the Farm Workers Bill and to make this a women's issue. She also was concerned that women have the basic right to access safe clinics.

I attended a variety of workshops:

\*Reproductive Freedom issues continue to be controversial. Not just about abortion but also about birth control, insurance issues because insurance often does not include

contraception. This is still in litigation. Gov Davis signed this into law but some women not covered. There is confusion about emergency contraceptive medication and RU486. Most states are controlled by anti-choice legislators. Under present laws only Physicians can perform abortions. There is legislation proposed to allow Nurse Practitioners to prescribe RU 486. There is a strong need for sexuality education. It was suggested that Commissions evaluate what is available in our community i.e. access to abortion services, emergency contraception, childcare and transportation.

\*Women of Color was an enlightening discussion of the immigration issues, religion, and welfare reform and their impact on women led by Dr. Rita Cameron Wedding from the point of view of young women looking at their experiences with racism and sexism. Their point is that although we are different we continue to move in our own way. See us for who we are not our headress or color or religion. Need to overcome fear of being treated differently. Ask us about ourselves they said.

\*Economic Justice Workshop discussion considered Welfare Reform and its impact on women. 30% of women live in poverty 11% in California. There is great disparity in incomes between the rich and poor the rural and city. Getting a college degree reduces poverty by 80% with a high school diploma there is a 20% reduction. Average earnings for women \$20,000 for men \$29,000. There is occupational segregation. Women nurses earn 88% of men's earnings. Race and ethnicity also contribute to the disparity. Erosion of the safety net. Today there is a housing problem. Some people spend 70% of income on housing. The need for a living wage is one way to change the statistics. The problems of the State Budget will affect the programs and remove many from the safety net. The gap is growing. Commissions could hold town hall meetings to find the real stories..

#### Legislative Briefing and Capital Visits

During a break in the workshops time was available to go to the Capital to visit our legislators and I went with the two young women commissioners from Santa Barbara to see Hannah Beth Jackson. We had an appointment. Hannah Beth Jackson was on the floor of the Assembly and came out to speak to us. We spoke about the problems of the budget and how it affects commissions and women. We were accompanied by her Aide who escorted us into the visitors area so we could observe the Assembly. She also gave us a tour of the Capital Building. Very positive experience to see how accessible officials are. We just have to make the effort..

After returning to the Convention I attended the workshop on Implementing CEDAW led by Billie Heller. who updated us on the status of CEDAW in congress. Although the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and moved the convention out of committee for the first time in 21 years since it was signed by President Carter. She urged us to continue to call the President to act.

One recommendation is to send a copy of the resolution that Ventura County Board of Supervisors passed to Senator Boxer and Senator Feinstein to show them what we have done locally. Particularly we should go to Congressman Gallego with the Resolution and ask him what he is doing to implement the signing. We need the support of the Supervisors to move to implementation on a local level. It was also suggested that we start a Task Force to create a local ordinance such as has been done in Santa Francisco and Santa Cruz. Also involve other community groups i.e. AAUW, League of Women Voters, RRN, and other groups and ask for their endorsement and for volunteers to be on task force. Work with neighboring Commissions. The issues to be addressed Economic Justice, Health, Violence Against Women, Include women of all races, class, ages and sexual preference and partner with men. This will be a slow process. Try not to get impatient. Write letters, thank Senators

Feinstein and Boxer. Gather success stories. Write letters to editor local newspapers and national publications. In Brazil it is part of the constitution. They also have Women's Police Stations. York University in Toronto has been studying CEDAW. There have been failures. Middle East has been held back because women aren't free. But some of the real reasons is the issue of reproductive health and is why the United States is not moving forward. The insurance industry is fighting the issue. The UN and politics are important. Women need to run for office. Women are asking to share power.

A reception was held to celebrate 30 years of Title IX and Hannah Beth Jackson addressed the group assembled.

On Monday August 19 2003 during lunch we heard Kathy Spillar address the issue of Winning Equality for Women in Policing. Training Law Enforcement and getting more women into law. Only 12% of women are police officers. Something hasn't changed. Perhaps dress and size. Studies have been done that show that women are competent. Women are more effective in domestic violence cases. 97% of domestic violence calls involve women. Women officers use less force than men. There are lots of reports and she referred us to the Feminist Majority Studies, Recommended that we look at the Ventura County budget and how the money is used. Women aren't better but because we are raised differently. Citizens prefer women officers. There needs to be more gender balance. Violence of any kind is violence. 40% of police officers are perpetrator of domestic violence. 50% of violent call is for domestic violence. Do we know the statistics in Ventura. What support do women police officers need from the commission? Look how money is spent on law suits.

Tuesday August 20 at the ACCW business meeting we elected new officers and reelected Lorene Irizarry as President elected, Yolanda Gibson Vice President, Kelly Hayes-Raitt, Treasurer, Lisa Coffee, Secretary and Allison Harlow and Ashley Gardner at large members.

The bylaws were amended to state that each commission will have one vote at ACCW meetings. We need to elect our delegate.

Since our commission is a county entity we should have access for our meetings to a county facility.

It was suggested that we develop a funding policy and strategy. Look at the possibility of ads in our newsletter as a way to pay for it.

We can apply for funding to attend ACCW quarterly meetings.

We could look at the issue of Work Life awards. We have corporations in Ventura that have developed program to make working a better fit for their employees. Make a survey of the companies who offer childcare, flex-time health care, etc. Recognize these companies with awards.

We have been asked to give the ACCW the list of our commissioners I need permission to submit.

At our closing session Sharon Davis the Governor wife spoke to us about:

1. Support each other
2. Mentor kids
3. Health Families -recruit more it is underenrolled
4. Literacy-lack of books in school libraries. She has written a book to raise funds for libraries.
5. Economy and the effect of the stock market, It has dried up lots of money from capital gains taxes. State is doing well but we need to keep jobs in California
6. Inner Peace gives women strength
- 7.. She shared her story on how she met the Governor while flying as a stewardess

Mary Wilson President of the Ms Foundation and the White House Project was our keynote speaker on our last morning.

She started the Take Your Daughter to Work Day and that we are beginning to see the 'feminization of power' "when it's a mess we get to clean it up" . We need to create a leadership paradigm shift. We need to bring other women in but we also know that "women want to make a living but they also want a life". It is time for a change, the men who have been in power ie BenLaden. Exxon, the Catholic Church haven't been doing such a good job. Women who are leading the way for change are women like Dolores Huerta, Barbara Lee, Maxine Waters and of course Nancy Pelosi. Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.

Women have to sit in the seat of power but just hoping for it isn't going to make it happen. Behind hope is fear of failure. It won't happen naturally We have to work for it.

She recommended we see a play about Golda Meir.

Look at what kind of women do we want.

Look at the media and how we are treated

We want the media to look at our agenda

We have to prove we are tough and appealing and be more direct.

Review how we react to other women in positions of power ie pilot on a plane.

Push for visibility

Invite women into leadership

Change the climate and we change the culture

We will be ready to have a Women for President.

I attended the business meeting of the California Commission on the Status of Women for a short time. ACCW President Lorene Irizarry made a special presentation to Thank the Commission for the wonderful job they did in hosting the Convention.

The major topic were funding issues. We need to keep building support and partner with other groups. Strategic thinking needs to be done before legislation is proposed. Often there is money to fund a task but no money to sustain. Look at core issues What is our role in Public Policy debates. There is danger in getting private money we must be careful not to endorse. What fits our mission Look for grants to do our work,

It was a important experience for me and I recommend that more of our Commissioners get involved in the future.