



**WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN'S COMMISSION**

*Advocacy. Education. Research.*

**2015**

**Annual Report**

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Earl Ray Tomblin  
Governor



Karen Bowling  
Secretary

The West Virginia Women's Commission 

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/West-Virginia-Womens-Commission/91192172900>

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# The West Virginia Women's Commission: What We Are?

The West Virginia Women's Commission is an agency of state government created by the Legislature in 1977 to advocate for women and educate on issues relating to women. As an office of the Department of Health and Human Resources, it seeks to improve the legal, social, economic, educational and political status of women by working with businesses, government agencies, and non-profit groups. Eleven citizen members, appointed by the Governor, serve as Commissioners for three-year terms. They determine the goals and projects of the Commission. Seven state department heads, or designated representatives, advise and support the Commission as Ex-Officio members. Regular Commission meetings are held quarterly, and are open to the public.

## Who We Are?

### Commissioners:

Stacy North, Acting Chair, Monongalia County

Kathleen McDermott, Acting Vice-Chair

Belinda Biafore, Marion County

Diana Bell, Ohio County

Jean Ford, Wood County

Kameron Miller, Vice-Chair Kanawha County

Robin Young, Kanawha County

3 Vacant positions

### Ex-Officio Members:

Wanda "Sue" Casto - West Virginia Division of Labor

Marykaye Jacquet - West Virginia Humans Right Commission

Betty Jo Jordan - West Virginia Department of Education

Jessica Tice - West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Nancy Sullivan - West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

Sara Walker - West Virginia Division of Personnel

Julie Warren - Office of West Virginia Attorney General

### Staff:

Julie C. Palas, J.D., Interim Executive Director (*October 2015 to present*)

As of October 1, 2015, in an effort to assist with the reduction of costs and streamlining of efforts within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, the Interim Executive Director of the Commission is also the Executive Director of the James "Tiger" Morton Catastrophic Illness Commission. Her salary is now being shared by both Commissions. Additional measures are being considered to further reduce costs and at the same time increase education, research, studies, and public engagement regarding women in the State.

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# The West Virginia Women's Commission: Our Mission

The West Virginia Women's Commission exists to foster women's health and wellness including economic, educational, political, and social development. We do this through advocacy, research, education, collaboration, and recognition.

## Our Vision

Promoting the equality and empowerment of all West Virginia women to ensure their full participation in society.

## Operations of the Commission

- The Women's Commission is the only state agency mandated to bring needs and concerns of the state's female population to the attention of legislators and other government officials.
- The Women's Commission provides services to state women as individuals and as members of organizations in one or more of the following ways:
  - Legislative monitoring,
  - Information referral,
  - Educational workshops and seminars,
  - Publication and distribution of educational materials,
  - Research and recognition of women's accomplishments.
- Conducts applied and original research on the status of women and girls in West Virginia.
- Completes outreach activities focused on needs and concerns found in research activities.
- Advocates for policy and programs with direct effect to the 51% population of the state.
- Collaborates with statewide and national organizations to create recommendations for legislative, policy driven, and program needs of the state's female population.
- Coordinates events and supports partner events recognizing women's achievements in the state. Please note a few items below:
  - Girls' Day at the Legislature (during the state Legislative session),
  - Women's Equality ( August 26 annually),
  - Equal Pay Day (April annually),
  - Host/Sponsor Annual Women's History Month Activities (March annually),
  - Girls on the Run program sponsorship,
  - WV Women Work Sponsorship—nontraditional job program,
  - Child Advocacy Network Sponsorship,
  - Youth Leadership Association Annual Youth in Government Sponsorship,
  - Girl Scouts of the Black Diamond Collaboration and Sponsorships,
  - American Red Cross—Women Who Care Event Sponsorship,
  - High Rocks Youth Program Sponsorship,
  - WV Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Training Sponsorship,
  - Midwives Alliance of WV collaboration,
  - Alzheimer's Association of WV collaboration and sponsorship,
  - WV Center on Budget and Policy collaboration and sponsorship,

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- Domestic Violence programs across the state collaboration and sponsorship
  - Covenant House collaboration and sponsorship
  - Actively delivers sponsorships and micro grants to organizations to support programs and activities of interest and concern to women and girls in the state
  - Collaboration with university and college system to offer paid and unpaid internships for students interested in the ongoing work of women's organizations in the state.
  - Monitors state level legislation and national initiatives of interest to our female population.
    - This is a collaborative effort of our Public Policy committee consisting of at least 20 statewide and national organizations.
      - This group creates a collection of issue "pillars" within those pillars an extensive legislative agenda is created and used to advocate on behalf of the populations interests as outlined in our research.
  - The Commission offers recommendations to the Legislative and Executive branches as mandated in our statute to ensure a better status for women and girls in our state.
  - Promotes information from state and national organizations through social media, e-mail delivery, mailing list, and outreach at various expos.
  - Continue to support partner organizations in advocating for issues of concern addressed through five pillars of our legislative agenda.
  - Executive Director sits as liaison to committees of concern to women's issues.

### **Ongoing Goals...**

- Continue to support partner organizations in advocating for issues of concern addressed through five pillars of our legislative agenda - Child Well-Being, Economic Empowerment, Education, Health, and Violence Against Women.
- Perform the duties of the Commission, per West Virginia Code, Article 20, §29-20-2:
  - (a) To review and study the status of women in this state;
  - (b) To recommend methods of overcoming discrimination against women in public and private employment and in the exercise of their civil and political rights;
  - (c) To promote more effective methods for enabling women to develop their skills, to continue their education and to be retrained;
  - (d) To strengthen home life by directing attention to critical problems confronting women as wives, mothers, homemakers and workers;
  - (e) To make surveys in the fields of, but not limited to, education, social services, labor laws and employment policies, law enforcement, health, new and expanded services of benefit to women, legal rights, family relations and volunteer services;
  - (f) To secure appropriate recognition of women's accomplishments and contributions to this state;
  - (g) To disseminate information for the purpose of educating the public as to the existence and functions of the commission and as to matters of general beneficial interest to women; and
  - (h) To advise, consult and cooperate with other offices of the department of health and human resources and other agencies of state government, and to receive assistance therefrom, in the development of activities and programs of beneficial interest to women and on matters relating generally to women.

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# West Virginia Women’s Commission: How We Operate

## Meetings

**Quarterly Meetings**—The West Virginia Women’s Commission holds four quarterly meetings around the state to discuss the business of the Commission and promote issues of importance to women. Notice of these public meetings is filed with the Secretary of State and the public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

**Planning Meeting**—Coinciding with one of the quarterly meetings, the planning meeting is a time for the Commissioners, Ex-Officio Members, and staff to evaluate the fiscal year, the strategic plan, and to plan for the year to come.

**Committee Meetings**—The Commissioners, Ex-Officio Members, and staff meet to plan programs and publications.

**Executive Committee Meetings**—The Executive Committee, comprised of the Executive Director, Chair, Vice Chair, and DHHR Ex-Officio meet once a month to discuss the operations of the Commission.

## Annual Programs

**Celebrate Women Awards**—These awards comply with the legislative mandate to recognize the accomplishments of West Virginia women in 12 categories: Arts, Business, Education, Government, Labor, Math/Science, Mountaineer Spirit, Professions, Public Service, Sports, Unsung Hero, and Volunteer Service.

**Student Essay Contest**—This contest invites students in grades six through 12 to answer one of three questions in an essay format. The essays are read by the Commissioners and the three selected winners read their essays during the Celebrate Women Awards Banquet.

**Women’s Day at the Legislature**—This event provides an opportunity for participants to learn about the legislative process. Women are encouraged to attend legislative sessions, make personal contact with their legislators, and learn about bills being considered for passage by the legislature that affect women and children.

## Other Programs

**Pay Equity Day**—Recognizes the disparity of pay that still exists between men and women and served as a reminder that pay equity is yet to be achieved (during April each year).

**Women’s Equality Day**—This event in August, in conjunction with the Secretary of State’s office, celebrates the Nineteenth Amendment, which was passed in 1920, giving women the right to vote.

