



National Council of Jewish Women

**Faith in the Future. A Belief in Action.**

**Utah Section: Connecting Socially to Connect Responsibly**

Editors: Laura Polacheck, Rochelle Kaplan

[lpolacheck@aarp.org](mailto:lpolacheck@aarp.org)

[ro@wifunds.com](mailto:ro@wifunds.com)

## **LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009**

### **Upcoming NCJW Events:**

Sunday, Feb. 22, 3:30-5:30 PM Turkish Fundraiser, \$25

Thursday, Feb. 26, Israeli Film Waltz with Bashir (begins Feb. 20)

Thursday, Mar. 19, 10 AM, Amy Dishell Memorial Ski Day at Alta

Thursday, April 2, 12-2 PM, Senior Passover Seder at the JCC

For additional details, visit our website: [www.ncjwutah.org](http://www.ncjwutah.org)

Two free film screenings in April presented by the SLC Film Center with the UJF UT & the JCC

**BLESSED IS THE MATCH: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF HANNAH SENESH**, Wed., April 1, 7pm

Tower Theater, 876 E 900 S

Documentary about Hannah Senesh who left Palestine as a young woman in 1944 to rescue Jews from Nazi brutality in her native Hungary. Hannah, captured and executed by the Nazis, lives again, on film. [www.blessedisthematch.com](http://www.blessedisthematch.com)

**TO SEE IF I AM SMILING** – Wed., April 29, 7pm - Sorenson Unity Center, 1383 S 900 W

Six young Israeli female soldiers speak of their military experiences. In Israel 18-year-old girls are drafted for compulsory military service. This award-winning 50 minute film explores how gender & ethics intersect during war.

### **Obama Signs Ledbetter Fair Pay Act**

The National Council of Jewish Women praised President Obama for signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. After attending the White House signing ceremony, NCJW President Nancy Ratzan released this statement: "NCJW was honored and thrilled to be there as President Obama signed the historic Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, the first bill signed into law under his administration. This victory is shared by all the activists across the country who worked so long and hard to win passage of this important equal pay legislation. The new law rectifies the Supreme Court's decision in Ledbetter v. Goodyear and reinstates important protections against wage discrimination."

### **NCJW Hails S-CHIP Law**

NCJW President Nancy Ratzan remarked, "The long-awaited reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) signed into law today by President Obama has been a truly bipartisan effort. This important bill adds 4.1 million low-income children, for a total of 11 million, to the rolls of the insured and will now reach children whose parents cannot afford coverage in higher-cost markets."

## Democracy Day on the Hill A Success

NCJW joined the Utah Community Action Partnership Association (UCAPA), the Utah Housing Coalition, and AARP Utah to sponsor Democracy Day/Housing Day at the Capitol. Barbara Durst, pictured below on the right, who worked on housing issues in Texas before moving to Salt Lake City, joined 300 other citizen activists to hear the importance of advocacy at the state legislature. Don Mathis, President and CEO of the national Community Action Partnership, discussed the current economic climate nationally and its impact on housing and poverty, Ed Sparrow of the Delaware Manufactured Housing Association addressed mobile home issues and resident rights, Rachel Ringwood talked about emerging from homelessness after benefiting from the Individual Development Account (IDA) program, which helped match her savings to buy a house she helped build, and Heather Trittin of UCAPA explained how a bill becomes a law. Mathis stated that every dollar invested in a temporary increase in food stamps generates \$1.73 worth of demand and for every dollar invested in extending unemployment insurance benefits, \$1.64 is generated.



Following the speakers, docents led small groups on a tour of the spectacular renovated Capitol and then we had a working lunch with legislators. In the rotunda were informational booths set up by various groups that support ending poverty and providing housing assistance. To find out more about UCAPA, visit this website: <http://www.utahcap.org/>

To learn about the legislative process or to track particular bills and resolutions under consideration, check out this site: <http://www.le.state.ut.us/>

## Comprehensive Sex Ed Bill Introduced in Utah Legislature

A comprehensive sex education bill has been introduced. House Bill 189, Instruction in Health Amendments, is sponsored by Rep. Lynn Hemingway of District 40. NCJW members in District 40, please send Rep. Hemingway a thank you for taking the initiative. The link to the bill is: <http://le.utah.gov/~2009/htmdoc/hbillhtm/hb0189.htm>

NCJW supports comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education in public schools.

PPAC (Planned Parenthood Action Council) will hold a phone bank Wednesday, February 18 at 5:30 pm at PPAC HQ, 551 East South Temple. Volunteers will call supporters in targeted districts and ask them to contact their legislators in favor of HB 189. PPAC needs many volunteers.

PPAC's Teen Lobby Day will be February 27 from 9:00am – 12:00pm at the Capitol. PPAC will take teens to speak to elected officials about the need for comprehensive sex education. For info, contact Joey at 801-524-1710 or [joseph.richards@ppau.org](mailto:joseph.richards@ppau.org).

## **Abortion Bills Limit Reproductive Choice**

Two abortion bills passed the Utah House on a party-line vote. Representatives pushed them through with the approval of every Republican present and a smattering of Democrats. They now head to the Senate for consideration.

HB90S1 would increase the penalty for an illegal abortion from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony. HB222 would require doctors to inform mothers about to have an abortion of anesthesia options for a fetus older than 20 weeks. The fetal pain bill sponsored by Rep. Carl Wimmer, R-Herriman, HB222 - Unborn Child Pain Prevention Act, passed 56-15.

NCJW supports comprehensive, confidential, accessible family planning and reproductive health services, regardless of age or ability to pay. Further, NCJW supports the protection of every female's right to reproductive choice, including safe and legal abortion, access to contraception, and the elimination of obstacles that limit reproductive freedom.

## **Health Care Issues**

The Medical Language Interpreter Act (HB144), sponsor Democrat Rep. Chavez-Houck, would enhance the ability of interpreters via certification to serve medical patients who speak specified non-English languages. HB17, sponsored by Democrat Rep. Jennifer Seelig, allows physicians to more effectively treat certain STD's by issuing prescriptions to unnamed partners of individuals with these conditions.

## **Huntsman Supports Civil Unions**

Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. backs Equality Utah's Common Ground Initiative, a legislative effort that would provide some rights to gay and transgender Utahns. And the governor favors civil unions.

Huntsman's backing will not likely lead to civil unions getting past the legislature. Rep. Jackie Biskupski, D-SLC, scuttled her proposal to seek the Legislature's and voters' approval to erase the second part of Amendment 3, Utah's constitutional gay-marriage ban, which forbids civil unions. Huntsman, who endorsed Amendment 3 when he ran for governor in 2004, now favors repealing that portion.

Of the remaining Common Ground bills, one, HB267, sponsored by Rep. Christine Johnson, would make it illegal to fire or evict someone for being gay or transgender. Rep. Rebecca Chavez-Houck's HB288 would allow unmarried couples, including gay and lesbian partners, to adopt and foster children in Utah. HB160, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Selig, would allow two, unmarried cohabiting adults to file a "declaration of joint support" with their county recorder and gain benefits of inheritance and medical-decision making. The governor could make the difference on a non-legislative piece of the Common Ground Initiative: extending state employees' health benefits to domestic partners.

For more on the Common Ground Initiative, go to:  
<http://www.equalityutah.org/action/common.html>

A core NCJW principle states: Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity must be eliminated. Moreover, NCJW supports laws and policies that provide equal rights for same-sex couples.

## **State Shortfall Means Budget Slashed**

Lawmakers rushed to slash \$175 million from the current year's budget in order to balance it. Most agencies took an across-the-board cut of about 3.8 percent, with classroom spending taking a 1.5 percent cut; some health programs were preserved in the initial cuts. However, more budget cuts are expected as the legislative session continues and economic forecasts worsen. The total budget shortfall is expected to be close to one billion dollars; hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts are anticipated to meet this shortfall. Utah's disabled residents, the mentally ill and at-risk youth would see dramatic cuts to the services they receive, including the elimination of scores of child abuse caseworkers, under legislators' budget recommendations for fiscal 2010.

## **Energy Resolutions Work Their Way Through Capitol**

HR 3, a Resolution on Energy Policy that urges Utah to withdraw from the Western Climate Initiative (WCI) is sponsored by Rep. Noel, Republican from Kanab. The WCI enables Utah, Western States and Canadian provinces to participate in decisions to reduce climate change emissions.

Sen. Pat Jones, D-Salt Lake City, is the sponsor of SJR1, a resolution that directs the State Energy Department to craft model ordinances that municipalities can use to include renewable forms of energy - namely solar, wind and geo-thermal - to meet the needs of their residents. NCJW supports environmental laws, policies and programs that promote the health of children and families.

## **Gun Law Change Proposed**

Rep. Curt Oda, R-Clearfield, a strong gun rights supporter, is sponsoring a proposed change in HB204, which would require applicants for certification of concealed firearms instructors to be state residents and to take a course in the safe handling and lawful use of firearms. This bill accords with NCJW Principle 11.12, "Laws, policies and programs to restrict and regulate firearms and prevent gun violence."

## **Voter Registration Bill To Full Senate**

Senate bill SB25 enabling voters to register online, moves to the full Senate for debate. Potential voters would use the signature on their driver licenses. The online system would ask users to submit an address to be checked against the address appearing on the license. Bill sponsor Sen. Peter Knudson, R-Brigham City, said he hoped the measure would boost voter turnout, which has declined in recent years.

HB 126, voter identification for elections, sponsored by Rep. Brad Daw, would, after amending, require voters to present ID at the polls. NCJW and the LWV oppose this bill since it is likely to depress already low voter turnout and voter fraud is almost non-existent in the nation. In a related development, Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. announced a new commission that will attempt to increase voter turnout in Utah and improve ethics in government.

## **Immigration Revisited**

The comprehensive immigration reform bill passed last year faces changes. SB81 takes effect July 1, but two legislators are leading the fight to push that back to July 2010. Rep. Stephen Clark, R-Provo, would delay the bill by a year and do a \$150,000 study assessing the fiscal impacts of illegal immigration on Utah. Sen. Pat Jones, D-Holladay, has a bill pushing back implementation one year. Jones noted that SB81's \$1.8 million price tag may give her bill a chance to succeed. Rep. Brad Dee, R-Washington Terrace, wants to create an immigration strike force, costing \$1 million, to address major crimes committed by undocumented immigrants. A bill by Sen. Scott Jenkins would make state contractors verify the residence status of all employees and would allow undocumented workers employed by the state to receive retirement benefits, though SB81 takes away all other

state public benefits to undocumented workers. NCJW supports comprehensive, humane, and equitable immigration and naturalization laws, policies, and practices that facilitate and expedite legal status for more individuals.

## NCJW Israel's Shari Eshet

March 9th is International Agunot Day, a time to speak out for those who have no voice - for those who choose to move on and make a new life for themselves out of an unbearable marriage. Please speak out for them. On the eve of Purim, when we celebrate Queen Esther and her courageous and powerful actions on behalf of her Jewish community, we urge all to take action and speak out against this human rights violation. We seek the right for all Jews to live free of oppression.

## Israeli Elections

The leaders of Israel's two main parties both claimed victory in an early general election. With almost all votes counted, the governing centrist Kadima has 28 seats and the right-wing Likud opposition 27, out of 120 seats, election officials said. Kadima's Tzipi Livni told supporters she was ready to lead the country. But Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu said the "nationalist camp" had won. And right-wing parties did garner a majority of votes. Ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beitenu came in third, making prospects for a working coalition slim. Voter turnout was 65.2%.



**Member Spotlight: Mary Jane Ciccarello** is the Self-Help Center Attorney with the Utah State Courts. She was an elder law attorney in private practice in Salt Lake City for several years and provided Older Americans Act Title III legal services to older persons in Summit and Wasatch Counties in northern Utah. She also served previously as the Legal Services Developer for the Utah State Division of Aging and Adult Services, a staff attorney with the Legal Aid Society of Salt Lake and Utah Legal Services, and the dean of students at the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law where she now teaches elder law as an adjunct professor. A Fellow with the Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging since 2002, she serves as the foundation's assistant director since 2007.

Mary Jane is the sole staff member of the virtual self-help legal center, begun as a pilot program in December 2007. With one urban and two rural sites, the self-help center has a website, a call-in number, email, a law library blog at <http://www.utcourts.gov/lawlibrary/blog/> and screencast for those with limited literacy skills. Mary Jane fields phone calls and answers emails from those seeking legal information. Three fifths of those served earn less than \$36,000 a year and almost a quarter earn \$12,000 or less. The informative self-help resources site is [www.utcourts.gov](http://www.utcourts.gov). Although it has been widely praised, served over two thousand and was approved as a permanent program, it has not been budgeted past the end of June.

Mary Jane has lived in Utah for twenty years, although she grew up in New York. She never wanted to be anything but a public interest lawyer. She is married to composer and University of Utah music professor Morris Rosensweig and they are the parents of two sons in college, Jacob and Max. She received her B.A. magna cum laude in Italian from Barnard College M.A. and M.Phil. in Italian from Columbia University, and J.D. from the University of Utah College of Law. The Utah State Bar named her the distinguished pro bono lawyer of 1997 and she was awarded the 2008 Pete Suazo Social Justice Award for individual advocacy by the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work. She served as the chair of the Needs of the Elderly Committee of the Utah State Bar and as president of the board of Jewish Family Service of Salt Lake. She currently serves on the Utah State Courts Standing Committee on Resources for Self-Represented Parties, the Utah State Courts Ad Hoc Committee on Probate, and on the Mental Health Special Committee of the Utah Commission on

Aging. She is a trustee of UJET, the Utah Jewish Community Endowment Trust, a member of the Utah State Bar, and a member of the Utah Aging Alliance. Mary Jane writes and lectures regularly on law and aging issues. She belongs to NCJW because the group tries hard to promote social justice.

## December Community Events Surpass Expectations

The Chanukah lunch for seniors at the JCC was a tremendous success. Emily Bauman, a driver for seniors that day, emailed, "Shira and I had a blast. We LOVED the people that rode in my car!! Thank you for organizing this event!" NCJW served eighty seniors, compared to fifty last year. The delicious food included potato latkes made from scratch, homemade apple sauce, chicken, salad, carrots and jelly donuts. We had over 20 volunteers, Rabbi Rosen performed the menorah lighting ceremony, JCC youth performed songs and a jazz trio from Heart and Soul provided background music. Ann Bernstein recounted, "I have never been so challenged at being a waitress for coffee and tea orders (a task I've never before attempted) and gathering said orders in a dual-language situation (English-Russian). I was so grateful for the tolerance and patience of our guests since, as soon as I'd finally managed to figure out one order (tea, no sugar, milk) the others would be forgotten! We recited the orders around the table and everyone obligingly drank whatever I brought them - perhaps they swapped around! Clearly a show of holiday joy!" Among the new volunteers were Larry Stensrud, cook at Kol Ami, and Peter Brownstein. Both expertly manned the stoves. Thanks to other volunteers Sally Padawer, Fran Lapin, Freida Sweitzer, Cathy Dern, Vivian Dowsett, Helene Jaffe, Wilma Odell, Rakella Richardson, Roberta Lovell, Allison Caplan, Joelle Kanshelpolsky, Marsha Backels, Ed Bronsky, Turid Lipman, Irene Grossman, Judy Sheffres, Helen Rappaport, Gina Dalton, Lois Spiegel, Sue Prottas, Shoshana Jansen, Sheila Gelman, Betty Yanowitz and Ann Bernstein. More photos are on our website: [www.ncjwutah.org](http://www.ncjwutah.org)



The Salaam Shalom Tikkun Olam Christmas Project also had record numbers of volunteers and recipients and proceeded smoothly at West High School. Culturally sensitive winter baskets and boxes including clothing, food staples, toys, educational materials, blankets and hygienic supplies went to hundreds of refugee families and others in need. The elderly got meals and companionship.

Karen Nielson Anson and David Anson recalled the day. "The Anson family showed up at West High Christmas morning to deliver boxes of food, blankets and other goodies to home-bound elderly folks at the Multi-Cultural housing center downtown. We asked if there was something that we could do that would involve our 5 and 8 year olds, Deborah and Daniel, and Eileen told us the seniors love seeing the kids, so we thought that would be the perfect thing for us. We caravanned over to the Center and happened to run into the daughter of the couple who we were about to visit, in the hallway, so she brought us in to meet her parents, an elderly couple, James and Marie Easter, and their darling dachshund. James and Marie were seated and unable to walk; Marie had an oxygen machine attached to her, which my daughter was fascinated with. Loads of chachka collections adorned their tiny apartment, and one wall was completely covered with family photos. They invited us in; we introduced ourselves and they immediately expressed how grateful they were to have visitors. Their other children and none of their grandchildren were unable to come, so they enjoyed seeing ours. My daughter, Deborah had never seen a nativity scene before, and Marie explained to us that she painted the one in their apartment years ago. It had survived all of their moves except for an ear was knocked off of one of the cattle. They asked us to tell the story of Chanukah, and we did as their ham was roasting in the oven for the Christmas dinner. My children marveled at the tiny baby in the nativity scene, and we talked about what a meaningful day it was for them, celebrating

such an important birthday. We all agreed it was a special day, and Marie gave each of my children a little ornament as we left. There were hugs all around, and James became quite emotional when it was time to say goodbye. By the time we got back into the hallway, all of the other boxes had been delivered (we had taken an entire HALF HOUR!), but we came away with the greatest gift of all. We knew it meant a lot to these people to have someone come into their home, look them into the eye, and get to know them a little. They know that we cared about them, we were able to lessen their loneliness, and it mattered to us, and to them. We'll be doing this every year if we're in town. Thanks for organizing this!"

NCJW members interested in tutoring refugee English Language Learners at West High School, please contact Susana Anderson, West H.S. ESL coordinator, [susana.anderson@slc.k12.ut.us](mailto:susana.anderson@slc.k12.ut.us), (801) 578-8500 ext. 419 or (801) 662-9188. More photos are on our website gallery at [www.ncjwutah.org](http://www.ncjwutah.org)



Get well wishes to Mavis Green, Reggie Benowitz, Doris Krensky, Rochelle Wenger and Karen Gladstone. Apologies made to anyone inadvertently left off this list.

NCJW seeks correspondence chair, book club organizer, someone to organize May's Race for the Cure, volunteers for Senior Passover Seder, folks interested in taking on leadership roles in next year or two. Contact Rochelle or Laura, emails top of issue.