

Lobby promotes legislation benefiting women

Women's Lobby, Inc., Nebraska was formed in 1973 to "keep people informed in this state as to the need for effective legislation in the field of women's rights," said Yvonne Norton Leung, women's lobbyist.

Leung, who has lobbied for women's groups in the past, said, "We decided to form one lobby group in order to help set priorities and work for legislation benefiting women.

We are a professional group," she said.

To set priorities, letters are sent to women in the state, asking their opinions on which issues are the most important concerning women.

"Child care and welfare reform are our two key issues now," she said.

The purpose of a child care program would be to provide a voluntary program for child development services to

children and their families, including the care of working parent's children and assistance through parent effectiveness training. Families of all income levels would have access to the facilities on a sliding fee scale, based on ability to pay.

Women's Lobby began working on this issue in September.

"Our study showed that there are 200,000 kids in need of help. In larger cities these

services are available but your smaller towns have no facilities," she said.

Leung also noted a great increase in child abuse in areas without child care services.

"We're interested in developing more human services and trying to help parents become better parents," she said.

Concerning legislation dealing with child care, Leung said there were two major points to keep in mind.

"Whatever child care services you build, it has to have quality. Also, enough money has to be provided for welfare mothers so they can stay at home and raise their family, if that's what they want to do," she said.

Leung feels that poor women and their children need adequate payments to exist and allow them time to raise their families, and return to the work force well qualified.

One problem in passing child care legislation, according to Leung, is "the feeling on the floor of the Legislature. Many of them (legislators) feel we would be putting our children in communistic institutions, or that we would be socializing our children, or just providing a way for mothers to get rid of their children.

But it would really be something the child and the family would benefit from. The family is a strong, basic unit, but it needs to be supported. We want to make the family a viable unit.

It's always a positive thing to have any child care legislation passed," she said.

With the help of the Women's Lobby, many child support bills have passed. The passage of these bills is a step in the right direction, according to Leung, but more is needed. Leung said that many husbands are late in paying child support, and that women and children are entitled to receive the support awarded them by the courts.

"The responsibility for the collection of their support should be with the courts, not the women," she said.

The Women's Lobby has been very successful, Leung said.

"We have a good relationship with the senators, and got many of our bills passed. They are aware now that women do exist, and that there are women in their respective legislative districts.

The legislators' consciousness has definitely been raised," she said.

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