



History of the Commission

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy created the President's Council on the Status of Women with Eleanor Roosevelt as its first Chairman. The report issued by that Council encouraged each state to create a similar organization to look at current legal status, potential problems of gender bias and key quality of life issues facing women and families. Governor Henry Bellmon established the first Governor's Commission on the Status of Women during his first term as Governor in 1965. Each Governor thereafter established either a Committee or a Commission by Executive Order and appointed a group of individuals to serve. By choice of each Governor, the Commission ranged from 20 to 90 members. Governor George Nigh established the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame in 1982, as part of the responsibilities of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women.

In 1994, through the efforts of Speaker of the House Glen Johnson, Senate President Pro Tempore Bob Cullison, Senator Angela Monson, Representative Laura Boyd, and a dedicated group of women, legislation creating the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women (OCSW) passed and was signed by Governor David Walters. The appointments are now made by the Governor, Senate President Pro Tempore, and Speaker of the House and consist of 30 members appointed for five-year terms. The initial appointment terms were staggered. By statute, the terms will end on June 30th of each year.

In addition to the appointed members, the Commission is assisted by an Advisory Council whose main function is supporting the Commission in meeting the requirements of the Oklahoma Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches (OLEJ.) The Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame recognizes and honors exceptional Oklahoma women whose outstanding service benefits the lives of women and families in Oklahoma, the nation, or the world. We look for women who have made significant and enduring contributions in a particular discipline, profession or field, including business, community service, public service, philanthropy, the arts, sports and the sciences. These women have elevated the status of women, opened new frontiers, acted as role models, and been champions for women.

Mission: "We strengthen and empower women in Oklahoma by improving their opportunities and quality of life".

Vision: "The Commission provides leadership and direction for actions to support the successes of Oklahoma women and encouragement of women in leadership". The Commission acts as a focal point for other agencies and communities to provide resource information, expertise and input on women's issues.

Duties of Commission

The OCSW offers advice on equity issues relating to gender bias, state agencies and employees, communities, organizations, and businesses of this state which desire the services of the Commission. Duties of the Commission includes but is not limited to, monitoring legislation as to whether the legislation is discriminatory toward one gender or whether the gender of an individual would have an effect on the enforcement of the legislation, acting as a resource on issues related to women and gender bias, conducting meetings and seminars within the State of Oklahoma as appropriate to support the goals and duties of the OCSW. In addition, the Commission shall report to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of its activities.

Committees

The OCSW accomplishes its mission and vision through the works and goals of its Administrative, Topical, and Event committees. Each committee is comprised of members from the Commission and the Advisory Council.

Administrative Committees

Communications Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Communications Committee promotes the activities of the Commission throughout the State of Oklahoma to create awareness.

Executive Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Executive Committee strives to improve the quality of life for women and families in Oklahoma through coordinating activities of the Commission, convening ad hoc committees, and coordinating with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services to oversee efficient management of finances of the Commission, the website and administrative office of the Commission.

Budget and Restructuring Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Restructuring Committee strives to improve the quality of life for women and families in Oklahoma through effective and efficient utilization of appropriated dollars of the Commission and through efficient structure of the Commission to conduct and carry out the Legislative Mandates.

Legislative and Policy Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Legislative and Policy Committee strives to improve the quality of life of women and families in Oklahoma through monitoring state, local and national legislation related to women and families.

Topical Committees

Health (Physical and Mental) and Aging Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Physical and Mental Health Committee strives to improve the health status, quality of life and reduce disparities of women and families in Oklahoma through communicating health messages, conducting seminars and special health events.

Incarceration of Women Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Incarceration of Women Committee strives to improve the quality of life and reduce disparities of women and families in Oklahoma through partnering with other coalitions, agencies and organization on activities and actions to reduce the incarceration of women.

Family Issues Committee

Purpose of Committee: The Family Issues Committee is focused on improving the quality of life for Oklahoma families.

Event Committees

Annual Kate Barnard Award and Luncheon

The purpose of the award is to recognize elected, appointed, and/or government salaried women who have made a difference in Oklahoma though outstanding service as public servants.

Guardian Award Committee

The Guardian Award is presented to an elected official who have made significant governmental contributions to guarding, protecting and preserving the rights of women and families.

Annual Retreat

Annual Retreats are conducted so that the Commission can develop a plan of action and long-range strategy for effective functioning.

Summit

Every biannual odd year, the Commission hosts a Solutions, Initiatives, Strategies (SIS) summit. Our Women's Summits include broad discussions of issues and in-depth looks at women's incarceration, gestational diabetes, and human Trafficking. During the annual retreat, the Commission approved Domestic Violence for its 2016 Summit.

Women's Hall of Fame

The Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame (WHOF) was established under the administration of Governor George Nigh in 1982, and is held every other year during odd numbered years. The purpose of the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame shall be to provide highest honor to Oklahoma women who reside in Oklahoma or were former residents of the state, and who provided outstanding service benefiting the lives of women and families in Oklahoma, the nation, or elsewhere in the world.

Special Committee – History and Archiving of Records

Purpose of Committee: The History and Archiving of Records Committee is charged with developing a dynamic history of the Commission and to oversee the archiving of Commission records since its inception

2015 Kate Barnard Recipient



The Kate Barnard Award and Luncheon were held February 27, 2014 in the State Capitol's Blue Room. This year's award was given to Representative Lee Denney, and President Janet Cunningham, Northwestern Oklahoma State College. Pictured left to right, Denney, OCSW Chairman Lou Kohlman, and Cunningham. Picture courtesy of State Capitol photographer.

2015 Guardian Award Recipient



Senator AJ Griffin was presented the Guardian Award on May 22, 2014 at the State Capitol by Lou Kohlman, Chair of OCSW. Senator Griffin was recognized for her work in behalf of passing legislation to combat prescription drug addiction. She also authored legislation to better protect victims of child abuse. Pictured left to right, Kitti Asberry, Executive Director, Senator Griffin, and Lou Kohlman. Picture courtesy of Commissioner Linda Haneborg.

2015 Women's Hall of Fame

The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women held their Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, April 9, 2015 at the Oklahoma History Center. A total of seven women were inducted, which included one posthumous induction. The honorees included LaDonna Harris, Mary Me'Lon, Dr. Marion Paden, Thelma Reece Parks, Patty Roloff, Avis Scaramucci and Dr. Ramona Paul (posthumous).



Pictured left to right, back row, Mary Me'lon, Dr. Marion Paden, Mr. Homer Paul, husband of Dr. Ramona Paul. Front row, left to right, Avis Scaramucci, Thelma R. Parks, Patty Roloff and LaDonna Hunt.. To read the inductees bios, please visit our website at www.ok.gov/ocsw/

Advisory Council Members Honored

Former Lt. Governor Jari Askins and Former Mayor of Edmond, Sandra Neifeh received the Elected Women of Excellence Award from the National Foundation for Women Legislators' during their annual conference held September 11, 2015. The conference will held at the Cox Convention Center in downtown OKC. Pictured below from left to right are Neifeh, Governor Mary Fallin, and Askins.



National Association of Commissions for Women Representative

Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women is represented by Commissioner Bernice Mitchell, and Kitti Asberry, Executive Director. The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women has been a member of the NACW since 2003 and has had representation on its Board of Directors since 2006 and on the Executive Team since 2010. OCSW, through its representative, continues to play a prominent role in the make-up of the NACW Board and Committees. At the present time, work is being done in the areas of Nominations, Recruitment, Elections, Board Development training and By-Laws review. Over the last 5 years, OCSW has won an Achievement Award for the outstanding mission related programs it has produced. Currently Mitchell is serving as an Associate Director. Asberry was elected July 2014 to serve a 2 year term as Secretary.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is chaired by Adeline Yerkes. The Advisory Council was created and approved by the Commission as a body January 26, 1995. The Advisory Council's purpose is to assist the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women in meeting its requirements; to act as an outreach to the women of the state; to be a resource and clearing-house for research and information on issues related to women and gender bias; to act as an advisory entity on equity issues to state agencies, communities, organizations and businesses of the state, and to establish recommendations for action to improve the quality of life for Oklahoma women, children and families. The active advisory council members participated as contributing members for all of the commission meetings and special events this year. The Council ended the year with ninety-one members.

2015 Commission Membership

The Commission consists of 30 commissioners appointed by the Governor of the State of Oklahoma, the President Pro Tempore of the State Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Chair:	Lou Kohlman, Oklahoma City
Vice Chair:	Maria Trapp-Braly, Edmond
Secretary:	Karen Sneary, Alva
Finance:	Victoria Woods, Edmond
Advisory Council Chair:	Adeline Yerkes, Edmond
Executive Director:	Kitti Asberry, Oklahoma City

Commissioners

Rita Aragon, Edmond
 Brenda Barwick, Edmond
 Beverly Binkowski, Oklahoma City
 Mary Louise Binning, Edmond
 Patty Bryant, Tulsa
 Representative Lee Denney, Cushing
 Senator AJ Griffin, Guthrie
 Linda Haneborg, Oklahoma City
 Estela Hernandez, Oklahoma City
 Joyce Horton, Chickasha
 Denise Kinzie, Cushing
 Jean Lehr, Edmond
 Valeska Littlefield, Tulsa
 Shondra McCage, Ada
 Amy McCord, Oklahoma City
 Bernice Mitchell, Stillwater
 Chris Morris, Oklahoma City
 Terry Neese, Oklahoma City
 Representative Jadine Nolan, Sand Springs
 Gloria Torres, Oklahoma City
 Nikki Waters, Shawnee



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