



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMISSIONS FOR WOMEN**  
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March 29, 2012

The Honorable Bob Lynn  
Chair, State House Affairs Committee  
STATE OF ALASKA  
State Capitol  
Room 108  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Lynn and Members of the Alaska House State Affairs Committee:

On behalf of the National Association of Commissions for Women, I respectfully submit this letter of support for SB53 to reestablish the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women.

The National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) serves as the only professional organization for government-established Commissions for Women across the country. We provide professional and leadership development to our member commissions, as well as advice, support, ideas and strategies that help commissions successfully engage with their local communities of women and girls. We advocate for millions of women through our membership network. Born from the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women established by President Kennedy, women's commissions have been the grassroots organizations supported by local governments that advocate for issues impacting women in cities, counties and states since the early 70s.

Women's commissions are specifically designed to identify barriers that prevent women from participating fully and equally in all aspects of life and work closely with public, private and not-for-profit groups to develop long-term solutions. As effective and efficient government partners, women's commissions directly address the challenges women face in fully garnering the contributions of women to the economic health of our states.

Alaska's women face considerable hurdles:

- Alaska has the highest rate of forcible rape of any state – 2.3 times the national average.  
*Council on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, Annual Report 2010*
- Alaska women made up 47.9% of the workforce in 2010, but only took in 38.2% of the earnings.  
*Alaska Journal of Commerce, October 2011*
- 22% of Alaska women live below the poverty line, and 36% of those women have children under the age of 5  
*Alaska Journal of Commerce, October 2011*

*The National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) is committed to equality and justice for women by increasing the effectiveness of member commissions and serving as their national voice.*

Without the reestablishment of the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women, women in Alaska will continue to be at the end of the line, in poverty, in low-wage jobs and with no opportunity for their concerns to be heard and addressed. Alaska's motto, "North to the Future," includes the women of Alaska and their future hinges on addressing the challenges they face.

**NACW, its member commissions and affiliate members respectfully ask the House State Affairs Committee to stand in support of SB 53 to reestablish the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women. We applaud the efforts of Senators Davis, Ellis and McGuire in recognizing the need for this action.**

The Alaska Commission on the Status of Women will provide leadership in working to turn up the volume on conversations about the strengths and challenges facing women and to develop strategies to give policy makers, service providers, and the public the information they need to identify, address and target the key issues facing women and their families. However, successful work in this area requires dedicated staff and sufficient funding.

"When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately; families are healthier; they are better fed; their income, savings, and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is true of communities, and eventually, of whole countries."

*Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize winning economist*

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cecilia Zamora", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cecilia Zamora  
President