

# GRAWA's Legislative Committee is gearing up

BY SARA STOUT ASHCRAFT

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The Legislative Committee of the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys is gearing up to support legislation for the new session of the New York Legislature.

Several major bills will be introduced this term, and GRAWA's Legislative Committee will support positions on bills backed by the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York (WBASNY), an organization of which GRAWA is a chapter. Although new versions of the bills will be drafted for the latest session, some of the basic proposals have already been reviewed and endorsed.

## No-fault divorce

WBASNY and several other bar associations and groups, including the League of Women Voters and the New York Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, are campaigning for no-fault divorce legislation devised so that divorce is just for all parties and provides the greatest protection to children. WBASNY is spearheading a coalition involving the aforementioned and other groups to

ensure passage of a no-fault bill.

As part of these efforts, WBASNY is collecting information on specific cases in order to show the direct impact of fault requirements on parties. The organization is seeking published and unpublished court opinions denying divorce on fault grounds as well as cases in which a spouse may have sacrificed an equitable interest in the marital estate in order to obtain a divorce without a ground contest.

## Human trafficking

Human trafficking has become an important focus for many organizations, both internationally and within the United States. The United Nations has identified human trafficking as a global problem and is urging governments to pass tougher legislation to combat it.

Human trafficking targets people in poorer countries, particularly women

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and children. Victims are recruited by promises of well-paid and legitimate jobs, but once they get to their destination they are under the trafficker's complete control and are exploited, often forced to become sex or sweatshop workers.

WBASNY will back legislation that seeks to curtail this serious problem. Although related legislation was proposed in the state assembly last year, the bills did not survive. New legislation will have to be drafted during the new session, and WBASNY and GRAWA's Legislative Committees will be very involved in the process.

## Judicial election reform

In 2006, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit held that the state's judicial selection process for supreme court judges — which uses a convention system to nominate major party candidates — is unconstitutional and ordered the state to employ a direct vote

mary system until legislation can address the unconstitutionality issues. Although there is now a plan to use Judicial Qualification Commissions to identify qualified judicial candidates, there is no question the Legislature must pass legislation and/or amend the state constitution to deal thoroughly with all of the problems pointed out by the federal court. WBASNY and GRAWA will certainly be involved as this important issue progresses.

These are just a few of the opportunities for GRAWA members to get involved. If you have an opportunity to join the Legislative Committee, or if you have a matrimonial grounds decision to share with WBASNY, please contact Legislative Committee Chairwoman Kimberly Duguay by e-mail at kfduguay@aol.com, or by phone at (585) 262-5130. If you would like to become a member of GRAWA, contact Membership Chairwoman Wendy Solovay by e-mail at wsolovay@hotmail.com or by phone at (585) 385-6474.

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