MUUSJN Women & LGBTQ Justice Project

The Michigan Unitarian Universalist (MUUSJN) was awarded a $10,000 grant from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program in 2018 to implement a project that promotes advocacy collaboration between Michigan’s Women and LGBTQ justice movements. These groups have in common oppression from the religious right. Unitarian Universalist values support the goals and aspirations of these groups. Additional funds have been obtained to sustain this project, which has been able to achieve several notable accomplishments. It’s beginning to demonstrate that collaboration between the women’s and the LGBTQ movements can result in each movement becoming stronger as they work together.

1. FORMED AN ADVISORY COUNCIL – MUUSJN recruited 15 organizations that included faith, women’s and LGBTQ groups to get involved with the project’s new Women’s and LGBTQ Justice Task Force. The Task Force has met monthly since October 2018. Project activities taken by the Coalition and the Task Force has included:
   ● Co-sponsored the Power of Pink (Planned Parenthood) Conference, promoting attendance and training;
   ● Task Force organizations regularly shared what they were doing at Task Force meetings;
   ● Provided updates on ballot campaigns for One Fair Wage and Earned Paid Sick Leave;
   ● Co-sponsored and helped organize an LGBTQ Rights conference held in October 2018;
   ● Hosted a Catholics for Choice briefing on AG Jeff Sessions Religious Liberty Task Force and how to fight back;
   ● The Task Force identified issues that applied to both movements, e.g., reform laws, economic justice, racial justice, health care services; religious freedom laws can oppress both women and LGBTQ community;
   ● Discussed new Trump administration definitions of “sex” that eliminated transgender identity. Issued a press release protesting this new definition. We are monitoring this issue;
   ● Issued action alerts protesting the Brett Kavanaugh nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court;
   ● Pressured Michigan’s Governor Rick Snyder to veto an anti-abortion telemedicine bill;
   ● Twelve organizations signed a letter sent to the Michigan Congressional delegation calling for the budget shutdown to end, expressing concern for its impact on low income families and demanding funding for the Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA). Funding for the VAWA was restored and expanded.
   ● Invited inspirational speakers, including Michigan’s new lesbian Attorney General, Dana Nessel, to speak at a June 2019 conference on women’s and LGBTQ policies and how to be allies of women and LGBTQ people;

2. ISSUED ACTION ALERTS - Action alerts on 10 topics were emailed to over 2,700 people statewide: Trump’s Gag Rule vs. funding for abortions and health clinics; Jeff Session’s “Holy War” on LGBTQ People; Michigan Civil Rights Commission Tackles LGBTQ Discrimination; Gov. Rick Snyder (R) was urged to veto cuts to Planned Parenthood. He did this!; Urged opposition to Judge Kavanaugh for the Supreme Court; Promoted the Power of Pink (Planned Parenthood) conference in Detroit; Urged Gov. Snyder to stand up for LGBTQ rights; Advocated for funding for the Violence Against Women’s Act; Promoted attendance at the Women’s March in January 2019.

3. COMMON ACTIONS TAKEN BY ALL PLAYERS IN THE PROJECT – Ten organizations helped formulate five policy issues that were forwarded to Gov. Elect Whitmer transition team during December 2018. Progress has been made on four of these issues! (see attached summary report).

4. NEXT STEPS – Project activists have agreed to work to promote these additional actions: oppose a federal “gag rule” that would cut funding for family planning clinics that provide abortions; support the (federal) Equality Act; support efforts to amend Michigan’s Elliot Larsen Civil Rights Act to include rights based on gender identity and sexual orientation; support legislation that would overturn old State laws that would outlaw abortion in Michigan if Roe v. Wade were overturned.
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