

▶ FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

by Linda C. Fox, President NCJW Long Beach Section/Serving Greater Long Beach and West Orange County



**"I cannot do all the good that the world needs.
But the world needs all the good that I can do."**

Jana Stanfield

Greetings and warm wishes for a prosperous, productive, and personally rewarding 2020! The New Year is upon us, but as always, NCJW Long Beach has been busy at work since last June, when we began the planning for our year that runs from July 1 through June 30. By now, you are aware that we are holding a vote on an amended name for our Section: National Council of Jewish Women Greater Long Beach and West Orange County Section, National Council of Jewish Women, Inc. Hopefully you have called, emailed or sent in your vote before our deadline of December 31, 2019. **If you have not yet voted, please do so right away.** We cannot proceed with our state application without a majority vote of yes by our entire membership. Now that a third of our membership lives beyond the city of Long Beach proper, it makes a great deal of sense to reflect that as well as to reflect our expanded outreach (see the list below).

Some highlights of the accomplishments and activities we have under our collective belt since July 1 are:

- ▶ Voter registration drives at both Long Beach Community College campuses, Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, and Golden West in Huntington Beach
- ▶ A successful and enjoyable Fall Membership event Sing Shalom! luncheon with the inimitable Cantor Nancy Linder
- ▶ Pastry and Politics: programs featuring outstanding programs in September (Human Trafficking: It Happens in Our Backyard) and November (Losing Roe: What Would This Mean for California?)
- ▶ Tributes to our partner Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition and to BeJeweled! honoring our dear Barbara Alpert (z"l) and the Alpert family, along with the 20th Anniversary of the Alpert Jewish Community Center
- ▶ Two Hug Packing sessions (August and November) providing 300 filled backpacks for children entering the foster care system (in support of LA County DCFS, Lakewood office)
- ▶ Our Tea "For the Child" in November that provided the trimmings for Thanksgiving dinner for a significant number of families in need served by this agency, whose clients include abused and neglected children and their families. We also collected gently used books for this agency over the summer.
- ▶ Chanukah donations of toys for clients of For the Child at our always fun Chanukah Potluck, with our unique artist-designed NCJW "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" pendants and pins newly available for purchase
- ▶ Continued official representation on the following coalitions and Boards:
 - the Early Childhood Education Committee of Long Beach
 - Long Beach Community College Homeless Coalition/Viking Vault for Food Insecure Students
 - Long Beach Human Trafficking Task Force
 - Coalition of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)
 - Long Beach Coalition on Homelessness
 - Office of Child Protection At Risk Task Force
 - Long Beach Continuum of Care
 - Jewish Family and Children's Service of Long Beach
 - Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition

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▶ OUR WOMAN OF VISION 2020 ADVOCATE PAR EXCELLENCE IS SHERRI SOBEL

by Linda C. Fox, President



NCJW Long Beach's new-found energy in many areas of advocacy in Greater Long Beach and West Orange County finds its impetus in the advocacy portfolios that Judge Sherri Sobel created and implemented as our advocacy co-chair. NCJW Long Beach now has official representation as a member of nine local and area coalitions as well as partnerships with several others, a result that is certainly attributable to her dedication to and work for our organization. Sherri has promoted far and wide the mission and vision of NCJW Long Beach/Serving Greater Long Beach and West Orange County.

Sherri Sobel has been teaching, "speeching", and preaching about children and families since 1965. She has taught English in an inner city high school, worked on campaigns for women candidates, and voting rights for elections. At the age of thirty seven she started law school, finished and passed the bar at forty. She immediately started working in child welfare, and has been there, bench and bar ever since. She is an expert in education for foster children, and has been an expert advisor for ten bench guides and taught at Judicial College. In 2013 she retired, and immediately met the "Lindi" (Calderón z"l and Fox) and joined National Council of Jewish Women. She co-chaired the advocacy committee for two years, then moved to Executive Vice President. She continues to work on issues around education, reproductive rights, and legislation, and has been recently trained by NCJW Inc.

as a spokesperson for the national NCJW initiative Benchmark, whose objective is to educate about the importance of the judiciary in our communities and in our society. She also attends OLLI classes, where she is writing about child welfare issues, enjoys book clubs, and ushers at Musical Theatre West with her husband, Craig. She has just begun teaching a mindfulness and mentoring class in an eighth grade Catholic class in Compton.

Her finest work, however, is her family, her children, and her perfect grandson, Bennet.

Please show your support for Judge Sherri Sobel by planning to attend the Arlene Solomon Women of Vision dinner at the AJCC on March 5, 2020. Invitations will be sent out by Women's Philanthropy of Jewish Long Beach later this month.

▶ 2020 HANNAH G. SOLOMON AWARD

By Lisa Raufman, Co-VP Programs



NCJW Long Beach Section/Serving Greater Long Beach and West Orange County is proud to announce that our Hannah G. Solomon award for 2020 will be presented at our Charter Day Luncheon to Congressman Alan Lowenthal. Throughout his long career of public service, Representative Lowenthal has embraced a human rights and dignity agenda that reflects the priorities of NCJW. He has long been a friend of our organization and shares our goals and values.

Representative Alan Lowenthal is serving his 4th term in Congress, representing California's 47th district, which includes Long Beach and parts of Orange County. He serves on both the House Natural Resources Committee (HNRC) and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I).

He earned his bachelor's degree from Hobart and William Smith Colleges and his PhD. from the Ohio State University, before teaching psychology at California State University, Long Beach for nearly three decades.

Congressman Lowenthal served two terms on the Long Beach City Council, three terms as a California Assemblyman, and two terms as a California State Senator before being elected to Congress. He is widely regarded as a leader on environmental, transportation, human rights, and education issues.

Representing one of the most ethnically diverse districts in the nation, Congressman Lowenthal has championed human rights in Congress, not just at home, but throughout the world. He has also brought his strong support for LGBT rights to Washington where he became the first Congress member to permanently fly the Pride flag outside his office. His support for women, family and children's issues has been constant.

In addition, he has continued his long history of fighting for environmental protections, with a new mission to bring the issue of climate change to the front in Congress as chair of the more than 60-member Safe Climate Caucus.

We look forward to honoring Congressman Lowenthal.



National Council of Jewish Women
Long Beach Section

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN®

LONG BEACH SECTION

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Long Beach and
West Orange County

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▶ COME TO THE 74TH ANNUAL CHARTER DAY

By Lisa Raufman and Sharon Brannon, Co-VPs Programs

On Sunday, February 16, 2020 we celebrate the 74th Charter Day which commemorates the founding of the Long Beach Section of the National Council of Jewish Women. Please join us at Seal Beach's beautiful Old Ranch Country Club at 10:30 a.m. to mark the occasion. Your invitation will be received in the mail soon and you will have the opportunity to donate at various levels of support. This event is our major fund-raiser and is also our major FUN event!

The program will open with a presentation by the Jewish Women's Theatre of Los Angeles. The group, now in its 12th season, seeks, develops, and adapts stories celebrating a diverse Jewish population, regardless of generation, observance, ethnicity or gender identification. They will perform "The Way Home", a unique theatrical experience exploring the power of home through a compelling and funny story. For more information about the group see: www.jewishwomenstheatre.org.

We will be honoring Congressman Alan Lowenthal with the Hannah G. Solomon award.

A lovely lunch will then be served. Additionally, we will have a Silent Auction and an Opportunity Drawing for numerous fun and interesting baskets for this annual fund raising event. Sharon Brannon will be happy to accept your donations of gift cards or items valued at over \$50 until February 5, 2020. This will truly be a wonderful afternoon.

For more information call (657) 235-2511 or email info@ncjwlongbeach.org

▶ REMEMBERING BARBARA ALPERT

by Ann Millman, VP Communications

There have been many dedicated leaders in the Long Beach community whose contributions and dedication to building and supporting the Jewish community have been memorable. But none have had the impact on the Jewish future in the Long Beach area as the late Barbara Alpert and her husband Ray. Their business started at a time when California was experiencing dynamic growth and, over many years, became extremely successful. The primary focus of their philanthropy became the growth and sustainability of the Jewish community of greater Long Beach. They founded and supported numerous programs to do just that, the most visible being their major donation to the new Jewish Community Center which now bears their name. Among their other donations is the Cal State Long Beach Chair of Jewish Studies, Temple Israel, the California Conference for Equality and Justice, and the AJCC New Leadership Program. Ongoing donations have supported Sharon-Carmel Hadassah as well as Long Beach Section of NCJW and other groups. Barbara was a Life member of NCJW, as are her daughters Teri, and Nancy, and a daughter in law and granddaughters. Barbara was named the Hannah G. Solomon award winner in 2015. Barbara Alpert has been an inspiration to the Jewish community and has left a life-long legacy to all of us.

▶ PASTRY AND POLITICS: ALL RISE! HERE COME THE JUDGES

by Deborah Chankin, Co-Chair Voting and Elections



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 7:00 - 9:00 PM TEMPLE ISRAEL OF LONG BEACH

All eyes may be on the President's judicial appointments, but here in California we have judges on our March ballot. Who's keeping an eye on them? Do you know why they're there? Why they matter? Or how we can make wise decisions?

These questions will be addressed by our panel of three Los Angeles County Superior Court Judges: NCJW member Ana Maria Luna, D. Zeke Zeidler and Temple Israel member Patrick Madden. Our panelists are experienced and respected local judges and are not 2020 candidates.

You are invited to attend and learn about the ballot options for voters.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK (Continued)

This year National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW, Inc.) is celebrating 125 years at the forefront of championing the needs of women, children and families and courageously speaking out on issues of social and economic justice. We in the Long Beach Section/Serving Greater Long Beach and West Orange will celebrate our 74th anniversary of our incorporation at the Charter Day festivities on February 16, 2020 at the Old Ranch Country Club. Please support us by attending the very special festivities honoring Congressman Alan Lowenthal, our Hannah G Solomon Award recipient, with entertainment provided by the Jewish Women's Theatre of LA. Invitations will soon be arriving in your mailbox.

And if you haven't already registered for the January 14th joint Shirley Stein Book Review, with Sharon-Carmel Hadassah, make sure to meet the January 7 deadline. This is one book presentation you won't want to miss! Pulitzer-nominated Dr. Steven J. Ross, author of *Hitler in Los Angeles. How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots Against Hollywood and America*, will be our speaker at what is sure to be an interesting event. Luncheon at The Grand is \$40.00; check made out to NCJW or online registration (ncjwlongbeach.org) is due no later than January 7th.

Powered by the Jewish imperative to ensure dignity for all, our members are community servants and activists who impact policy, advocate for justice, and support the community. As the oldest Jewish women's organization in this country, NCJW welcomes all who share our core values to join us. NCJW Long Beach has much to be proud of. Our "New Year's resolution," then, is not "new" at all: NCJW Long Beach pledges to continue to work hard in our efforts to make the world a better place. Join us!

**"Act as if what you do
makes a difference. It does."**

William James

CARING CORNER

by Harriette Ellis, Chair Caring Corner

NCJW sends deepest condolences to the families of:

Ada Kreindel, very longtime, active member, who died of a severe stroke last month. Ada's three sons, Kenny, Steve and David, and their families held a celebration of her long life last Saturday.

Barbara Alpert, who died in November. She and her husband, Ray (z"l) were known for their extraordinary generosity to the Jewish and Long Beach community. A celebration of her life was held at the Alpert JCC hosted by her children, Teri, Alan and Nancy and their children and grandchildren.

Jean Keleman, former NCJW Long Beach member who was active in the 90's. She moved to Laguna Woods, where she passed away on November 28.

If you know of any of our members who are ill, or have passed away, or of awards, honors, or special celebrations, to Harriette Ellis at (657) 235-2511 or info@ncjwlongbeach.org. NCJW wants to know!

TRIBUTE FUNDS

We thank all these donors who have acknowledged other members, family and friends on special circumstances in their lives with contributions to our organization.

To Bobbi Horowitz

Wishing you the best.

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To Barbara Millman

Thinking of you. Looking forward to seeing you soon.

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To Ted Van Boemel

Wishing you the best and thinking of you.

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To Harriette Ellis

Look forward to seeing you and thinking of you as always.

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To Jean Feldman

Look forward to seeing you soon and wishing you as always the best.

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To Alan Lowenthal

Congratulations on receiving the Key to the City of Long Beach. Welcome to NCJW and being selected to receive the Hannah G. Solomon award at the Charter Day meeting on February 20, 2020.

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To the Alpert Family

In memory of Barbara

From Barbara Wolfe KFF

To the Alpert Family

In memory of Barbara

From Barbara Millman SF

To Ann Millman

I honor my mother, Ann Millman, during this season of Thanksgiving. I am so blessed to have been taught and shown the value of service. Thank you for your fine example. May I be half the woman you are.

From Sara Millman Silva HP

To the family of Fred Masback

In memory of Fred Masback

From Barbara Millman SF

Don't forget to call or email Barbara to remember or congratulate friends with a Tribute card and support NCJW projects or make a Tribute online at www.ncjwlongbeach.org!

PLEASE SEND YOUR TRIBUTES TO BARBARA MILLMAN.

GF: General Fund

HPF: Hug Pack Fund

DVF: Domestic Violence Fund

SOF: Senior Outreach Fund

SF: Linda Calderón Memorial Scholarship Fund

KFF: Denise Berro Kindergarten Festival Fund

CSNF: College Student Nutrition Fund

ISTF: Immigration Services Tribute Fund



▶ EDUCATE, EMPOWER, ENGAGE!

by Linda C. Fox, President

January is now recognized as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. On Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020 the Long Beach Human Trafficking Task Force (LBHTTF), founded in 2012, will present its fifth annual Youth Empowerment Safety Symposium (YESS) at the Salvation Army, 3000 Long Beach Blvd, Long Beach 90807. This free event, which runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., will include workshops and presentations to inform youngsters and their caregivers about existing dangers and how to avoid them, as well as a great display of agencies working to prevent this modern day slavery and to help survivors. NCJW Long Beach has been a member of this Task Force since 2014 and provides some of the volunteers needed to make this day a success. Last year NCJW staffed part of the sign in and information table, but assignments vary.

LBHTTF core member Virginia Zart said art displays and special performances will add an element of fun to the day, along with food such as hamburgers and hot dogs and pizza, all of which are donated. Youth leadership groups will offer rallies and stage shows. Last year, 300 people attended the symposium and a similar number of visitors are expected this year.

"This event gives them a place to learn, have fun, and see how much support there is in our own community to help and empower them," Zart said. Appropriate for ages 13 and over.

If you are interested in being an NCJW volunteer who provides this service for the greater Long Beach community by staffing a shift of 1 ½ -2 hours, please contact Linda C. Fox at president@ncjwlongbeach.org or call and leave a message at (657) 235-2511. More information about parking and specific time of shifts will be available shortly.



▶ DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE FOR ORIGINAL NCJW JEWELRY

by Bobbi Horowitz, VP Resource Development



Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Fusion Glass Art Jewelry

NCJW Long Beach is offering stunning, limited-edition, glass pendants and pins designed exclusively for NCJW Long Beach.

Vivian Shimoyama, Long Beach glass fusion artist, created "Breaking the Glass Ceiling," a brooch for Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's beautiful pin collection. This gorgeous pin is featured in Secretary Albright's book *Read My Pins*, which was viewed on a national and international tour. The pin and book were displayed in over 22 museums and Presidential Libraries, including the Smithsonian, NY Museum of Arts and Design, Bowers Museum, SF Museum of Modern Art, and the Clinton, FDR and Reagan Libraries.

Vivian has been featured in several publications. Her pins have graced the lapels or prominent women in politics, corporations and governments. Now, you will have an opportunity to own your own custom piece or purchase one as a gift for women in your life. And, your purchase will support the work of NCJW Long Beach! Pendants and pins with gold are \$50, without, \$36.

When you purchase one of these limited edition pieces, each will be gift boxed and include information about the artist, her work and NCJW Long Beach. The designs can be seen at upcoming NCJW Long Beach events, including the Shirley Stein Book Review and Charter Day. For more information on how to obtain your pin or pendant, contact Bobbi Horowitz at (657)235-2511 or info@ncjwlongbeach.org. Purchase online at www.ncjwlongbeach.org/jewelry

▶ WE NEED HELP WITH HUGPACKS!

By Lydia Pinto, Co-Chair of Hugpacks

Hugpacks is one of our longest running community service projects, but it's still one of our most important! NCJW is the only organization in our area that provides emergency supplies to children when they are taken into foster care, frequently with no opportunity to take anything personal with them. Join us on February 4, 2020, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the AJCC to stuff 150 backpacks with items to let these children know that they are not forgotten. And meet new friends and enjoy a treat!

▶ CONVENTION IS WHERE IT'S HAPPENING!

by Linda C. Fox, President

NCJW CONVENTION 2020 : Jewish Feminism: Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future

WHEN: Thursday April 23 -Saturday April 25, 2020

WHERE: The Westin Chicago River North -Marriott, 320 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60654

WHY: To get inspired, to make change happen (voting on new board and bylaws and revising resolutions for 2020-2023), to learn something new (great workshops and celebrity speakers), and to cultivate connections with new CEO Sheila Katz and other fierce feminists from around the country who turn passion into action

HOW: Anyone can attend and is encouraged to do so. NCJW Long Beach/Serving Greater Long Beach and West Orange County will be given a specific number of voting delegates. Those who wish to be delegates need to submit a request to the NCJW Long Beach Nominating Committee that includes a commitment to a future leadership role. Those chosen will qualify for a subsidy from our Section and register for the full conference ticket. This year there is also a Shabbat ticket that begins at 2:30 pm Friday, April 24 through the rest of the Convention, ending at 10:00 pm Saturday, April 25 for those who are not voting delegates and wish to skip the business meetings. Registration fees therefore vary. Registration will begin soon! **Early registration (with a lesser fee) ends January 20, 2020, and it is highly recommended to register by that date, particularly if desiring a subsidy.** Hotel arrangements are made separately on your own but if you are a voting delegate and/or will be receiving a subsidy, we expect you will request double room occupancy.

PROCESS: First, check out the full Conference description and segments on the National website www.ncjw.org. Click on the Convention button at the top, as well as the multiple segment descriptions on the left. Anyone may register to attend. However, preference for Section subsidies will be given to our voting delegates, those who currently have a leadership role and/or those who commit to a future leadership role. Once you decide you'd like to apply to be subsidized, send a letter of interest detailing why you would like to attend and your commitment to NCJW Long Beach to Deb Lechuk, Chair, Nominating Committee, NCJW Long Beach, 3801 E. Willow St., Long Beach, CA 90815 or by sending an email to info@ncjwlongbeach.org. For more information, contact president@ncjwlongbeach.org

JOIN NCJW in Chicago for a real celebration of 125 years of progressive work and for a vision of our future!

▶ HOUSEWARMING FOR THE HOMELESS

by Deb Lewis and Barbara Cohen, Co-VPs Community Service

When individuals who have experienced long-term homelessness finally are able to move into a new housing situation, they typically have ZERO items needed and it can be very overwhelming! NCJW wants to help provide supplies to the Multi-Purpose Center for the "Welcome Home Kits" that they provide. These kits help ease the transition into housing and provide basic items that every home needs. Plan to attend this fun and worthwhile event at the AJCC on February 27, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Bring a NEW or like-new household item to donate, enjoy good company, wine and cheese, and, in addition, put together cozy fleece blankets with Temple Israel Sisterhood. See the link for the list of suggested items. www.ncjwlongbeach.org/welcomehomekits Please RSVP to Michelle Sztraicher or Barbara Cohen at (657) 235-2511 or info@ncjwlongbeach.org by February 20, 2020. A tour of the Multi-Purpose Center might be available on February 28. If you are interested, please note that when you RSVP.

Welcome NEW MEMBERS

Lynn Basson	Maria Osorio
Harriet Einhorn	Laurie Pearlman
Leslie Evans	Robin Flitt Schafer
Deborah Fabricant	Chaya Leah Sufrin

REMINDER

Postcard deadline is the 10th of the previous month. Please send postcard information to Sharon Brannon.

Pillars deadline is the 1st of the previous month. Send copy to Editor Ann Millman.

CELEBRATE WOMENS SUFFRAGE!

By Lisa Raufman and Sharon Brannon, Co-VPs Programs

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary for women earning the right to vote. Absolutely a cause to celebrate! Lisa Raufman is representing NCJW Long Beach on the planning committee for the year-long celebrations in the Long Beach area and has much to report and she can be contacted for more detail. The committee has been meeting since last August and has many interesting events coming up. NCJW members are encouraged to attend and participate.

Saturday, January 11, 2020, 11am: The Suffrage Film Festival opens at the Art Theatre, 2025 E. 4th St in Long Beach. Martha Wheelock of Wild West Women, Inc. will be presenting three of her films on Suffrage, including California Women Win the Vote, and Inez Milholland, Forward into Light.

On Sunday, January 26 at 2:00 p.m. come to a Suffrage Salon, Tea With Alice and Me, at the First Congregational Church, a journey through personal stories and photos of the many places women gathered, from parlors, tearooms, bookstores and marches to Washington D.C.

In February there will be another morning of films at the Art Theatre, date to be announced. Watch for the Eblast with more information. **Save the Date for March 15 at 7:00 p.m.** NCJW will sponsor a program at the A JCC—Suffrage! A History in Word and Song! You'll want to attend this rollicking evening of historical protest songs and impassioned pleas for women' right to vote. You also might learn some surprising information along the way! **THESE EVENTS ARE ALL WITHOUT CHARGE.**

The Long Beach Suffrage Centennial Circle and the Historical Society of Long Beach are also seeking your assistance with recommendations for 100 women who broke barriers and/or gave extraordinary service to the Long Beach Community. So far our members, Harriette Ellis, Renee Simon, and Barbara Wolfe have had their bios submitted for consideration. We are asking our members to recommend activists and submit bios with their suggestions for inclusion. For further information go to <https://lbsuffrage100.com/seeking-100-women/> Deadline to submit information has been extended through Spring 2020.

THE NEW YEAR USHERS IN OUR 2020 KINDERGARTEN FESTIVALS

by Trish Gordon, NCJW Kindergarten Festival Chair

Calling all NCJW volunteers with a love for small children! Our three Kindergarten Festivals in January and February need your support! As you may know, NCJW Long Beach is an integral part of the "K-Fests" that offer parents and children entering Kindergarten the following Fall useful school readiness information, workshops, and a free dental exam needed to enroll. NCJW Long Beach provides the backpacks through our Denise Berro Kindergarten Festival Fund, established by Binnie and Jack Berro to honor the retirement of their daughter, while the Long Beach Unified School District provides the "fillings." The excited smiles on the adorable pre-K children as they receive their backpacks are a sight to behold!

At the K-Fests, NCJW volunteers may be asked to sign in families or provide important information for the day with regard to the workshop schedules and maps of the site. Come spend a Saturday morning with us at one or more of the three 2020 Festivals:

- **January 11,** Dooley Elementary School, 5075 Long Beach Blvd., Long Beach 90805
- **February 1,** Roosevelt Elementary School, 1575 Linden Ave., Long Beach, 90813
- **February 22,** Burcham Elementary School, 5610 Monlaco Road., Long Beach, 90808

Call (657) 235-2511 or info@ncjwlongbeach.org to say you'll be there!



▶ VIOLINS OF HOPE IN LONG BEACH

by Ann Millman, VP Communications



A unique program of special interest to the Jewish community is coming to Long Beach this Spring. Sixty instruments which survived the Holocaust have been reconditioned as a labor of love. A recent PBS documentary detailed the history of the instruments and the dedicated violin craftsman who has spent years restoring them to playing condition. There will be several opportunities to see and hear performances with these instruments that we would like to bring to the attention of NCJW members. Please click on the link and try to attend some of these events, including the ARLENE SOLOMON Visions Dinner on March 5. You will be touched and thrilled by the story that has brought these instruments back to life. For more information about the upcoming performances visit www.ncjwlongbeach.org/violinsofhope.

▶ PASTRY & POLITICS ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

by Cynthia Gordon, Co-VP of Advocacy & Legislation

Since its founding in 1893, NCJW has worked steadfastly to bring reproductive freedom to women and their families. While we have seen much progress over the last 100 years, including the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling in 1972, in recent decades, and especially in the past few years, women's fundamental rights to abortion and contraceptive health services have been attacked in a multitude of lawsuits and regulations across the country. On November 4 an audience of about 50 heard from three distinguished speakers about the history of reproductive freedom, the current state of reproductive health care services, and some specifics about what's happening locally.

Our keynote speaker was Professor Michele Goodwin, who is the founder and director of the Center for Biotechnology and Global Health Policy at UC Irvine. She began our evening by sharing some historical perspective. She drew a line from how African-American women were demeaned and abused as slaves in this country to reproductive justice issues today. Abortion had been a common and legal tool of midwives for millennia, including under slavery. With the advent of the new science of Obstetrics & Gynecology, male doctors replaced midwives and stopped doing abortions, making them illegal. Roe v. Wade changed this, but in recent years new anti-abortion laws have multiplied across the country.



Professor Goodwin explained how these laws are being challenged in the courts, including in the Supreme Court. But with the recent additions to the Supreme Court, restrictive laws now have more chance of being upheld. While we are protected in California, obviously rulings at the Federal level can affect us. We must remain vigilant and involved.

Our next speaker was Betha Schnelle, the Chief Operating Officer of Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties. Betha explained that only 5% of the visits to their clinics last year were for abortion services, which helped the audience understand that Planned Parenthood provides primarily non-abortion, comprehensive health care services to women and men. While the rate of abortions is declining overall in the U.S., she explained that low income women and women of color are disproportionately represented among those seeking abortions.

Betha noted that between 2011 and 2017, 33 states have passed 480 laws restricting abortions. As a result, in certain parts of the country, women must travel long distances from their homes to the nearest abortion provider. In response, Planned Parenthood has developed an online national search tool for patients, enabling them to find a Planned Parenthood clinic near them. In addition, Planned Parenthood clinics in states where abortion access remains, such as California, are developing partnerships with clinics in states with restrictions. Additional funding will be needed to recruit, hire, and train new staff to support this effort. Planned Parenthood is also coordinating logistical support for patients who may have to travel distances to receive abortion services. This could lead to a future opportunity for NCJW members to become "patient navigators" who help provide such support to traveling patients.

The Honorable Judge Lynne Riddle, a retired Federal judge, was our final speaker of the evening. She discussed the California Healthy Youth Act, which requires six hours of sex education instruction both in middle school and high school. While this law was passed in 2003, there are compliance problems in a number of school districts throughout the state. In addition, there has been a chorus of criticism expressed by fearful and angry parents at various local school board meetings.

Judge Riddle suggested that the audience discover how the law is being implemented in our local schools. And she encouraged us to support our local school boards in providing this important part of a child's education. With more adequate sex education throughout our schools, teens will better understand their needs for comprehensive health care services, and perhaps the number of abortions will continue to decline. And this becomes yet another advocacy opportunity for NCJW members!