

For Immediate Release
July 6, 2017

Contact Information: Rep. Patricia Smith
Office: (225) 342-7106
Fax: (225) 342-7117
Email: smithp@legis.la.gov

Area Legislator in Two National Spotlights

At the Annual Legislative Conference of The National Organization of Black Elected Legislative/Women (NOBEL/Women), held in Nashville, Tennessee on June 28 -July 2, 2017, **Representative Patricia Haynes Smith (District 67)** was elected as 1st Vice President. Rep. Smith has been a member of NOBEL/Women since 2008. She was elected to the NOBEL/Women Executive Board as Recording Secretary in 2013 and 2015.

The National Organization of Black Elected Legislative/Women (NOBEL/Women) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization primarily composed of current and former black women legislators as well as many appointed officials. Originally established in 1985 as a national organization to increase and promote the presence of black women in government, NOBEL/Women in recent years has expanded its vision to serve as a global voice to address a myriad of issues affecting the lives of all women. Throughout its history, NOBEL/Women have inspired women to take an active role in the making of public policy and have served as a catalyst to provide economic and social justice for all classes and races of people. NOBEL/Women has worked actively to achieve its goals to increase the representation of black women in public service and the private sector by providing educational forums to address major public policy issues particularly in the areas of health, telecommunications, education, economic development and financial policies.

Today, NOBEL/Women stand 283 members strong. With the dynamic leadership of a renowned board, this premiere organization of black elected legislative women is preserving the legacy of leadership and shaping the future of our country with exceptional knowledge, character, courage and resolute few organizations have emulated.

As a viable voice for black women, NOBEL/Women strives to communicate the needs of black women to the media, legislature and government to affect change. NOBEL/Women supports opportunities that promote career, education and employment advancements for black women. Although NOBEL/Women is primarily concerned with issues facing the black community, NOBEL/Women examines the human and economic needs of all people. The organization works to ensure the enforcement of responsible programs and policies that meet the legal, social, political, economic, education and health needs of children, women and families. This accomplished by keeping governmental agencies accountable for implementing equitable laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination against women and promote equity and participation in the public and private sector.

The U.S. Justice Network has asked **Representative Patricia Haynes Smith (District 67)** to participate in a forum *Women Unshackled: Policy Solutions to Address the Growth of Female Incarceration* held July 18, 2017 in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Justice Action Network,

Google.org, and the Brennan Center for Justice will be hosting this forum to discuss the unique challenges facing women in the justice system and the policy solutions to improve outcomes.

Most often overlooked in the discussion about justice reform is its impact on women and their experiences in prison. The number of women in prison increased by 646 percent between 1980 and 2010, a rate nearly 1.5 times that of men. Even more concerning, nearly a third of the incarcerated female population have a serious mental illness and more than 80 percent have a history of drug or alcohol abuse. The goal of the forum is to offer real policy solutions that examine the impact on mothers and children, establish a trauma lens in arrest and jail policies, define gender-responsive programming and services in jails and prisons, and identify unique re-entry needs. The discussion will feature prominent female lawmakers from Congress and the states, and from both sides of the aisle, as well as notable policy experts, impacted individuals, policymakers, and judges to offer their perspectives.

The Justice Action Network (JAN) is the first and largest 501(c)4 organization in the country to bring together progressive and conservative partners to make our criminal justice system fairer, more efficient, and effective while ensuring public safety. The Justice Action Network employs federal and state lobbying, public advocacy, and public education efforts to pass sweeping criminal justice reforms that advance the following policy goals: to safely reduce the exploding prison population and astronomical costs to taxpayers; to implement effective rehabilitation programs that prepare the formerly-incarcerated to successfully re-enter society; to break down barriers to employment and housing for formerly-incarcerated individuals so they can support their families and lead crime-free lives; to end the systemic problem of overcriminalization and narrow the net of incarceration by reforming criminal codes; to collaborate with law enforcement to advance reforms that are smart on crime and strengthen public safety.

Created in the summer of 2015 to expand and drive forward the building criminal justice reform effort in the United States, the Justice Action Network has turned national momentum and widespread support into concrete action. Since their inception, JAN has worked to advance bipartisan reform legislation at the federal level, and successfully passed significant legislation in 11 priority states, one of which is Louisiana.

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