

**Jon Wainwright:** We're back for another In Depth edition of California Lawmaking. We're here with Beth Hassett, who is the CEO and Executive Director of WEAVE - Women Escaping A Violent Environment. Thank you so much for joining us today.

**Beth Hassett:** Thank you for having me.

**JW:** So, we're going to talk about one of the bills you worked on a couple of years ago, AB 1407. And this is an interesting one, because it took a couple of years to get done and it wasn't necessarily a two-year bill. What's the reason why it took a little bit extra time?

**BH:** Well, we got started, and we're just going gangbusters with Leland Yee as our author, and then the FBI arrested him the day before we were set to go live with the bill. So, we took a pause until the next session so that...

**JW:** (interrupting) Understandably.

**BH:** we could decide who was going to carry that bill for us.

**JW:** And then who wound up carrying it the next session.

**BH:** Toni Atkins did, but it was really interesting because several people knew it had floundered and we actually had quite a few overtures to have other folks carry it and really took our time deciding who we thought would be our strongest advocate and who would really get it through, frankly.

**JW:** Very cool. So, were there any other factors that led you to going with...?

**BH:** Well, you know, we look at lot of things when we're looking at who we want to work with. Her being a woman was one thing. She certainly was in a position of power, which we thought would help. And she also really seemed to get the underlying issues at play, which led us to wanting to get that bill going through in the first place. And that was really important - not just somebody who was wanting to jump on a women's issue or something to do with victims, but somebody who had a long track record of working on such projects.

**JW:** Okay. And then, to back up, what did AB 1407 do?

**BH:** Well, we had identified a need for our clients to be able to keep their cell phone numbers and their devices even if they were no longer with their partner and were no longer part of that family plan. I don't know if people really realize how much we use our cell phones and how for a victim of domestic violence, a cell phone can be that vital link to everything.

It can have documentation of the abuse on it, in the form of photos and text messages and that history. It's everybody we're connected with and so for somebody who's trying to extricate themselves from a dangerous situation, it can have those lifelines in that phone and the perpetrator has a lot of power over that device if it's part of a family plan and he or she is the key family member. So, we were trying to make it possible for the victim to extricate themselves in a legal fashion and we did that with this bill.

**JW:** Great. What were some of the hurdles you had to face to get the bill passed? It, at least on the front end, it looks like - you look at the bill and - you never see a no vote on this thing. So it looks like it had a pretty easy path but I'm sure behind the scenes that might not be the case.

**BH:** There were a lot of meetings and a lot of coordinating behind the scenes. I think the first thing we had to address was the fact that we needed the cell phone companies to agree on this and it needed to not look like it was just an AT&T thing or a Spring thing. We needed everybody in the room to have a conversation about what the problem was and how we might solve it. It really was this problem solving collaborative thing with a representative from each of the four major cell phone companies.

That's where we started. And I think that helped the bill all along the way because everybody was doing their own marshalling of forces and supporters throughout the process. We started there and we overcame a huge hurdle by being very inclusive and making sure everybody understood that it was a group effort.

The next hurdle would've been if we picked the wrong author, I think. I think we could've made some mistakes if we picked somebody who was really polarizing, or somebody who was really just trying to gain something else through assisting us. And, then we did a lot of testing our ideas, meeting with the staff, meeting with people who were on various committees and really talking about, "What do you see that's wrong about this?"

Let's talk about what doesn't work for you and what problems there might be before we get to them becoming a problem.

**JW:** Great. I think the other thing that really stood out, looking at the bill, is you had a ton of support from public safety groups up and down the state. What was process like getting them on board with the bill?

**BH:** Once we had the cell p[hone companies on board and we had our author and we were moving forward, it was really just reaching out and talking about the importance of this particular piece of legislation for victims. And when we started talking to everybody in the criminal justice system, first responders, all of those folks - they got it. They really understood the need for a victim to have that cell

phone. We also had some really good examples of clients we had where had this bill been in place, it could've either saved their lives or made leaving their relationship much, much easier and safer.

**JW:** That's great. And then, as we alluded to, it passed through both houses with no real troubles. It's been law now for a little while. What have been some of the impacts of the bill now that it's become law?

**BH:** We are able, we and anybody else who's apply for restraining orders, are able to include that in the orders and it means that so many more victims have the right to keep that phone and to be separated from their abusers' family plan. And so, more people have been taking advantage of that and it's one of those things that eliminates a barrier for somebody who's going, "I just, I can't imagine getting through the next week if I don't have my cell phone and I don't have access to that information."

**JW:** Wow. Well that's all really great stuff and it's a great piece of legislation you got passed there. So, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us about it.

**BH:** Thank you.