

Human Rights in the Legislative Session
By Andrea Denault

Human rights infringements were in no shortage at the 2017 state legislative session. We at the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition narrowed our focus to three specific groups who seemed to be under particular attack-the refugee, Native American, and LGBTQ communities.

As the NDHRC lobbyist and organizer, I had the privilege of standing at the helm orchestrating statewide resistance. Watching hundreds of North Dakotans rise to the occasion and volunteer their time and energy to fight for human rights was nothing less than humbling. They organized large-scale rallies, made phone calls, and came to Bismarck to testify at the capitol sharing deeply personal stories of struggle.

Looking back and putting things into perspective I realize that lobbying on behalf of NDHRC and partnering with other powerful groups like the AFL-CIO and the ACLU of North Dakota, we were tremendously successful in striking down bills that would have been a humanitarian disaster for our state. We did not get everything we wanted but luckily, due to our collective hard work, here are some laws that do NOT exist in North Dakota...

1. You cannot legally run over protesters who are intentionally blocking the road. Yes, that was a real proposal.
2. You will not be charged with a class C felony for causing a business economic harm in the sum of \$1000 or more. Remember, almost all protests use economic harm for leverage and that is a constitutionally protected right!
3. For now, communities in North Dakota may NOT put a moratorium on refugee resettlement. Real leaders like Grand Forks mayor, Michael Brown, testified against this bill. Organizers from within the refugee community turned out in droves to defend their rights.

It has been an honor to stand up on these issues and to work alongside some of the most driven and compassionate people in the state. I look forward to continuing to work with all who stand on the right side of history.