

[Click to print](#) or Select 'Print' in your browser menu to print this document.

Page printed from: <https://www.law.com/2019/2019/03/12/women-push-for-lactation-rooms-in-courthouses/>

# Women Push for Lactation Rooms in Courthouses

It's common for lawyer moms to pump in bathrooms, their cars, or empty offices with no locks, where court staff can barge in accidentally.

By **Angela Morris** | March 12, 2019

In courthouses across the country lawyer moms still have no option but to express their breast milk in public bathrooms, where they face frequent interruptions and unsanitary conditions.

But some women lawyers are pushing to change the lack of breastfeeding accommodations in courthouses. They've succeeded in getting the American Bar Association House of Delegates in January to pass a resolution to encourage federal, state and local courts to create properly-equipped lactation areas.



**Amanda Keller, of counsel at Gray Robinson, at a new lactation room at the Palm Beach County, Florida, South County Courthouse. (Courtesy photo)**

Now it's on to the next step: to get key decision-makers like court administrators and chief justices on board and show them easy, workable solutions to accommodate nursing lawyers, witnesses, jurors and the public.

"The goal is not only to create a policy but do something with it," said Dana Hrelac, the immediate past chair of the ABA Young Lawyers Division, who was the primary author of the lactation room resolution.

The people who've taken a leading role in pushing courthouses to better accommodate nursing mothers include three women lawyers in the ABA Young Lawyers Division, who co-authored the resolution, and 14 members of the lactation room task force of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers, who've assisted other women lawyers in FAWL chapters to create lactation rooms in Florida courthouses.

There's a chance that at least federal courthouses won't have a choice but to create lactation rooms if Congress passes pending legislation by Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Illinois, Steve Daines, R-Montana, and Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts. They filed the Bipartisan Fairness For Breastfeeding Mothers Act, which would require all federal buildings open to the public to establish lactation rooms.

The bill is still pending, yet even if it passes, it would not include state courthouses.

A lack of support at work is one of the main reasons women quit breastfeeding early, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies drink only breast milk for the first six months because of numerous health benefits. A nursing mother needs to express her breast milk in a 20-minute session every three to four hours when she's away from her infant, to ensure she can provide enough nourishment for the baby and keep up her milk supply.

When in the office, many attorneys can typically close their office doors to pump. For lawyers without offices, many firms have created special rooms (<https://www.law.com/2018/10/31/for-breast-pumping-lawyer-moms-accommodations->

often-fall-short/) so women can pump in private. However, it's a different story at court, where it's common for lawyer moms to pump in bathrooms, their cars or empty offices with no locks, meaning court staff may barge in accidentally.

The easiest and most affordable solution is for a courthouse to identify an existing room—it can be small—but not a bathroom or closet—to convert into a lactation room, said Joann Grages Burnett, chairwoman of FAWL's lactation room task force, which has helped members of local FAWL chapters to convince 25 Florida courthouses to create nursing rooms. Late last month, Gray Robinson shareholder Leora Freire and of counsel Amanda Keller celebrated the ribbon-cutting of a new lactation room in the Palm Beach County South County Courthouse.

The newest room, in Burnett's own local courthouse the St. Petersburg Judicial Courthouse, is opening on March 21. The courthouse itself paid nothing, Burnett said, because FAWL covered it with a fundraiser. Businesses and law firms made donations to purchase about \$1,000 to \$1,500 worth of items on an Amazon wish list to furnish the room. Many FAWL chapters have conducted similar fundraisers.

"I don't think it requires that much, but we really wanted to go for the gold. We wanted a nice rug in the room; we wanted a nice lamp; we wanted a space for a woman to be able to also, if she wanted to, do work in there," said Burnett, who is also associate director of the Office of Career and Professional Development at Stetson University College of Law in Gulfport, Florida.

It was a snap to find sponsors, she said.

"I think it shows people understand this is important, and this not only is an issue of inclusion in the legal profession but is also an access to justice issue," she said, noting that a lack of nursing accommodations not only impacts nursing lawyers, but also litigants, witnesses, jurors and crime victims.

But the solution of retrofitting an existing room into a lactation area might not work everywhere.

Some courthouses are challenged for space and have difficulty making room for lactation areas, especially in historic buildings that haven't kept up with growth in a community. Other buildings have restrictions on renovations because of historical reasons, noted Stephanie Conduff, founder and CEO of Leche Lounge, a company that produces portable lactation suites equipped with a locking door, seating, a table for a breast pump and an electrical outlet. They cost between \$12,500 to \$15,500, depending on size.

Conduff says she has the solution for tight spaces. "If they can just find 36 square feet somewhere in the building, we can create that private space and accommodation quickly," said Conduff, of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

There is precedent for requesting a courthouse to change to accommodate emerging needs: Courthouses have been required to change to better accommodate people with disabilities, said Hrelac, the lactation room resolution author.

"Accommodating breastfeeding mothers is just as important as accommodating people who can't walk on their own," said Hrelac, partner in Horton, Dowd, Bartschi & Levesque in Hartford, Conn. "Saying, 'We don't have space,' doesn't seem like an adequate response."

*Angela Morris reports for Law.com and other ALM affiliates.*

---

**Copyright 2019. ALM Media Properties, LLC. All rights reserved.**