Ruth Roemer papers

Finding aid prepared by Kelly Besser in consultation with University Archivist Charlotte Brown and with assistance from Alyssa Goodstein and Rebecca Bucher, 2013; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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Title: Ruth Roemer papers
Collection number: 2176
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 13 linear ft. (35 document boxes.)
Date: ca. 1966-2004
Abstract: Ruth Roemer was an internationally renowned public health lawyer, UCLA School of Public Health professor and advocate for tobacco control, health care reform, and women’s reproductive rights. The collection consists of correspondence, presentation transcripts, lecture notes, research files, publications authored by Roemer and colleagues and records of professional involvement as a founding member of the California Committee on Therapeutic Abortion and as a consultant to the World Health Organization.

Language of Materials: Materials are in English.
Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

Restrictions on Access
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Processing Information
Processed by Kelly Besser in consultation with University Archivist Charlotte Brown and with assistance from Rebecca Bucher and Alyssa Goodstein.

Biography/History
Ruth Joy Rosenbaum was born in Hartford Connecticut in 1916 to a politically progressive family. She was a young girl when her father, a plant pathologist, died of a bacterial infection following the extraction of a tooth. Her mother relocated the family to the Republican town of Milford where Ruth excelled in academics, gained entrance to Cornell University, majored in English and planned to teach after graduation. However, she changed her mind after she toured Europe in 1936 with the American Student Union and witnessed the rise of fascism.

When she returned to the United States, it was with inspiration to make social change through legislative action so she enrolled in Cornell Law School. There she competed for the editorship of the Cornell Journal of Opinion with pre-med student, Milton Roemer, whom she married in 1939. Upon graduation, she worked as a labor lawyer representing unions through the 1940s and 1950s until she participated in a landmark study of the laws governing admission to mental hospitals in New York state. This work was published in 1962 as a book, Mental Health and Due Process that called for significant reforms, which were adopted by the New York legislature two years later.

This project led to her newfound focus during the 1960s on public health law and set the stage for her next four decades of legislative activism following her move to Los Angeles. Roemer joined the UCLA School of Public Health in 1962 as a researcher and a professor whose work centered on laws governing abortion and family planning, international tobacco control and health legislation reform.

Shortly after her move to Los Angeles, Roemer helped organize the California Committee on Therapeutic Abortion (CCTA), formed to provide public education and leadership on the state's abortion law reform. Roemer served as vice president from 1965 to 1976 and led the CCTA's contribution to the enactment of the California Therapeutic Abortion Act in 1967. Roemer's work turned to global tobacco control during her last two decades. She had been a heavy cigarette smoker until 1961 when her husband Milton persuaded her to stop. She switched to smoking pipes until she quit in 1972. She believed tobacco use was an epidemic and began service as a consultant for the World Health Organization (WHO). She completed a world review of tobacco legislation in 1982 and the WHO first published these findings in her book, Legislative Action to
Combat the World Tobacco Epidemic. After the second edition was published, the WHO invited her to collaborate with attorney Allyn Taylor in 1996 to prepare a document that helped launch the WHO’s first international convention on tobacco control.

Roemer served as President of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest and largest professional association of public health workers in the world. She is the author of countless publications and the recipient of numerous awards including the WHO’s Medal on Tobacco or Health, the APHA’s Sedgwick Memorial Medal for Distinguished Service in Public Health and the UCLA Public Health Student Association’s Faculty of the Year Award.

On August 1, 2005 Ruth Roemer passed away at 89. At the time of her death, she was planning her classes for fall quarter.

Scope and Content
The collection consists of correspondence, presentation transcripts, lecture notes, research files concerning tobacco control, health care and abortion, publications authored by Roemer and colleagues and records of professional involvement as a founding member of the California Committee on Therapeutic Abortion and a consultant to the World Health Organization.

Organization and Arrangement
The arrangement maintains the original order of Roemer’s office file cabinets. The series titles indicate Roemer's divisions within her filing system.

Related Material
California Committee on Therapeutic Abortion records (Collection 1195). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
Center for Oral History Research internal reference copies of transcripts (University Archives Record Series 796). UCLA Library Special Collections, University Archives.

Boxes 1-7
Tobacco Issues
Scope and Content
Materials concern Roemer’s legislative work toward international tobacco control and include correspondence, notes, conference papers, World Health Organization (WHO) reports, journal articles, book reviews, studies, newsletters and clippings.

Subject files include the following:
Box 1: Addiction, the industry, advertising, developing countries, tax and price increases, cessation, costs, tar and nicotine contents, mortality and morbidity estimates, workplace smoking laws, product liability and regulations on additives.
Regional research files are arranged alphabetically and include the following:
Box 2: Africa, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil and California.
Box 3: Canada, China, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and Europe.
Box 4: Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland and India.
Box 5: Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua and Nigeria.
Box 6: Norway, Poland, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Tanzania.
Box 7: Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, U.S.S.R., Vietnam, Yugoslavia and Zambia.

Boxes 8-10
Managed Care
Scope and Content
Materials include Roemer’s articles, reports, lectures, correspondence, notes and speeches. Topics include the following: social security, ethical issues, public and private insurance in America, financing and managed care, single payer health care, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care and children's health insurance.
National Health Insurance

Scope and Content

Materials include correspondence, transcripts of speeches to the Women in Health Administration and the Organization for Obstetric, Gynecologic and Neonatal Nurses (NAACOG), lesson plans for Ethical Issues in Health Care course, drafts for publications, program and notes for International Course in Health Legislation, World Health Organization reprints on oral and mental health, handwritten notes and Little Hoover Commission Report "To Protect and Prevent: Rebuilding California's Public Health System."

Topics include affirmative action, managed care, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), reproductive rights, legal problems and access, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Medicare and ethics, worker's compensation, welfare law, Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) lawsuits, national health insurance proposals, mental health benefits, for profits and not for profits, drug dependence, guidelines for regulatory changes in nursing education, Little Hoover Commission, alcohol and tobacco legislative policies and healthcare of women.

Tobacco Correspondence

Scope and Content

Box 14: In addition to correspondence, materials include articles on tobacco control by Judith Mackay, Peter D. Jacobson, Kenneth E. Warner, Jeffrey Wasserman, Roemer's WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control, her lecture on the International Aspects of Tobacco Control, book reviews and her discussion paper on the feasibility of a regional convention on tobacco control with Katherine M. Gorove and Allyn L. Taylor.

Box 15: Two files of select correspondence from Roemer's WHO monograph, "Legislative Action to Combat the World Smoking Epidemic."

International Instrument for Tobacco Control

Scope and Content

Correspondence, resolutions and notes concerning the Forty-Eighth World Health Assembly agenda item, "An international strategy for tobacco control," WHO framework convention on tobacco control working group reports, agendas and primers. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is an international legal instrument designed to circumscribe the global spread of tobacco and tobacco products.

California Policy Seminar

Scope and Content

Records concerning UCLA courses taught by Roemer on the tobacco epidemic and public policy and strategies to combat it. Materials include course evaluations, correspondence with students and colleagues, lesson plans, examinations, answer keys, copies of presentation slides, overhead transparencies and typewritten lectures.

History of Tobacco Control Legislation

Scope and Content

Roemer's typewritten Tobacco Control presentations for Public Health courses and overhead transparencies concerning the World Health Organization's Smoking Control Strategies in Developing Countries and her annotated presentation outline, "Legislation to Control Tobacco Use." Materials also include correspondence between Roemer and colleagues regarding the American Public Health Association's Annual Meeting with a focus on "Controlling the Tobacco Pandemic at Home and Abroad," Roemer and Barbara A. Berman's final monograph: "Strengthening Enactment, Enforcement and Evaluation of Tobacco Control Legislation," Roemer's "Legislative Action to Combat the World Tobacco Epidemic: International Experience" presentation and her speech of acceptance for the International Network of Women Against Tobacco Lifetime Achievement Award.
WHO Fellowship

Scope and Content
World Health Organization Tool-kit for Tobacco Control Legislative Interventions, Tool-kit papers and slides, correspondence and tobacco control legislation case studies for the following countries: South Africa, Thailand, Canada and Poland.

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Scope and Content

Tobacco Papers

Scope and Content

Food and Drug Regulations

Scope and Content
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Executive Summary, "The Regulations Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Cigarettes and Smokeless Tobacco to Protect Children and Adolescents," correspondence, HHS Fact Sheets and a Smoking Control Advocacy Resource Center (SCARC) Action Alert concerning Philip Morris' recording label and women's concert series.
Scope and Content
Box 20: California Committee on Therapeutic Abortion (CCTA) Articles of Incorporation, Prospectus, bylaws, bulletins, pamphlets, Board of Directors lists, sponsors lists, mailers, and correspondence including Roemer's letter to UCLA University Research Library Department of Special Collections concerning the CCTA records donation. Roemer concludes with appreciation to the Library staff and states, "I can only say that I believe that these materials record events that contributed to a significant improvement in the human condition."

Materials also include a National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) conference packet from the Real Choices Organizing Training, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) letter concerning standards for notification of institutional, ethical or religious restrictions on delivery of care, Roemer's abstract for "Ethical Aspects of the Claim of Personhood for the Fetus," copy of the American Public Health Association's Principles to Guide Religious/Secular Health Industry Mergers, legal briefs concerning the right to abortion and the MergerWatch Project's draft report, "No Strings Attached: Public Funding of Religiously-Sponsored Hospitals in the United States."


Box 22: California Women's Law Center, MergerWatch and National Women's Law Center National Advisory Board Meeting materials, Lois Uttley's emergency contraception Master's thesis and correspondence. Materials also include one file of selected remarks, papers and statements which includes the following titles by Roemer: "Tracking Abortion Rights and Practices From the '60s," "Lessons Learned From the Past," "Parental Consent and Parental Notification Laws: Assault on Young Women's Lives," "Impact of the Abortion Decision on Law and Health," "Public Health Facts About Abortion," "Remarks to Training Session of Los Angeles NOW" and "Public Health Aspects of Abortion."


Box 24: Correspondence, book reviews, legal briefs, press releases and presentation transcripts. Roemer's transcripts include the following: "Family Planning and Abortion: Issues and Prospects" and "Abortion and the Right of Privacy: Past, Present and Future."

Box 25: Copies of court decisions, notes and reports on adolescent abortion and parental involvement laws, legislative and judicial action on abortion timeline, Roemer's Family Planning and Abortion annotated lectures and course materials and a copy of The CCTA book, Abortion and the Unwanted Child which includes her paper, "Abortion Law Reform and Repeal: Legislative and Judicial Developments."

Box 26: Annotated clippings, legal briefs and lectures.
Health Legislation

Scope and Content

Box 27: Correspondence with the WHO and the International Digest of Health Legislation (IDHL), Roemer's "Guidelines for Legislation Affecting the Development of Human Resources for Health" and the resulting WHO report, Partially Annotated Select Bibliography on Health Aspects of Human Rights and regional health legislation research files for Albania, Poland, Hungary and Thailand which include notes and correspondence.

Box 28: Health legislation research file for Indonesia which includes correspondence and reports, David M. Dror and Christian Jacquier's paper, "Micro-Insurance: Extending Health Insurance to the Excluded," Roemer's background paper for WHO Study Group, "Strengthening Regulatory Mechanism of Nursing Training and Practice Relating to Primary Health Care," and her two reports on national needs, legislative trends and strengthening of WHO's activities on health legislation in South East Asia with a focus on Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Thailand and the Western Pacific Region with particular reference to Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Materials also include a copy of Public Health Outlook which includes an interview with Ruth and Milton.

Box 29: Public Policy Statements of the American Public Health Association (APHA), a compendium of resolutions and position papers which deal with public health issues and have been officially adopted by the Association since 1948.

Box 30: Lectures, notes and outlines for her Legal Aspects of Family Health course and the following three subject files: Mental Illness, Long Term Care, and Regulation and Legislation.

Box 31-32: Selected manpower papers and lecture materials for the following topics: Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Regulation of Health Personnel, Anti-Trust, Family Planning and Sterilization and Regulating Quality of Care.

Box 33: Lecture materials for introductory Public Health Law course and Law, Social Change and Health Service Policy course.

Box 34: Lecture materials for Legal Aspects of Family Health course.

Public Health Course 235 Reserves

Scope and Content

Course reserve readings are organized by lecture topic and include the following areas of study:

Box 34: Role of Law: Use of Materials, Governmental Action and Individual Rights, Regulation of Facilities, Regulation of Personnel, and Food and Drugs.

Box 35: Family Planning and Sterilization, Abortion, Anti-Trust Law, Quality of Care, Medicare and Medicaid, Mental Illness, HIV and AIDS, Patients' Rights and Ethical and Legal Issues.