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## Maine Commission for Women Annual Report 1976-1977

Maine Commission for Women

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ANNUAL REPORT

1976-77

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## BACKGROUND

When Maine's Governor Reed appointed the original Governor's Advisory Council on the Status of Women<sup>1</sup>, in 1964, it became the first state Commission for Women in the Northeast. Its appointment signalled the beginning of a new national awareness of the special problems, concerns and talents of women. During the past fifteen years, the ever-increasing cost of living, growing divorce rate, and people's widening discontent with traditional roles alone have combined to intensify those problems and concerns. At the same time, the influx of great numbers of women into the labor force and the small but growing participation of women on policy-making committees at all levels, have begun to demonstrate those special talents.

In Maine, the activity of the Council on the Status of Women increased during that period to reflect the new importance of women's issues. It became clear that in order to bring the knowledge and skills of its members effectively to bear on the issues, the Council required staff support. In 1975, the Council applied for and received a CETA (Concentrated Employment and Training Act) grant to hire an Executive Director. For the first time, the Council was able to fulfill the basic mandates of its legislation: to gather information about the needs of women in the State; to provide analysis on the availability of opportunities for Maine women; and to promote and coordinate activities designed to address the unmet needs of women. With a staff person who could execute programs and policy decisions of the Council, answer requests for information, monitor current legislation, attend meetings of women's groups throughout the State, and develop plans while locating resources, the Council moved forward. The grant terminated in December 1975.

In 1976, L.D. 2190 became law. This bill changed the name of the Council to the Maine Commission for Women. This name change was in line with other state commissions for women throughout the country. Maine, as well as those commissions in all of the other 50 states, is part of the National Association of Commissions for Women.

In February, 1977, the Commission obtained clerical help through the WIN (Work Incentive Program) Program, and Starlette Walsh worked for the Commission from February to August. Besides handling the day to day clerical tasks for the Commission, Ms. Walsh compiled a bibliography of books on women available in the Maine State Library which is available from the Commission for Women. In addition, she compiled a card file of books and resource materials maintained by the Commission itself. During the summer of 1977, the Commission was also awarded an intern position through the Governor's Intern Program. Becky Fisher was responsible for the day to day operation of the Office, as well as special projects. She prepared an analysis of legislation considered by the 108th Maine Legislature, compiled the results from a questionnaire on resources for women in Maine, and drafted numerous small reports.

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<sup>1</sup>Now called the Maine Commission for Women.

## FUNDING

The Commission for Women receives a legislative appropriation each biennium designed to meet operating expenses and reimburse Commission members for travel and expenses. The appropriation for fiscal year 1976-77 was \$2500.00. This funding should be compared with that enjoyed nationwide by other Commissions for Women. There are Commissions in all of the states as well as numerous local commissions, and the average appropriation per state in 1975 was \$30,525.00. In addition to the legislative appropriation, the Commission received a \$1000.00 grant from the Maine State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to publish a booklet on "The Legal Rights of Maine Women (See later section on Legislation and Legal Affairs).

## COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION

The Commission for Women is comprised of seventeen persons chosen primarily for their proven leadership in promoting the status of women throughout the State. Currently members of the Commission, appointed in July 1976, differ greatly in age, occupation and geographical range bringing a diversity of opinions and ideas to the Commission (See Attachment A for listing). Nine (9) members of the Commission are appointed by the Governor, four by the President of the Senate, and four by the Speaker of the House. The Governor appoints the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

During the past year, the Commission has undertaken various activities and projects, and is pleased with its success in a number of areas. In order to facilitate the orderly accomplishment of tasks, committees were formed to work in certain areas. Because of limited funding, committees were established geographically. Four major Task Forces were established: (1) Task Force on Legislation and Legal Affairs, (2) Task Force on Resources, (3) Task Force on Public Information and Education, (4) Task Force on Planning.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION

At its initial meeting in FY 1976-77, the Commission for Women adopted general goals and objectives, as well as operating policy (See Attachment B). In addition, the Commission adopted "Priorities for Action for FY 1976-1977. (Attachment C). Following is a description of some of the major activities of the Commission to meet those priorities during the past year.

### Resource Analysis

During the past year, the groundwork was set to do a comprehensive analysis of resources in the State that have an impact on women. After much discussion, the Task Force on Resource compiled a questionnaire entitled "What Have You Done For Yourself Lately?"

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U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1976)

Commission members feel strongly that future Commission efforts should proceed from greater knowledge of existing opportunities and after consideration of the valuable perspective provided by those who envision additional services. Therefore, over 150 organizations were contacted for information on programs and activities offered by them. By compiling the information received, the Commission hopes to: (1) share ideas and information between groups on a statewide basis; (2) recognize needs for new or expanded services and encourage groups to address those needs; and, (3) promote wider dissemination of information about existing services to girls and women who may want to take advantage of them.

The questionnaire is now being compiled and a booklet should be published in the next several months. The Commission plans to keep an updated file of resources available for women in Maine in its office for more extensive information.

#### The Legal Rights of Maine Women

In order to enhance the status of women in Maine, the Task Force on Legislation and Legal Affairs agreed that we must further increase the awareness of women of their rights and responsibilities; and increase the receptivity by the general public to these same rights and responsibilities on behalf of all women.

Professor Judy R. Potter, a Commission member and Professor of Law at the University of Maine School of Law, assisted by law student Gail Marshall, wrote a booklet entitled "The Legal Rights of Maine Women." The Commission received a \$1,000.00 grant from the Maine American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to publish this booklet. The booklet explores women's rights under the law in the following areas: employment discrimination; credit discrimination; discrimination in educational opportunities; discrimination in housing; insurance; constitutional rights; wage and hour laws; public financial assistance; social security; criminal law; marriage and the rights of a married person; annulment, legal separation, and divorce; parents and children; name change; wills and probate; and health.

#### Legislation

The Commission served as an advocate for women's issues in the Maine Legislature. Approximately 90 bills were introduced in the First Regular Session of the 108th Legislature affecting women. The Commission monitored most of those bills, supporting some, opposing others, and generally looking out for the rights of women. Of the 90 bills introduced, approximately 35 became law. They dealt with such issues as displaced homemakers, dual telephone listings, fair credit reporting, child abuse and neglect, marriage records, and aid to families with dependent children.

One of the major breakthroughs for women this session was passage of LD 842, the Displaced Homemakers bill. The legislature appropriated \$35,000 to implement this program. A Displaced Homemakers Advisory Council will be set up that will, in cooperation with the Commission of Manpower Affairs, establish, monitor and evaluate a pilot project for helping women return to the work force after having been out for a period of time. The Advisory Council will be composed of nine members, with the Commissioner of Manpower Affairs being ex-officio. These nine people will be appointed by the Governor.

LD 933, An Act To Require an Advisory Referendum on the Equal Rights Amendment, failed to pass due to some hard lobbying efforts of Maine women. This bill would have required a state-wide referendum on the question of the ERA in November.

There was also some disappointment in the 108th Legislature. The indefinite postponement of the Pregnancy Disability Bill (LD 821) was a serious disappointment to women. Pregnancy disability is an important issue nation-wide. Although the bill was voted upon favorably by a great majority in both chambers, the fiscal note that was attached to it after the hearings and votes, sent it to the Appropriations Table, where it was left unfunded.

#### Talent Bank

The Commission for Women maintains a Talent Bank designed to recruit qualified women candidates for nomination to State Boards and Commissions. This project was put into operation during FY 1975, but continues to be an activity of the Commission in order to accomplish a long-range goal of obtaining greater participation of women in all levels of State Government. The Talent Bank now contains the names of over 350 women. Work needs to be done in order to update the information, and make it more readily accessible to appointing authorities.

#### International Women's Year Meetings

While not directly involved, the Commission opened its office to the members of the International Women's Year Coordinating Committee, for their preparations for Maine's State Meeting for Women. Approximately 1400 Maine women attended the State Meeting, or one of eight regional meetings to express concerns, and address unmet needs of Maine women. Fourteen delegates and five alternates were elected to represent Maine at the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas, in November 1977. The Commission for Women now maintains all IWY files and data collected during an extensive six month effort.

### Analysis of Women in the Maine Labor Force

Late in the year, the Commission for Women signed a contract with the Maine Department of Manpower Affairs to do an analysis of data provided by the Department on women in the labor force in Maine. It is believed that this analysis will be the first in the country of its kind. The contract is for \$7,000 and is scheduled to be completed in September 1978. The project will also enable the Commission to employ part time staff for the duration of the contract.





James B. Longley  
Governor

# Maine Commission for Women

STATE HOUSE, AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

(207) 289-3418

Patricia Ryan  
Chairwoman

## MEMBERSHIP 1976-77

PATRICIA E. RYAN, Chairwoman  
South Gardiner

DONNA MUNDY  
Augusta

RONALD E. BEARD  
Bar Harbor

MARGUERITE MURPHY  
Lewiston

CONSTANCE CARLSON  
Orono

JADINE O'BRIEN  
Portland

JEANNE DEVOE  
Eagle Lake

JUDY POTTER  
Saco

ALICIA HARDING  
Pownal

\*LOIS RECKITT  
South Portland

\*TINA HINCKLEY  
Southwest Harbor

\*KAREN STRAM  
Dresden

\*JAN KLITCH  
Old Town

\*CATHERINE SWENGEL  
North Leads

\*BEVERLY MADORE  
Madawaska

\*SUSAN WOLFORD  
Augusta

\*JOAN MARSHALL  
Farmington

\*Term expires in 1977.



James B. Longley  
Governor

# Maine Commission for Women

ATTACHMENT B

STATE HOUSE, AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

(207) 289-3418

Patricia Ryan  
Chairwoman

## PURPOSES, OBJECTIVES AND OPERATION

### I. PURPOSE

The Commission shall advise and consult with the Governor and Legislature about, and to assist them in improving opportunities for, Maine women.

### II. GOALS

- A. Research: The Commission shall determine the current status of Maine women by reviewing opportunities and needs of women in the areas of employment, education, health and welfare, and by examining treatment of women under the law and under current cultural patterns.
- B. Activities: The Commission shall promote and coordinate activities on state and local levels, which are designed to meet the needs of women as determined by (A) Research, outlined above.
- C. Advocacy: The Commission shall serve as an advocate for Maine women by making recommendations, on proposed budgetary, legislative and policy actions, to the Governor, Legislature and to other officials of the state and federal governments with respect to state and federal policies, programs and other activities affecting or relating to the women of Maine.
- D. Information: The Commission shall inform the Public about the presence or absence of opportunities and areas of discrimination for Maine women.

### III. OPERATION

- A. Philosophy: The Commission shall serve an initiative as well as reactive role.
- B. Structure: The Commission will recommend action after discussion of reports by Task Forces. The powers to advise and consult will be given by the Commission to the Chair or other Commission members, and will request reports on results of such advisement and consultation.
- C. Research and Information: The Commission shall conduct public hearings, conferences, workshops and other such meetings to retrieve and disseminate information about the needs and solutions to the problems of women.
- D. Reports: The Commission shall make a biennial report to the Governor and Legislature concerning the status of women in Maine, and other work and interests of the Commission.



James B. Longley  
Governor

# Maine Commission for Women

STATE HOUSE, AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333  
(207) 289-3418

Patricia Ryan  
Chairwoman

## OPERATION GUIDELINES

### INITIATIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY

- (1) Each Task Force is responsible for taking its own initiative in proposing programs and policies. Each Task Force and all individual members shall keep the Chair informed of actions taken and statements made in the name of the Commission.
- (2) The staff is responsible to the Commission through the Chair. Task Forces and individual members may request staff support at any time.
- (3) Members are requested and encouraged to propose new or amended projects and policies to the full Commission, all Task Forces, the Chair and the staff.
- (4) Commission members are encouraged to seek speaking engagements, press interviews, and other public forums where personal interest exists and resources allow.
- (5) Commission members are urged to keep personal and project costs to a minimum. Necessary expenses incurred in carrying out the work of the Commission may be reimbursed.

### DECISION-MAKING

- (1) Each Task Force shall study alternatives related to its assignments and shall propose programs and policies to the full Commission for final determination.
- (2) When a consensus is not available, decision-making shall be governed by Robert's Rules or Order, Newly Revised.

Adopted 9/23/76



# *Governor's Advisory Council on the Status of Women*

STATE HOUSE, AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION FY 1976-77

# 1

### PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

Lack of knowledge about the actual, current status of Maine women and activities being undertaken by federal, state, and local governments; and public and private groups and individuals to affect that status.

### ACTION SUGGESTED

1. Determine areas of need not already covered.
2. Identify groups and individuals in Maine that have developed action programs relating to girls and women.
3. Develop questionnaire, or other mechanism, to be sent to groups identified that will provide us with information needed to accurately identify roles and programs that groups and individuals are performing.
4. Organize and disseminate information in the form of public service spots, press releases, features, news stories, resource materials, etc.

### GOAL OF EFFORT

To identify resources in State, action programs and gaps, with the objectives in mind of being able to coordinate efforts towards improving the status of women in Maine and disseminating information in a meaningful and appropriate manner.

# 2

### PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

Lack of knowledge of legislative process and activity that affects the lives of Maine women and lack of awareness and knowledge among Maine women of their current rights and responsibilities under the law.

### ACTION SUGGESTED

1. Encourage more women to participate in the legislative process through keeping them informed of legislation relating to issues of concern to women.

2. Identify further existing discriminatory legislation.
3. Identify gaps in legal area that might need legislation, and draft where appropriate.
4. Monitor legislation affecting women, and support or oppose where appropriate.
5. Prepare and publish a booklet on the provisions of Maine law which affect women in matters that touch their daily lives.
6. Utilize legal interns where possible for research and drafting.

## GOAL OF EFFORT

To improve the position of women under the law and to increase the knowledge of Maine's women of their rights and responsibilities under the law; to increase the receptivity of all citizens of these same rights and responsibilities on behalf of all women.

3

## PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

Lack of women in crucial policy and decision-making positions.

## ACTION SUGGESTED

1. Continue the operation of the Talent Bank to promote the expansion of qualified women on Boards and Commissions on state and local governmental levels.
2. Explore possibility of expansion of Talent Bank for private sector.
3. Encourage more women to seek political office and offer Council assistance with information on campaign mechanics.

## GOAL OF EFFORT

To obtain greater participation of women on all levels.

4

## PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

Lack of information and skills for many Maine women attempting to re-enter the job market.

## ACTION SUGGESTED

1. Encourage existing agencies and groups to designate a specific portion of their services towards dealing with the special needs of women seeking employment.
2. Hold hearings to ascertain from women what the major obstacles are towards gaining employment and respond to needs with workshops geared toward providing information and/or skills needed.

3. Promote assertiveness training for women to enable them to develop their skills in seeking out and obtaining jobs.
4. Establish or encourage job bank/information network for private industry in Maine -- using media and mailings.
5. Monitor implementation of affirmative action programs, especially for State government, the largest employer in Maine.

GOAL OF EFFORT

To improve access for women to jobs, and improve the status of women on jobs.

PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

Lack of adequate resources to effectively operate Council.

ACTION SUGGESTED

5

1. Look into student internships and volunteers.
2. Pursue funding for staff.
3. Obtain adequate operating expenses.

GOAL OF EFFORT

To maintain continuity of program operations and to be more responsive to the needs of our constituency.