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Maine Women's Lobby Legislative Alert (1989 - March) No. 2

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P.O. Box 15, Hallowell Maine 04347

March 1989
Number 2

LEGISLATIVE
ALERT

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This edition of *Legislative Alert* is devoted to the issue of reproductive freedom—and how that right is threatened by the session's major anti-choice legislation, a bill to mandate parental/judicial consent for minors seeking an abortion. In addition, we'll tell you how to assist the work of the H.A.R.T. Coalition (Helping Adults Reach Teens), which is fighting mandatory consent and proposing alternative legislation to enhance family communication and effectively reduce unplanned teen pregnancies and abortions through education.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide our members the information and support necessary to effectively lobby your legislators on this issue. Remember, we have defeated this proposal twice before, and we can succeed again—*by discussing the facts, the hard evidence, and the devastating consequences of this law in other states.* We provide here fact sheets on parental consent laws, exposing the failure of such laws in other states to reduce teen pregnancies and abortions or to enhance family communication, and the draft of our alternative bill, AN ACT To Improve Family Communication with Adolescents. Also included are reprints of "Ten Points of Lobbying" and "How to Lobby Your Legislator: Effective Letter-Writing".

After reading this edition, we ask all M.W.L. members to please call and/or write your legislators to urge their opposition to the mandatory consent bill, and their support of AN ACT To Improve Family Communication with Adolescents. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of the Maine Women's Lobby at 622-5798 if you have any questions.

Joanne D'Arcangelo, M.W.L. Lobbyist

Mail: Maine Women's Lobby
P.O. Box 15
Hallowell, ME 04347

Phone: 623-1220 (State House)
622-5798 (MWL Office)

Legislators

Mail: Maine State House
Augusta
Maine 04333

Phone: 1-800-423-2900 (House)
1-800-423-6900 (Senate)

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GUILT TRIP #846

QUESTION: Do you know that lobby member Lynn Goldfarb has already sold 20 books of raffle tickets?

How many have *you* sold?

ANSWER: Well, uh, ... let me check on that figure and get back to you.

This message is brought to you by your friendly Development Committee of the Maine Women's Lobby reminding you to sell raffle tickets early and often before the May 3rd drawing. Need more tickets to sell? Call Darrilyn at 622-7566 (work) or 354-8158 (home)

CALLING ALL LOBBY MEMBERS ! ! !

Please call and/or write your state representative and state senator today to urge their opposition to the mandatory parental/judicial consent bill!

- If you do not know who your legislators are, call your Town or City Clerk.
 - If you have specific questions you need answered before calling your legislators, call the office of the Maine Women's Lobby at 622-5798.
 - You may contact your legislators by leaving a message at the following toll-free State House numbers: 1-800-423-2900 (for Representatives); 1-800-423-6900 (for Senators).
 - For effective lobbying and letter-writing tips, see our suggestions also printed in this newsletter.
-

Mandatory Parental/Judicial Consent: Introduction and Background

The legislation proposes to require the consent of a parent or judge for any minor 17 years or younger seeking an abortion. This bill is being initiated by anti-choice groups which have lobbied its passage twice before: at the State Legislature in 1985 (it was defeated), and again in 1988, when, via the referendum petition process, they attempted to gather sufficient signatures to place the proposal on the General Election ballot for voter approval (they failed).

Undaunted by these failures—and fueled by the current threat to the Roe v. Wade decision—Maine's anti-choice lobby is marshalling considerable resources to avoid another embarrassing defeat: Their efforts should not be underestimated, and our need to rally each and every M.W.L. member to defeat the bill cannot be overstated. READ ON, AND CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS TODAY!

FACT SHEET

Mandatory Parental Consent Laws and Their Impact on Adolescents and Their Families

I. Mandatory parental/judicial consent laws will not promote better family communication and will hurt teenagers.

A. Teenagers are already talking to parents.

Nationwide studies have documented statistics regarding parental involvement in a teen's decision to have an abortion—over 70% already seek guidance from their parents. Those who don't cite reasons such as harassment, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or the lack of a parent to confide in.

B. Mandatory parental consent laws will not reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy and teen abortions.

Experience in other states confirms that teens will instead seek abortion services out-of-state or illegally, underground. Late abortions to minors rose sharply by 26.6% after the Minnesota parental consent law began. While the in-state abortion rate in Massachusetts decreased 29% after that state's parental consent law was enacted, the corresponding number of teens travelled to other states for abortions. Over the two-year period following the enactment of the Massachusetts Law, the percentage of abortions to Massachusetts teens performed out-of-state increased by 68%. (Cartoof, Boston University School of Social Work; and Klerman, Yale University School of Medicine).

C. Mandatory parental consent laws violate teens' and their families' right to privacy.

Though privacy is guaranteed by the constitutional right to reproductive choice, confidentiality is violated, in practice, by mandatory consent laws.

In order for this bill to be constitutional, it must include a "judicial bypass" option, which allows the teen to circumvent her parents and appear before a judge who determines whether she is mature enough to make her own decision; or, lacking maturity, whether the abortion is "in her best interest". Again, experience in other states shows the law requires the teen to have contact with as many as 23 people before a ruling is made. It is also common knowledge that court houses in Maine are very crowded, very public places, where little happens in a private setting. On a practical level, the law will fail to protect privacy—a fact that has chilling consequences for teens who are victims of abuse.

We also know from vast experience (and the court has acknowledged) that teens will forego safe and legal medical treatment—for drug abuse or sexually transmitted diseases, for example—when privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed *Just as they choose to seek abortions out of state—or worse, illegally, underground, in states where mandatory consent laws threaten that privacy.*

II. What mandatory parental/judicial consent laws fail to do:

A. *FAIL to discourage adolescent sexual activity or pregnancy.*

The American Journal of Public Health (1986): "Massachusetts minors continue to conceive, abort, and give birth in the same proportions as before the law was implemented."

B. *FAIL to stop abortions:*

Recorded experience in Massachusetts shows that virtually no abortions were averted as a result of judicial bypass. Of the more than 3,000 adolescents who petitioned the court between 1981 and 1986 for authorization for abortion, "only 11 cases were turned down ... Ten of those denials were overturned on appeal within 72 hours ... the 11th adolescent sought the abortion out-of-state." (Boston Globe Magazine, 6/15/86)

C. *FAIL to enhance family communication.*

This law does nothing to foster communication between parents and teens: *healthy open family communication cannot be legislated*. In addition, the judicial bypass option allows the teen to seek court consent without her parent's knowledge or approval. Hence, the law does not guarantee parental involvement.

Parental consent laws succeed to do one thing only: to gravely jeopardize the safety, health, and welfare of pregnant teens by denying them access to prompt safe medical care, whatever their decision.

III. What can be done to help Maine teens and their families prevent unplanned, unwanted teen pregnancies:

To effectively encourage family communication and to promote a realistic solution to unplanned teen pregnancies, urge your legislators to:

A. *Support AN ACT To Enhance Family Communication with Adolescents*, which will fund new and existing programs—programs that will provide training for families, peers, school personnel, clergy and others in the area of sexuality education and responsible decision-making. (Sponsored by Rep. Pam Cahill of Woolwich; co-sponsored by Sen. Joe Brannigan of Portland, Rep. Francis Marsano of Belfast and Rep. Patricia Stevens of Bangor.)

B. *Support increased sexuality education and reproductive health care services for teens*, which help prevent the need for abortion by preventing unwanted pregnancy.

C. *Support existing parent education programs in your local churches, schools, and community.*

1989 M.W.L. Legislative Slate

The following lists bills printed since our last edition of *Legislative Alert*. Bill summaries presented last month are not reprinted here unless there has been a change in status or there is new information to report. Please call the office of the Maine Women's Lobby at 622-5798 if you would like additional information about any bill(s). The MWL has taken a position to support a bill unless otherwise noted. (* - Indicates Prime Sponsor; *** - Indicates WLAC Bill)

AA to Increase the Age Limit for Child Support, (L.D. 156)

Sponsors: *Rep. Hoglund of Portland, Rep. Melendy of Rockland, Rep. Crowley of Stockton Springs, Rep. Burke of Vassalboro.

Committee: Committee on Judiciary, Room 438, State House

Public Hearing: Tuesday, March 7th, 1:30 p.m.

Summary: A technical change ensuring the continuation of child support until the end of the school year for individuals who turn 18 during their senior year in high school.

AA to Expand Head Start Preschool Opportunities in Maine. (L.D. 47)

Reported by: Senator Estes of York for the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education (Interim study commission)

Committee: Committee on Education

Summary: Provides \$500,000 (FY 89-90) and \$629,863 (FY 90-91) for a 10% COL increase to cover operating costs in the first year of the biennium and a 5% increase in the second (Head Start programs received no state funding increase in '88, so the FY 89-90 appropriation covers costs accrued over a 2-year period). Also provides funds for increasing levels of service and staff salaries, facility improvements/maintenance, improving transportation services, and purchasing classroom equipment.

AA to Establish Child Care Availability for Individuals in the Substance Abuse Treatment System. (L.D. 463)

Sponsors: *Rep. Clark of Brunswick, Rep. Chonko of Topsham, Sen. Clark of Cumberland, Sen. Perkins of Hancock

Committee: Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Summary: For FY 89-90, provides \$100,000 to fund a demonstration project for child care services and programming in a women's halfway house; and \$115,000 for 30 day care vouchers for parents participating in either in-patient or extensive out-patient treatment services.

***AA to Provide Funds for Start-Up of School-Based Child Care. (L.D. 384)

Sponsors: Rep. Clark of Brunswick, Sen. Estes of York, Rep. Greenlaw
WLAC

Sponsor: Maine Home Economics Association

Committee: Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Summary: Provides \$500,000 over the biennium to cover start-up costs to those schools that wish to establish on-site child care for student parents.

**The Maine Women's Lobby
Annual Cocktail Party**

**The Senator Inn, Augusta
March 29, 1989 5-7PM**

**Join us at the end of the day for
great conversation, scrumptious
hors d'oeuvres, and a cash bar...
and all for a good cause!!!**

Please send this form with your check today
\$15 per person
I will attend the Lobby Cocktail Party. Enclosed find
\$ _____ for _____ tickets.
I cannot attend but here's my contribution for
\$ _____ to the Maine Women's Lobby.

Name _____
Address _____
The Maine Women's Lobby
P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, Maine 04347



Tips for working with your legislator if....

P.O. Box 15, Hallowell Maine 04347

They agree strongly with your position

1. Thank them
2. Ask them to take a leading/active role on this issue a) in the legislature among their colleagues b) in the media c) in the community
3. Ask for advice on whom else you should talk to, what supporting arguments they think are effective, any special legislative/p.r. strategy they think you should use
4. Ask if they will "lobby" undecided legislators
5. Thank them again

They agree with your position

1. Thank them
2. Assure them of your continued interest in the issue and your continued support of their position
3. Ask if they would be willing to help in any way beyond their vote (if so, follow tips above)

They are undecided

1. Inform them of your interest
2. Present your argument as concisely and cleanly as possible
3. Ask what their reservations are. Determine if they are political, personal, or due to a lack of information or any combination. Alter your lobbying strategy accordingly.
4. Offer to get any information they would like
5. Ask them if there are other individuals/organizations they would like to hear from
6. Get back to them; keep in touch until they have made up their mind

They are against your position

1. Determine how strongly they are opposed. If not too strongly, try and persuade them to change their mind
2. If now "swayable", but not strongly opposed, ask them not to lobby their colleagues
3. In RARE cases on a very close vote when you absolutely will not win unless they cooperate, ask them to "walk" (be absent) when the vote is taken
4. If they strongly disagree, write and let them know of your opposition to their position, but don't waste your time and energy trying to move an immovable object.



Maine Women's Lobby

THE TEN INFORMAL RULES OF LOBBYING - OR

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lobbying But Never Thought to Ask

P.O. Box 15, Hallowell Maine 04347

- #1 Consider yourself an information source. Legislators have limited time, staff, and interest on any one issue. They can't be as informed as they might like on all the issues - or the ones that concern you. You can fill the information gap.
- #2 Tell the truth. There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to a legislator.
- #3 Know who else is on your side. It is helpful for a legislator to know what other groups, individuals, state agencies and/or legislators are working with you on an issue.
- #4 Know the opposition. Anticipate who the opposition will be - organized or individual. Tell the legislator what their arguments are likely to be and provide them with answers and rebuttals to those arguments.
- #5 Make the legislator aware of any personal connection you may have. No matter how insignificant you may feel it is, if you have friends, relatives, and/or colleagues in common, **LET THEM KNOW.** Our legislative process is very informal and though it may make no difference in your effectiveness, it may make the difference.
- #6 Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something. If a legislator wants information you don't have or asks something you don't know, tell them and then offer to get the information they are looking for.
- #7 Be specific about what you are asking for. If you want a vote, information, answers to a question - whatever it is -- make sure you ask for it directly and get an answer.
- #8 Follow up. It is very important to find out if your legislator did what she/he said they would. It is very important that you then thank them or ask for an explanation as to why they did not vote as they said they would, etc ...
- #9 Don't "burn any bridges". It is very easy to get very emotional over issues you feel very strongly about. That's fine, but be sure that no matter what happens you leave your dealings on good enough terms that you can go back to them. Remember, your strongest opponent on one issue may be your strongest ally on another.
- #10 REMEMBER YOU ARE THE BOSS! Your tax money pays legislators' salaries, pays for the paper they write on, the phone they call you on. **YOU** are the employer and they are the employee. You should be courteous, but don't be intimidated. They are responsible to you and nine times out of ten, legislators are grateful for your input.



P.O. Box 15, Hallowell Maine 04347

HOW TO LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATOR: EFFECTIVE LETTER-WRITING

Writing a letter to your local legislator can be just as effective, and sometimes more effective, than a phone call. Here are some quick tips to maximize the effect of your letter -- and the message you want to convey.

1. **MAIL YOUR LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATOR'S STATE HOUSE ADDRESS** when the Legislature is in session. S/He will be sure to receive it in a timely fashion. Letters should be addressed as follows:

For Representatives:

The Honorable John Jones
Maine House of Representatives
State House Station #2
Augusta, ME 04333

(Salutation:

Dear Representative Jones)

For Senators:

The Honorable Susan Smith
Maine State Senate
State House Station #3
Augusta, ME 04333

(Salutation:

Dear Senator Smith)

2. **STATE THE INTENT OF YOUR LETTER IMMEDIATELY.** Try to give him/her as much information about the bill -- and your opinion about it -- in the first paragraph. If possible, state the name of the bill, the L.D. number, the Committee to which the bill has been referred for public hearing, and the status of the bill (when, for example, it was held for public hearing). Here's a sample first paragraph::

Dear Representative Jones:

I am writing to urge your support of L.D.
2214, AN ACT to Ensure Safety for Maine Workers,
which was presented for public hearing before the
Legislature's Labor Committee last Tuesday,
February 10th.

3. GIVE A LITTLE BACKGROUND ABOUT YOURSELF. Tell him/her why you are interested in the bill. Explain, in your own words, why the bill is important to you, how it will affect you and other citizens like you. If possible, give a brief anecdote from personal experience that conveys how the bill will correct (or create!) problems for you and other Maine people.
4. BE SHORT AND TO THE POINT! A single page letter that gets your point across in a clear, concise, and direct way is most effective. Legislators get lots of letters, so they will appreciate -- and remember -- those that get to the point fast (3-4 paragraphs are sufficient)! Letters don't have to be typewritten: neatly handwritten ones are just as effective.
5. BE SURE TO PROVIDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE LETTER. Envelopes can get lost -- along with your return address -- so be sure to include your address and phone number(s) under your sign-off signature. This will ensure your legislator an opportunity to get back to you. Also, it will let him/her know that you live -- and vote! -- in his/her district!
6. TRY TO FOLLOW UP YOUR LETTER WITH A PHONE CALL. Though you can try to reach the legislator at home during the weekend, it's often more effective to give a quick call to the State House if only to leave him/her a message. The message can simply confirm his/her receipt of the letter. Tell the receptionist: "I'm calling Rep. Jones to make sure that he received my letter concerning L.D. 2214, AN ACT to Ensure Safety for Maine Workers." Be sure to leave your name and the phone number(s) where you can be reached during the day and evening. Legislators can be reached at the following toll-free State House phone numbers:

Representatives:
1-800-423-2900

Senators:
1-800-423-6900

If you don't receive some acknowledgement of your letter and/or call within 2-3 days, don't be shy: write or call again until you do!

7. SEND A "QUICK HIT" POST CARD AS A FINAL REMINDER. If you know when the bill is scheduled for a vote on the floor of the Legislature, send a quick post card as a final reminder of your support (or opposition) to the bill. Again, state your position and the L.D. number and title, if possible. This will let your legislator know his/her vote is still important to you!

Prepared by The Maine Women's Lobby
For more info, contact:
Joanne D'Arcangelo, MWL Lobbyist
622-5798 or 623-1220

Notes from the Chair

Tory Leuteman

First, I'd like to thank the Grassroots Committee for all of its efforts in mobilizing the membership around opposition to parental consent. This is an extremely important issue and it's great to have so many members actively involved in the campaign.

Second, a word about the SAFE (Safe Abortions for Everyone) Fund. Currently there is a group of women who are laying the groundwork (by-laws, incorporation, etc.) for the establishment of an abortion loan fund. When the MWL Board of Directors voted not to pursue legislation that would allow medicaid funding for abortion, they also expressed their support for finding alternatives to assisting low income women in obtaining abortion. The board voted to make the establishment of the SAFE Fund a top priority. An enormous contribution has already been made. Carol Wyckoff and Karen Heck are representing MWL on the planning committee. Joanne D'Arcangelo has also been involved in its development. The Board's commitment to establishing the SAFE Fund and investing MWL resources to do this is very strong. Therefore, it is important that all of our fundraising activities be very successful.

Third, the Board of Directors will meet Saturday, March 18 at the Brunswick Library to continue to pursue the recommendations made in the State of the Maine Women's Lobby report. The questions before us are: Whom do we represent? How do we do that? Hopefully the answers to these questions will help us to focus our activities for the coming years. The meeting is from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will have a professional facilitator. Lunch is potluck. Members are invited and encouraged to attend. Please call Reid Scher 725-6847 or Annee Tara 865-3591 for more information.

Finally, I had the pleasure of attending the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance annual dinner to accept their award given to MWL for our support and commitment for lobbying for gay rights. Joanne D'Arcangelo was specifically recognized. As I said in my acceptance speech, Gay rights legislation is always a priority on the MWL agenda, there's never any question of it. That's because we know in our hearts what's right and what we must do, and we're very glad to do it!

1989 Child Care Conference

The 1989 Governor's Conference on Child Care will be held April 10, 1989 at the Augusta Civic Center. This conference will highlight Governor McKernan's major child care initiative to improve and increase the coordination and delivery of child care services to Maine families.

As a result of the Governor's 1987 3.5 million dollar child care initiative, the Department of Human Services has funded ten resource development centers statewide. This year's conference, which is sponsored by the Governor and Commissioner Rollin Ives, will emphasize the comprehensive services offered by these centers to Maine businesses and communities.

There will also be a forum featuring Maine employers who have developed innovative child care programs since the first conference. The importance of creating public-private partnerships to meet the increasing demand for quality child care will also be a focus of this year's conference.

Through the use of national and Maine experts the conference will offer a mixture of awareness and skill-building workshops designed for Maine businesses, child care professionals, parents, social services providers, local community resource people, and decision makers.

For further information, contact Donna Bailey-Miller or Peg Ricker at 289-5060 (or write to Office of Child Care Coordination, DHS, Station #11, Augusta, Maine 04333).

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

. FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT: Fundraising tickets, raffle sales, contributions, new memberships, renewals, and your phone calls and letters to legislators!

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: If our memberships doubled, we wouldn't have to rely on constant fundraisers. ASKA FRIEND TO JOIN THE LOBBY TODAY!

Name _____ Town & ZIP _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone Numbers: Days _____ Evenings _____

Will you help with: Fundraising? Recruiting Members? Calling Legislators?
(Circle one or more)

My Contribution to the Lobby is:

_____ Life (\$500)	_____ Supporting (\$50)
_____ Sustaining (\$250)	_____ Individual (\$25)
_____ Sponsoring (\$100)	_____ Other (\$1-24)

The Maine Women's Lobby is committed to representing women of all economic means. Any contribution you are able to make will entitle you to membership



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