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Maine Women's Lobby News Letter (1994 - November) No. 9

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

Maine Women's Lobby

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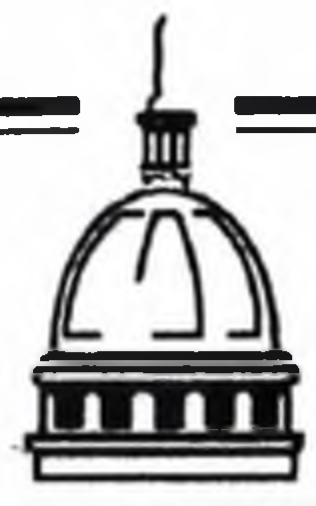
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Maine Women's Lobby

NOVEMBER 1994

NUMBER 9

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Women's Economic Security Project (WESP), introduced to you in the Lobby's September newsletter, is underway. The project is a comprehensive study of welfare receipt and the public policy changes needed to help families leave the welfare system and get out of poverty. When we began this project, we knew this was an ambitious undertaking. We had a \$2,000 grant from the Haymarket People's Fund and promises of other money from a variety of groups and individuals. The project will cost about \$34,000. We still need approximately \$10,000 to complete this endeavor.

We had the radical notion that reforming the welfare system should be done by involving AFDC recipients in the dialogue. We asked recipients to trust us, to tell us what they needed from the system that has encouraged their dependence.

They did their part. Our post office box was flooded with over 900 surveys! Each 12-page survey is filled with ideas, pain, pleas for understanding and incredible stories of courage. The faith these women have placed in us requires us to find the money needed to let their voices be heard. We are committed to living up to that responsibility. It is vital that we do so before the Legislature convenes in January, to assist in developing appropriate welfare reform legislation.

Please help us do that, by sending a contribution, indicating that it is for the Women's Economic Security Project, to: WDI, P.O. Box 85, Hallowell, Maine 04347.

WESP Activities Timeline:

- Mail 3,000 surveys to AFDC recipients, to find out more about their work experience, their desire to work, and their history of AFDC receipt. **Completed.**
- Conduct five focus groups with employers, women at risk of going on AFDC, rural women, former AFDC recipients working in nontraditional occupations, and the general public to gather more in-depth information about the supports low-income families need to become self-sufficient. **November or early December.**
- Analyze the labor market to determine the characteristics of jobs available to low-income women. **Late October through December.**
- Hold informal meetings with AFDC recipients in five locations throughout the state to solicit comments and suggestions about reforming the welfare system. **Tentatively scheduled for December.**
- Disseminate project findings and develop policy recommendations. **December, continuing as needed.**

The Maine Women's Lobby: "Hip, Assertive, Politically Savvy"

A large, enthusiastic crowd of more than 180 attended the Maine Women's Lobby "Breakfast of Champions" Thursday, October 6. The Portland event featured the four gubernatorial candidates, Joseph Brennan, Jonathan Carter, Susan Collins and Angus King, who expressed their support of issues of concern to the Lobby, a group described by Bangor Daily News staffer A. Jay Higgins as "hip, assertive and politically savvy."

Higgins reported the candidates' addresses to this audience were among the best and most impassioned delivered during this campaign. Clearly, the voice of women in Maine is heard, and respected, by each of these candidates. Further, the Lobby is seen as a powerful body, critical to this campaign.

The Lobby owes the success of this event to our committed membership. Thanks to all of you who attended and who worked to help make this possible. If you left a dreamcatcher at the Breakfast, please call the Lobby office.

**VOTE - ELECTION DAY
NOVEMBER 8**

Coalition for Economic Justice

"Rethinking Social Activism in the Nineties: A Conversation about Poverty," was a conference held in December, 1993 and attended by about 70 people. That conference was sponsored by a diverse collection of organizations which shared a common interest in issues of economic justice: the Maine Women's Lobby, the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods, the Maine Coalition for the Homeless, the Maine Council of Churches, and the Maine Community Action Directors.

About 40 of the participants continued to work together, over the following several months, to explore new ideas and strategies for unified action around issues of poverty. The result is a new coalition, the Coalition for Economic Justice, officially born on September 29, 1994. The steering committee for the Coalition includes a majority of low income people. The purpose of this Coalition is to promote a more accurate public understanding of poverty, including the real causes of economic inequality in our society. For more information about the Coalition, call Laura at the Lobby office, 622-0851.

Keeping You Informed . . .

. . . From the Chair:

The Lobby's first quarter has been both busy and challenging as we organize ourselves for the upcoming Legislative session, respond to campaign requests for information (especially about the WDI's Economic Security Project), and set priorities for Committee work. Some of the major activities and accomplishments over the last three months include:



- Board training on lobbying and the legislative process
- Initiated our fall Women's Issues Leadership Council (WILC) fundraising campaign
- Orchestrated a successful "Breakfast of Champions" with all four gubernatorial candidates present, the only forum in the state focused exclusively on women's issues
- Increased press coverage
- Participated in the Maine Economic Growth Council, testified at the Governor's Commission to Promote the Understanding of Diversity
- Served as a founder for the Coalition for Economic Justice
- Secured a seat on the consumer panel of the Maine Health Care Reform Commission
- Conducted our annual fall visit to Aroostook County, under the sponsorship of the regional AAUW Chapter
- Published a newly-formatted newsletter
- Spoke out about the reduction of health care services for women in the State and the associated harassment and intimidation of women who seek those services

Our plans are just as aggressive between now and the end of the calendar year. Some highlights are:

- Recruiting Board members to fill newly-created vacancies
- Staffing for the Membership Committee
- Conducting the Board's Annual Planning Meeting
- Orchestrating our bi-annual Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition Conference
- Completing our WILC fundraising campaign, including hosting a thank-you event and publishing our brochure
- Increasing our membership, both new members and renewals
- Updating membership materials

As you can see, we are never at a loss for opportunities to shape and influence public policy. We will continue to insure that women's needs are communicated and heard throughout the State. There is much to do.

We would love to have you, our members, consider filling the vacancies on the Board, joining our Membership Committee, or lead our major fundraising campaign for 1995. Please call the office at 622-0851 to volunteer!

Regards,

– Pierrette Lambert Kelly

. . . From the Executive Director:

In April, 1993, all of us in the pro-choice community jubilantly celebrated the passage of the Reproductive Privacy Act, a bi-partisan piece of legislation that codified Roe v. Wade into Maine law. Since its passage, and the election of a pro-choice President, many of us breathed deeply, feeling the major battles over our right to abortion have been won. We were wrong.



A small group of anti-choice individuals has stepped up the harassment of physicians who perform abortions. This harassment has reached the point where some physicians have felt they can no longer risk their safety and the safety of their families to meet the health care needs of their patients.

In the past, we worked hard to make sure that abortions were safe and legal. Now we need to ensure that women in our state will have access to those services. The following is a list of suggested ways you can help:

- Ask your Ob-Gyn if s/he performs abortions and if not, why not. Consider changing providers if you are unhappy with their answers. At the very least, let them know how you feel.
- Find out if your local hospital provides affordable abortions. If they do, send their Board and President letters of thanks. If they do not, demand to know why. Ask them to begin to support choice by making abortion services available to the community.
- Write a letter to the physicians you know who offer abortion services, thanking them for their courage and commitment.
- Write a letter to the editor. Encourage community hospitals to provide space, staff and services, condemn anti-choice terrorist tactics, demand protection for physicians and ask for more providers to come forward to provide abortions.
- Volunteer to counter-picket.
- Be sure you know how the candidates in your district stand on the issue of access. Support truly pro-choice candidates with time, money, bumper stickers and lawn signs.
- Start a Pledge a Picket campaign in your local area and give the proceeds to one of the organizations working to keep abortion services accessible.

It is up to all of us to send a clear message that death threats and harassment of patients and doctors will not be tolerated in Maine. The time to act is now. We must speak out loudly and publicly on this issue while abortion services are still available in our state.

– Laura Fortman

SAVE THESE DATES:

Women and Class: Can We Talk?

Dr. Angela Davis, professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, political activist and author, will deliver the keynote address at 10:00 at the day-long statewide Maine Women's Studies Conference, Saturday, November 12, beginning at 8:00 a.m. at the University of Maine at Orono. At 4:30, Carolyn Chute will read from her newest novel, *Merry Men*. Workshops will focus on a variety of topics, including, Franco-American women, ecofeminism, a range of work women perform, welfare issues and Native American women.

In addition, the conference will feature exhibits of books, women's art, and crafts. Representatives from Maine's women's organizations will be on hand to address concerns and answer questions. Free child care will be available. All conference buildings are accessible, and the two major presentations will be signed. Additional accommodations for disabilities may be arranged.

Conference fee is \$15; \$20 if you're interested in Continuing Education Units (0.8 CEUs). For a brochure or for more information, please call 581-1228 or 581-1508.

Maine Health Care Reform Commission

The Maine Health Care Reform Commission (MHCRC) has appointed 140 individuals to serve on its seven advisory committees. Participants have been charged with providing expertise to the MHCRC in the following areas: consumers, health professions, institutional providers, business, insurers, data and government.

The advisory groups have been meeting weekly since September and will present their recommendations at a day long public meeting on Tuesday, November 22, from 10:00 - 4:00 at the Augusta Civic Center. For more information, contact Ellen Schneider, MHCRC Executive Director, 287-8220.

The Maine Women's Lobby honors a real champion for women – Dr. Karen Kalustian – who died in October. Karen, a longtime Lobby member, was a tireless activist for reproductive choice, persons living with HIV, and women's rights. Maine is a richer place for having had her here – and we all will miss her greatly!

Women's Voices, Changing Politics

The Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC) conference will be Saturday, November 19, 1994 from 8:45 - 3:00 at the University of Maine at Augusta. Dr. Mary Murphree, Regional Director of the Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor, will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Murphree will discuss reasons why the Bureau was established, what the issues for women were then and what the issues are now.

Conference participants are asked to preregister for the workshops. The five choices for workshops, offered in the morning and repeated in the afternoon, are:

- A. How a Bill Becomes a Law
- B. Ending Violence Against Women and Children
- C. Building Strength Through Diversity
- D. Promoting Access to Health Care for Women
- E. Eliminating Poverty: Including Women in Economic Development

This is an excellent opportunity for women to become more skilled advocates for legislation that benefits women, to meet other women active in the political process, and to voice your opinion about current issues. For more information about the conference, call the Lobby office, 622-0851. To register, send your \$15 registration fee, along with the registration form, below to:

WLAC, P.O. Box 324, Hallowell, Maine 04347.



Name: _____

Morning Workshop
(Circle One)

Organizational Affiliation: _____

A B C D E

Address: _____

Afternoon Workshop
(Circle One)

Phone Number: (H) _____ (W) _____

A B C D E

Send check for \$15, payable to WLAC, to: WLAC, P.O. Box 324, Hallowell, Maine 04347.

MWL BOARD

Executive Committee

Chair: Pierrette Lambert Kelly,
Rome
Vice Chair: Penny Plourde, Augusta
Treasurer (Acting): Barbara Tribou,
Gardiner
Secretary: Lucinda Coombs, Leeds

Legislative Committee

Lynn Cole, Canaan; Chair
Eileen Fingerman, Oakland
Betsy Reinheimer, Rockland
Janis Bork, Thorndike

Membership and Member Relations Committee

Lori Doty, Winslow
Rose Scribner, Old Town
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Committee on Outreach, Research and Education (CORE)

Helen Payne, Waldoboro; Chair
Diane Parkinson, Cornish
Penny Plourde, Augusta
Libbey Seigars, Coopers Mills

Public Relations Committee

Joyce Grondin, Hallowell; Chair
Christine Kukka, Scarborough
Deborah Cummings-Khadraoui,
Portland

MEMBERSHIP FORM



I want to help improve the lives of Maine Women and their families.

Maine Women's Lobby		Women's Issues Leadership Council	
\$100	Sponsoring	\$1000	Champion
\$ 50	Supporting	\$ 750	Benefactor
\$ 25	Individual	\$ 500	Sustainer
\$ 10	Student	\$ 250	Contributor
\$	Other*		

My check, payable to the Maine Women's Lobby, is enclosed.

I would like to pay in _____ installments.

My contribution is \$ _____

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Business Phone _____

Address _____ Town _____ Zip _____

I do not want my name given to other groups.

* 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.



BULK RATE
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P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, Maine 04347

Upcoming Events:

Election Day
November 8

Maine Women's Studies Conference
November 12
8:00 - Early Evening
University of Maine, Orono

WLAC Conference
November 19
8:45 - 3:00
University of Maine at Augusta

Maine Health Care Reform Commission
November 22
10:00 - 4:00
Augusta Civic Center

Jun 1, 1994

University of Maine
Women's Resource Center
5728 Fernald Hall, Rm. 101
Orono, ME 04469