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## Maine Women's Lobby News Letter (1994 - September) No. 8

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

*Maine Women's Lobby*

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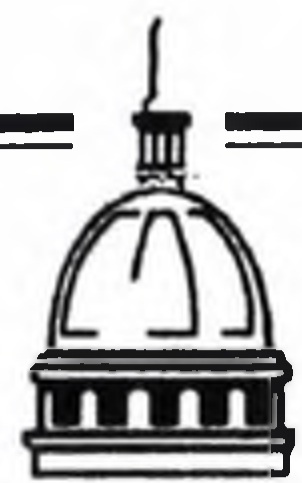
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# Maine Women's Lobby

SEPTEMBER 1994

NUMBER 8

## WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

### WDI Initiates Women's Economic Security Project

Why do families go on welfare, and why, if they go off, do they so often return? These questions must be answered in order to reform Maine's welfare system, a change supported by policy makers, citizens, politicians, advocates, and most importantly, the women and children struggling to survive in the present system.

The current welfare reform debate is being driven by powerful stereotypes focused largely on the individual behavior of poor women, including charges that women on AFDC have more children to get bigger welfare checks or do not work because they are lazy. These and other welfare myths persist, despite virtual consensus by researchers that they are not true. They have resulted in proposals that punish recipients, but do very little to actually reform the system. Further, we are very concerned that these "solutions" will not address the real barriers facing welfare families but will drive them deeper into poverty.

To better understand these barriers, the Women's Development Institute, in concert with other concerned organizations in Maine, has initiated a research and education project, the Women's Economic Security Project (WESP). WESP is a comprehensive study of welfare receipt and the public policy changes essential to getting families off welfare and out of poverty. WESP consists of five components:

- A mail survey of AFDC recipients to find out more about their work experience, their desire to work, and their history of AFDC receipt.
- An analysis of the labor market to determine the characteristics of jobs available to low-income women in Maine.
- 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 economically self-sufficient.
- Informal meetings with AFDC recipients in five locations throughout the state to solicit comments and suggestions about reforming the welfare system.
- Dissemination of project findings and development of policy recommendations. To influence public policy, we plan to reach women's groups, low-income groups, church and civic groups, legislators, and key decision-makers in the executive branch of state government.

Additionally, we will discuss the findings with groups that have not yet participated in the welfare debate, but whose support we will need to make policy recommendations a reality, including the Economic Growth Council, the Human Resources Development council, the Maine AFL-CIO and the Maine Alliance.

The individuals and organizations joining WDI in this project are current and former AFDC recipients, Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, People's Regional Opportunity Program, Portland United Way, Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Portland Adult Education, the AFDC Advisory Council, Women Unlimited, Displaced Homemakers Program, Maine Children's Alliance, Kennebec Valley Technical College, and the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods.

The project is being funded by the Haymarket People's Fund, Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, Downeast Health Services, Maine Department of Transportation, Governmental Services, Inc., and Educational Skills, Inc.

If you are interested in working on the project or learning more about it, please call 622-0851.

## SAVE THESE DATES . . . .

### Breakfast of Champions to Feature Gubernatorial Candidates

The four candidates vying to be Maine's next governor will speak on women's issues at the Lobby's Breakfast of Champions, 7:30 a.m., Thursday, October 6 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland. This year's Breakfast will feature Maine's four candidates for governor, who will present their views on four subjects critical to Maine women: preventing violence against women, helping women get off welfare and out of poverty, improving reproductive health services and promoting health care reform, and achieving gender equity in gubernatorial appointments. Candidates will also answer audience questions.

The Breakfast, one of the Lobby's annual fundraisers, will be held on Thursday, October 6, 1994 at 7:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland. The cost is \$25 each; expect your invitation soon!

## Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition

The Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC) will sponsor a conference on Saturday, November 19, 1994 from 8:45 - 3:00 at the University of Maine at Augusta. Workshops will focus on such issues as: violence against women, women and the economy, anti-discrimination and health care.

A special feature of the conference is a training session for women who are just beginning to get involved in public policy and legislative activity. Furthermore, the conference serves as a forum for discussing upcoming legislative priorities for women.

The day-long event is an excellent opportunity to meet women from 18 state-wide organizations, learn more about issues that concern you, and let organizations and elected representatives hear your point of view. Conference registration fee of \$15.00 includes a buffet lunch. For further information, call the Lobby office (622-0851).



## Keeping You Informed . . .

### . . . From the Chair:

The Lobby ended its fiscal year on June 30th in a reasonable financial position and with a clear set of objectives for '94-'95. We have established a new Committee structure, with explicit responsibilities. Each committee has created work plans as well as income and expense budgets to support the achievement of our objectives. We have 20 members on the Lobby Board who bring enthusiasm, diversity and, most importantly, a commitment to do the work!



We are dedicated to *optimizing women's lives through legislative action*. We have established the following objectives for '93-'94 to meet that purpose. By June of 1995:

1. We have sufficient revenue to cover expenses as well as future needs.
2. We are functioning with a Board and a Committee structure that has clear accountabilities, a fully involved and active membership, and Board participation in the development of our legislative agenda. We have set and achieved realistic measurable organizational and committee goals.
3. We have passed a major piece of legislation that, indeed, optimizes women's lives.
4. The Lobby is recognized as THE voice for women in Maine.

Financial stability, our first objective, is still our greatest challenge. We raised over \$59,000 in income last year, 35% of which came from our members. The other major sources of income included our 15th anniversary celebration and our major donor campaign, the Women's Issues Leadership Council. This revenue exceeded our budget by 12%. We spent approximately 4% more than we'd planned and still achieved a \$6,000+ surplus, due in large part to the success of our 15th anniversary event.

However, we are still not in a position to support the staff we need. Our Executive Director, Laura Fortman, and Administrative Assistant, Barbara Price, are working a severely restricted schedule this summer, due to lack of funds. We are hopeful that the processes and plans we are putting in place will enable us to support the staff hours necessary to accomplish increased educational and economic opportunities for women in Maine.

I am excited about where we are headed. I look forward to reporting our successes and progress to all of you over the coming months. And, I welcome your comments and suggestions, and encourage your involvement. Please call or write with your ideas!

— Pierrette Lambert Kelly

### . . . From the Executive Director:

The Legislative session has ended and the summer. I'd like to report on the Lobby's 1994 efforts at the State House, which resulted in legislation that will positively affect women's lives in three areas: economic security, health care and personal safety.



The first, economic security, included four proposed pieces of legislation, all of which were supported by the Lobby and were enacted. These included:

- P.L. 1994, Ch. 660, "An Act to Affect the Credit of People Who Are in Default of Child Support Payments," which can result in the suspension, revocation and denial of professional and motor vehicle licenses for parents who owe child support, and proves to be an effective tool in child support collection efforts.

- P.L. 1994, Ch. 528, allows the State to provide an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits under certain circumstances.
- P.L. 1994, Ch. 690, intends to minimize child support collection issues across state lines.
- P.L. 1994, Ch. 570, directs applicable amounts of income earned by incarcerated persons to the Victim's Compensation Fund.

The second category, health care, included three proposals:

- L.D. 1185, attempted to increase access to primary care by removing barriers that exist for nurses in advanced practice. That bill was vetoed by the Governor.
- Rep. Rydell's health care reform bill was killed, though it resulted in the creation of the Maine Health Care Authority.
- "An Act to Continue the Maine Health Program," was enacted as P.L. 1994, Ch. 673.

The third category, personal safety, included three legislative proposals, all supported by the Lobby, and all enacted by the Legislature:

- P.L. 1994, Ch. 687 prohibits sexual contact between providers of services to the mentally retarded and the recipients of those services.
- P.L. 1994, Ch. 61 established a study group to examine issues of parental rights and responsibilities in cases of domestic violence.
- P.L. 1994, Ch. 727, makes first time possession of child pornography a Class D crime, second offenses a Class C crime and allows law enforcement to confiscate the pornographic material.

It was, as usual, a busy and sometimes hectic session. I thank you all for your support of the Lobby's legislative agenda, particularly those of you who made phone calls and wrote letters to your Senators and Representatives, spoke at hearings and let me know how you felt about the issues.

The 1995 session is shaping up as a challenge. Anti-discrimination, welfare reform and health care remain volatile topics, and seem to be producing some punitive and destructive proposals. Please contact members of the Lobby's Legislative Committee, the Lobby office, or your elected officials to express your concerns about these issues. See related articles in this issue to learn about how you can become involved in public policy-making. Your voice does matter — let us hear from you.

— Laura Fortman



**Women's Issues Leadership Council (WILC)** is the Lobby's major donor fundraising effort, securing annual contributions greater than \$250. Thusfar in calendar year 1994, WILC has secured \$14,500, and plans an additional campaign for Fall. This effort yields approximately 20% of MWL's income. WILC contributors are individuals, businesses, and organizations who share a commitment to promoting issues concerning Maine women and their families. The Lobby and the Women's Development Institute rely on these members for their vision, leadership and long-time support of our efforts.

## MAINE ECONOMIC GROWTH COUNCIL

The Maine Economic Growth Council, established in 1993, was designed to develop, maintain and evaluate a long-term economic plan for the state. Over 200 people are involved, on either the Council or its working committees, to develop that plan and present it to the Legislature in January, 1995.

As it is essential for women to be involved in the development of the state's economic plan, Laura Fortman, MWL's executive director, serves on the advisory board and the Human Resources Committee.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this effort, or would like more information, please contact the Maine Development Foundation, 622-6345. The committees will meet September 14, October 12 and November 1.

## MAINE HEALTH CARE REFORM COALITION

The Maine Health Care Reform Coalition (MHCRC) recently convened to design three health care bills, based on three different financing models, for the Legislature to consider in January 1996. The three models are a single-payer model that provides universal health coverage for Maine citizens, a multi-payer model that provides universal coverage and a model that is based on our current system with further cost-containment measures.

The MHCRC is organizing advisory committees, representing a wide range of health care providers, the health care financing industry and consumers, to help structure these bills. A second set of advisory committees will then be formed to focus on specific issues, including women's health, and reimbursement.

If you are interested in becoming members of these advisory committees, write to the Commissioners, c/o Sally Tubbesing, Executive Director of the Legislative Council, State House Station #115, Augusta, ME 04333. Include in your inquiry your committee interest and your qualifications.

## MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Lobby Board has reorganized its committee structure and clarified each committee's work, a change designed to bring about a more efficient and cohesive working Board. The Lobby welcomes suggestions and help from any member. If you have a skill or an interest that might help promote the work of the Lobby, please contact the Lobby office or the appropriate committee chair. As you can see, a lot of work needs to be done, and the more involved you get, the stronger our organization will be!

**Executive Committee:** Pierrette Kelly, Chair

- Manage operations, administration, systems and finances
- Monitor adherence to policies and procedures
- Provide Board support: orientation and sustenance
- Supervise Executive Director

**Legislative Committee:** Lynn Cole, Chair

- Run the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC), along with Executive Director
- Set priorities, follow, and manage proposed legislation
- Implement phone tree and legislative ALERT

**Committee on Outreach, Research and Education:**

Linda Wilcox and Penny Plourde, Chairs

- Identify and secure grants and other non-profit funding
- Identify needs and conduct research on issues affecting women in Maine
- Conduct outreach and education programs

**Membership and Member Relations Committee:**

Susan Allein, Chair

- Retain current members
- Secure new members
- Publish and distribute newsletter

**Public Relations Committee:**

Joyce Grondin, Chair

- Build relationships with the media
- Conduct editorial board visits

**MWL BOARD****Executive Committee**

Chair: Pierrette Lambert Kelly,  
Rome

Vice Chairs: Linda Wilcox, Mon-  
mouth and Penny Plourde, Augusta

Treasurer (Acting): Barbara Tribou,  
Gardiner

Secretary: Lucinda Coombs, Leeds

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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

**Legislative Committee**

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

**Membership and Member Relations Committee**

Susan Allein, Fairfield; Chair  
Lori Doty, Winslow  
Sonya Melanson, Turner  
Linda Rice, Bowdoinham  
Rose Scribner, Old Town  
Andrew Wilcox, Monmouth

**Committee on Outreach, Research and Education (CORE)**

Penny Plourde, Augusta and Linda  
Wilcox, Monmouth; Co-Chairs  
Diane Parkinson, Cornish  
Helen Payne, Waldoboro  
Libbey Seigars, Coopers Mills

**Public Relations Committee**

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

**Maine Women's Lobby**

\$100 Sponsoring  
\$ 50 Supporting  
\$ 25 Individual  
\$ 10 Student  
\$ Other\*

**Women's Issues****Leadership Council**

\$1000 Champion  
\$ 750 Benefactor  
\$ 500 Sustainer  
\$ 250 Contributor

☐ 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.



P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, Maine 04347

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**Upcoming Events:****Breakfast of Champions**

Thursday, October 6

7:30 a.m.

Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland

**WLAC Conference**

November 19

8:45 - 3:00

University of Maine at Augusta

Ann Schonberger  
40 Garland St.  
Bangor, ME 04401

Dec 1, 1994