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## Maine Women's Lobby News Letter (1995 - January) No 10

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

*Maine Women's Lobby*

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# Maine Women's Lobby

JANUARY 1995

NUMBER 10

## WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

### Women's Economic Security Project - Thanks

The research component for the Women's Economic Security Project (WESP) is completed! We have many people to thank.

First, in our last issue, we reported needing \$10,000 to work on that project. You responded with \$1,000 in contributions earmarked for that project. We also received a \$5,000 grant from the Maine Community Foundation and \$4,000 from a local non-profit organization. These contributions enabled us to meet our financial goal!

Second, we would like to recognize and thank the many people who volunteered time to help out with the project:

Active members of the working group:

Sonja Christinsen, Women's Business Development Corporation

Lynn Cole, Kennebec Valley Community Action Program

Sally Davis, Displaced Homemakers

Maureen Emery, People's Regional Opportunity Program

Laura Fortman, Maine Women's Lobby

Chris Hastedt, Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods (MAIN)

Mary Henderson, MAIN

Kathy Kearney, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Kathy Moore, Kennebec Valley Technical College

Christina Perez, summer student volunteer, Brown University

Wendy Rose, Women, Work and Community

(formerly Displaced Homemakers Program)

Bonnie Ryder, People's Regional Opportunity Program

Linda Wilcox, Women Unlimited

Additionally, we thank those who assisted with the design, coding, data entry and analysis of the survey: Andrew Wilcox, Mary Nevin, Amy Locke, Terry Hunt, Margo Bourque, Ruth Benedikt, Maureen Morton, and Sandy Butler joined members of the working group to accomplish this task.

The focus groups were successful, thanks to the efforts of Jane Fisher, focus group expert and Lobby member, who educated the group about how to use focus groups; Mary Nevin, the Lobby's MSW intern, who assumed responsibility for organizing the focus groups; Deb Deatrack, with years of public policy experience and former Lobby Board member, who designed and facilitated the groups. Margie Roy assisted the working group with organizing the AFDC recipient regional meetings.

All in all, WESP was successful due to countless hours of work from an enthusiastic group of volunteers. Thanks to everyone who helped complete this project.

## WESP Update

Now that the focus groups and regional meetings have occurred our research is complete. The regional meetings were held in Portland, Augusta, Lewiston, Bangor, and Presque Isle during the first two weeks of December. Those meetings provided an ideal opportunity for us to meet with people of diverse backgrounds and discuss their suggestions for welfare reform. One of the benefits of these meetings was hearing from so many creative people. Though the details of their stories varied, what was strikingly similar were the problems women reported with the system, and their determination to improve their own lives and their children's future.

Two recurring themes heard at the meetings were: 1) real welfare reform must provide support to working poor families as well as AFDC families; and 2) low wages, child care, health care and transportation, for both working poor and AFDC families, are the greatest barriers to economic security.

We are now taking all the information we have gathered and are using it to prepare a real welfare reform proposal. We have gathered a great deal of information, and are in the process of analyzing it. Though we can't release detailed information just yet, we are developing a public information effort to educate the general public, public policy decision-makers and community leaders and individual constituents, as well as those who participated in this research project. We will announce the project findings at a press conference in January.

### 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. **Completed.**
- Analyze the labor market to determine the characteristics of jobs available to low-income women. **Completed.**
- Hold informal meetings with AFDC recipients in five locations throughout the state to solicit comments and suggestions about reforming the welfare system. **Completed.**
- Disseminate project findings and develop policy recommendations. **We anticipate holding a press conference to release the project findings sometime in January.**

## Keeping You Informed . . .

### . . . From the Chair:

This is always a time of year when I pause to reflect on the past and establish plans for the coming year. On a recent December Saturday, as the year 1994 was winding down, the current Board of Directors met to do just that. In our semi-annual planning retreat, we took some time to assess where the Maine Women's Lobby has been, to reaffirm our direction, and set priorities for 1995.



The Board continues to feel that both our direction and infrastructure are, indeed, correct. We are buoyed by current successes and accomplishments:

- Breakfast of Champions.
- WDI's Economic Security Project (both the response as well as the enormous success in raising 100% of the budgeted dollars).
- Our role in a well-attended and good quality Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition Conference.
- The Legislative Committee, the very core of our work and competence, is extremely well-staffed and enormously active. This Committee has conducted Board training and have established our legislative priorities for the 117th Legislature.
- We continue to meet our commitment to keeping you, our members, well-informed through this bi-monthly newsletter as well as improved radio and press coverage.
- Early in the Legislative sessions, you will receive yet another communication tool which we are calling the "Legislative Alert."
- Our financial position is good: we expect to meet both our revenue and expense budgets.

Over the coming months, we will focus on adding several new Board members and solidifying our Membership Committee. If you'd like to join that effort, and we'd love your assistance, please contact the Lobby office. Additionally, we are exploring creative alternatives to our development efforts, particularly the 1995 Women's Issues Leadership Council Campaign.

Last month, the Lobby wrote to each of the elected Senators and Representatives, extending our best wishes and congratulations. We promised we'd continue an animated and comprehensive dialogue on issues affecting women across the State. You, too, can count on us to pursue action and change. We, in turn, will count on your continued support and involvement.

On behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby, I extend best wishes for a joyous 1995!

—Pierrette Kelley

### . . . from the Executive

#### Director

On December 7, 1994 our newly elected legislators were sworn into office, setting in motion the 117th Legislative Session, which promises to be an active and challenging one.

Our primary piece of legislation for the first session of the 117th deals with welfare reform. Data collected by the Women's Economic Security Project will be the foundation of our reform proposal, which defines assistance to families with children as an economic issue, and is based on the private and public sectors working together. The long-term goals of the reform effort are to clear the path out of poverty for parents who are able to work, and to prevent those who are presently working from losing their jobs and relying on AFDC. We intend to accomplish this by:



- recognizing the connection between the economy and welfare receipt
- removing the barriers to work (low wages, child care, health care and transportation)
- rewarding working families
- expanding child support provisions

We realize this is an ambitious undertaking, but with your support we can reframe the welfare reform debate to focus on fact rather than unfounded assumptions, misogyny, racism and classism.

The Lobby will continue to play an active role in ensuring that women have access to abortion services on our state. Working with the Maine Choice Coalition, we will introduce legislation that provides greater protection to women and their health care providers. This legislation responds to the recent harassment of abortion providers, which caused some physicians to feel that it had become too dangerous to continue to provide abortion services.

Additionally, we expect to see at least two pieces of anti-choice legislation introduced: one designed to restrict abortion services to young women, and the other to require proscribed counseling for all women before they would be allowed to have an abortion.

We will also be working on strengthening the existing stalking law, obtaining increased funding for rape crisis centers and battered women's projects, passing anti-discrimination legislation, improving the sex offender registration process, and implementing "Healthy Families," a program that has reduced child abuse by 70% in other states.

The Lobby will be following other issues as well. We need your participation to continue our long tradition of effectiveness. Look for your Legislative Alert in the mail for more details about our work at the State House, and please call me at 622-0851 to find out how you can become more involved.

—Laura Fortman

## WLAC CONFERENCE

Despite the date, the Saturday before Thanksgiving and the day the Democrats were caucusing, 70 enthusiastic participants, including 9 legislators, traveled to the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC) Conference in Augusta. Those legislators included: Representatives Herb Adams, Eliza Townsend, Bonnie Green, Elizabeth Watson, Ed Benedikt, and Gail Chase, and Senators Sean Faircloth, Dale McCormick, and Susan Longley.

Keynoting the conference was Dr. Mary Murphree, Regional Director of the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, which was set up 30 years ago to examine working women, and the issues faced by them.

Women make up nearly half of the nation's workforce, and a staggering 99% of women in America will work for pay sometime during their lives, and yet, very little has been known about how women evaluate their experiences in the workforce. In her dynamic keynote address, Dr. Murphree discussed the findings of a recent comprehensive study, *Working Women Count!*, to which over a quarter of a million women contributed their experience. Three priorities emerged from this study:

- Improving pay scales and health care insurance for all, as working women are breadwinners and frequently the sole support for their households.
- Improving the culture of the workplace, to respect and support families, paying particular attention to child care, problems with which were identified as "deep and pervasive," affecting families across the economic spectrum.
- Increasing opportunities for training and recognition for work women do, allowing them to advance to jobs with higher pay and more visibility and responsibility.

Though much work remains to improve the lives of working women, hopeful signs of progress are emerging throughout the country. Dr. Murphree's address detailed the findings of the *Working Women Count!* study. To obtain a copy of the full report, send a self-addressed mailing label to: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, ATTN.: WWC! Report, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210.

## RESOURCES FOR CITIZEN ACTION:

**A Citizen's Guide to the 117th Maine Legislature.** provides detailed objective profiles of Maine's governor, state senators, representatives and constitutional officers. **THE GUIDE** is produced to demystify Maine's legislative process and help citizens participate more effectively in their own governance. It sells for \$13.20 each, plus tax, and shipping & handling charges. For more information, contact the Maine People's Resource Center, 65 West Commercial Street, Portland, 04101. Or call (207) 761-1881. FAX (207) 761-1863.

**MAINE CHOICES: 1995 A Preview of State Budget Issues** reviews major areas of spending in the state budget and their effects on public policy. This report includes eleven papers, each written by a Maine expert, which address actions the state can take to make the most effective use of resources in each area. **MAINE CHOICES** is available from the Maine Center for Economic Policy, a nonprofit, non-partisan research organization, for \$17.00. Contact them at P.O. Box 2422, Augusta, Maine 04338-2422, or call (207) 622-7381. FAX (207) 622-3731.

## Maine Receives Grant for Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Services

The Maine Women's Lobby, a longtime fighter for improved health services for women, is pleased to congratulate the State of Maine on receiving money for a comprehensive cancer screening program for women.

The Maine Department of Human Services, Bureau of Health has received notice of a cooperative agreement award of approximately \$7.5 million over the next five years to implement a comprehensive breast and cervical cancer screening program for low income Maine women. Services will be delivered through existing health care provider sites, such as community health centers, hospital clinics, family practice sites, and private physician offices. Mammography facilities and laboratories will also participate in the program.

The award culminates several years of planning efforts on the part of the Bureau of Health and its collaborator, Medical Care Development, Inc. of Augusta. Advisory groups comprised of Maine health care providers, advocacy groups and the public have helped to develop the program. "We are so pleased that we will now be able to address the needs of women who previously had little or no access to breast cancer and cervical cancer screening services. This program will be an important new component to our public health delivery system in Maine," said Jane Sheehan, Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, upon learning of the award.

Approximately 900 Maine women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and 70 women with cervical cancer in 1994. An estimated 230 deaths will occur this year from breast cancer, and 15 from cervical cancer. "We know that nearly all of the cervical cancer deaths, and about 30% of the breast cancer deaths could be prevented this year, and every year," said Lani Graham, director of the Bureau of Health, "if appropriate, comprehensive breast and cervical cancer screening services were utilized by all Maine women. We see this award as a vital step in ensuring access to these services for those most in need."

In addition to supporting screening services, the cooperative agreement includes funds for public education, professional education, quality assurance, and surveillance.

The Bureau of Health anticipates that it will provide services to 4,000-5,000 women annually once the program is fully operational. Payment for screening services is expected to be available to eligible women by the middle of 1995. Until that time, the Bureau of Health will be developing requests for proposals, awarding contracts and assuring that appropriate follow-up services are in place, and will continue to work with Medical Care Development to initiate professional education and quality assurance activities.

### HELP WANTED

Start off '95 by giving a bit of yourself to the Maine Women's lobby. We need:

**ENERGETIC, VISIONARY LOBBY MEMBERS** committed to moving the Lobby forward. Skills desired: good communication and organizational skills, an eye and a heart for detail, a passion for women's issues and the determination to do what is necessary to see that those issues are addressed, previous experience working as a member of an active committee or board. Must be available for at least one evening meeting a month. Positions available: Board of Directors, Membership Committee. Please call the Lobby Office: 622-0851.

**VOLUNTEER COMPUTER CONSULTANT:** to advise on the purchase of a new computer, install hardware and software, and convert the existing membership database to the new system. Please call MWL Treasurer Barbara Tribou if you would like to volunteer, or if you have suggestions or questions. Evenings: 724-3336; days: 582-8713.

**MWL BOARD**

**Executive Committee**

**Chair:** Pierrette Lambert Kelly, Rome  
**Vice Chair:** Vacant  
**Treasurer (Acting):** Barbara Tribou, Gardiner  
**Secretary:** Lucinda Coombs, Leeds

**Legislative Committee**

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Libbey Seigars, Coopers Mills

**Public Relations Committee**

Joyce Grondin, Hallowell, Chair  
Deborah Cummings-Khadraoui, Portland



Maine Women's Lobby  
P.O. Box 15  
Hallowell, Maine 04347  
(207) 622-0851

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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

Maine Women's Lobby		Women's Issues Leadership Council	
\$ 125	Sustaining	\$ 1000	Champion
\$ 60	Supporting/Household	\$ 750	Benefactor
\$ 35	Individual	\$ 500	Sustainer
\$ 10	Student	\$ 250	Contributor
	Name of School: _____		
\$	Other*		

- My check, payable to the Maine Women's Lobby, is enclosed.
- I prefer to pay with my:  
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Visa # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CARDHOLDER

- 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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**Watch for More Information About:**

**1995 Women's History Poster** commemorating the 75th anniversary of Women's Suffrage. The poster is geared to high school and middle school students and their teachers. Look for it sometime this winter.

**Annual Lobby Members and Legislators Reception** a chance to meet and talk with the movers and shakers in Augusta, held in March or April.

**Legislative Alerts** will be sent from the Lobby to inform you about progress in the 117th Legislature on issues we are following. Watch your mailboxes.

**Call for proposals** The Lobby will be seeking proposals, through an RFP process, for development and implementation of our '95 Women's Issues Leadership Council Campaign. The RFP will appear in leading Maine newspapers.

May 1, 1995

Sharon Barker  
47 7th Ave.  
Bangor, ME 04401