

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

---

Maine Women's Publications - All

Publications

---

9-1-1995

## Maine Women's Lobby News Letter (1995 - September) No. 12)

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

*Maine Women's Lobby*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/maine\\_women\\_pubs\\_all](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/maine_women_pubs_all)



Part of the [History Commons](#), [Law and Politics Commons](#), [Public Administration Commons](#), [Public Affairs Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Staff, Maine Women's Lobby, "Maine Women's Lobby News Letter (1995 - September) No. 12)" (1995). *Maine Women's Publications - All*. 100.

[https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/maine\\_women\\_pubs\\_all/100](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/maine_women_pubs_all/100)

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine Women's Publications - All by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact [um.library.technical.services@maine.edu](mailto:um.library.technical.services@maine.edu).



# Maine Women's Lobby

September 1995

Number 12

## LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

The November 1994 elections shifted the balance of power in the Maine Legislature from a House and Senate dominated by Democrats to a Republican Senate and a House with a slim Democratic margin. This change, coupled with the election of an Independent Governor, created a challenging and frustrating legislative session that forced us to revitalize our grassroots connections.

At the beginning of the session, the Lobby Board decided that although we would continue to monitor numerous pieces of legislation, our primary task would be to focus on those bills that we felt would have the greatest impact on the lives of Maine women. Thus, our priorities became defeating all anti-choice legislation and refocusing the welfare "reform" debate away from punitive measures and toward constructive responses to the welfare issue. Our WESP research identified lack of jobs, low wages, inadequate child care, lack of health insurance, and domestic violence as reasons women sought AFDC receipt, and we knew we needed to concentrate on measures that would lessen these obstacles. There were 11 bills that dealt with changing the AFDC program.

Our secondary legislative agenda included increasing funding for rape crisis centers and battered women's projects and finding a legislative response to the escalating violence at health care facilities that provide abortions.

The following briefly summarizes our legislative efforts:

### CHOICE:

Although only 2 of 6 anti-choice bills received public hearing (4 were withdrawn early in the session), both bills were defeated in the House and the Senate, but only after vigorous debate. Because of the strength and tenacity of the opposition, I'm sure we have not seen the end of proposals like these:

**L.D. 630:** An Act to Require a 24-Hour Waiting Period Before an Abortion May Be Performed. This proposal would have forced all women seeking abortions to receive mandated information, oral and written—as well as graphic pictures from a physician, 24 hours before receiving an abortion. This was defeated, 84-53 in the House, 22-10 in the Senate.

**L.D. 633:** An Act to Require Parental Notification for Minors Seeking Abortions. This would have mandated parental notification before a minor could have an abortion. This bill had 73

original co-sponsors and we were able to convince several of these people to change their positions. This was defeated, 81-63 in the House, 22-12 in the Senate.

**L.D. 1216:** An Act to Amend the Civil Rights Act. This bill was sponsored by the Attorney General's Office with the original intent to add to the ability of law enforcement to protect women seeking abortions as well as staff at health care facilities providing abortions. During negotiations the scope of the bill was expanded and pieces of it apply to all buildings while other aspects of the law specifically apply to health care facilities. The legislation prohibits the following activities that are intended to interfere with the rights of women seeking abortions, and the rights of providers to perform them:

**Physical obstruction of access to a building.**

**Harassing use of the telephone,** specifically making repeated phone calls to an office for the purpose of tying up the phone lines.

**Releasing a stink bomb or other noxious substance.**

**Excessive noise endangering the health of patients.**

### WELFARE REFORM:

See pages 3 and 4.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

**L.D. 863:** An Act to Improve the Well-Being of Communities by Providing Adequate Services for Victims of Sexual Assault, Incest, Rape and Child Sexual Abuse and Enhance Community Education and Prevention Programs Statewide. This bill sought increased funding to rape crisis centers (by \$500,000 over the biennium). The bill was killed; however, the Appropriations Committee increased funding to centers by \$350,000 in the Budget bill. (The funding is for \$175,000 in each of the next two years with some conditions.)

**L.D. 846:** An Act to Provide Funds for Family Crisis Shelters. This bill requested an increase of \$2.8 million in funds over the biennium. This bill was also killed; however, the Appropriations Committee also provided an increase of \$350,000 for battered women's programs over the next two years.

## Keeping You Informed . . . . . . from the Chair

June marked the completion of the Maine Women's Lobby and Development Institute's '94-'95 fiscal year. We are quite pleased with the accomplishments and the momentum achieved over the course of the year. We "celebrated" at our Annual Membership Meeting with refreshments and reflections at the Blaine House. Our special thanks to Mary Herman for her support for this meeting, and throughout the year on issues important to the future of Maine women.



Here are highlights of the year past:

- We provided the leadership and vision to the Women's Economic Security Project. Thousands of AFDC recipients responded to our survey and the results have been published. We exceeded our fundraising for the project by almost 5% and worked with Stephanie Seguino in publishing a comprehensive report on the economic status of women living in Maine. Most importantly, as Senator Pingree told me at our annual Legislative Reception, the Lobby and Institute significantly altered the quality of the Welfare Reform debate at the State House by introducing facts and shattering myths.

- We established new, and sometimes unlikely, alliances with the Maine Council of Churches and assisted in the formation of the Coalition for Economic Justice, while strengthening alliances with such groups as Pine Tree Assistance and the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods.

- We believe we've turned the corner on finances, ending the year with sufficient surplus to employ our Executive Director throughout the summer. This, I'm told, is a first!

- We have "updated" our literature and logo with a new image, thanks in large measure to the generous support of Garrand and Company.

- We receive grants from the Maine Women's Fund, Haymarket People's Fund, Maine Community Foundation, and the Center for Economic Policy. We are grateful that these organizations share our commitment to improving the lives of Maine Women.

- We held our membership at close to 800 members, enjoyed expanded press coverage (including being dubbed "...hip, assertive, politically savvy" by the Bangor Daily News). After much discussion, we reluctantly increased our dues structure, while, of course, continuing to offer a sliding fee structure.

- We have lots of new faces and new energy on the Board and welcome the vitality and enthusiasm each is bringing to the organization. We look forward to another great year as we spend the month of August firming up our priorities and budget. We'll continue to keep you well informed about our plans. We would love to hear from you as to what you believe we should focus on.

Finally, we thank our Executive Director, Laura Fortman, for continuing to staff the helm and for another year of tireless and strong performance. We could not have achieved all of this without her.

—Pierrette Kelly

## . . . from the Executive Director

The first regular session of the 117th legislature gave rise to unusual alliances for the Maine Women's Lobby. We worked with the Catholic Church on welfare reform, entered into discussion with the Christian Civic League and the Catholic Church on preventing violence at abortion clinics and received support from conservative Republicans for increased funding for rape crisis centers and battered women's projects. I believe our willingness to put into practice our often quoted advice, "your strongest opponent on one issue may be your strongest ally on another" allowed the Women's Lobby to have a very successful legislative session.



Briefly, we were able to:

- defeat all anti-choice legislation
- defeat punitive welfare "reform" proposals
- pass legislation that increases safe access to abortion services
- increase funding for battered women's projects and rape crisis centers

We, of course, would not have been able to do this without strong support from you, our members. It was your phone calls to your legislators, letters to your local newspapers, and your willingness to come to the State House that allowed us to create a climate that force legislators to retreat from policies that would have seriously harmed women and children. In addition to your participation, you also sent us the money that we needed to be effective. Some of you may not realize that the dues you send has a direct impact on the quality of our legislative campaign. For example, your contribution funds personnel, office equipment, photocopying, production of fact sheets, mailing legislative alerts, and phone calls--numerous phone calls! All of these expenses are necessary components of any successful legislative effort. So, Thank you--and Congratulations!

Hope you had a wonderful summer and got some rest, because we will need your help in the next session. Some of the issues we will be addressing are:

- anti-discrimination legislation
- impact of managed health care on hospital maternity stays
- strengthening anti-stalking laws
- time limits for welfare recipients, and
- several health care bills

This is just a preliminary list of topics. Our fall newsletter will provide a more comprehensive look at our legislative agenda. If our successful struggle this year has whetted your appetite for greater involvement with us, the Lobby does have several openings for members at large on the following committees: legislative, WILC (our major donor program), CORE (our education and outreach committee), and membership. For further information, please call the Lobby office, 622-0851.

—Laura Fortman

## WELFARE REFORM

### Summary of New Welfare Reform Law

The Welfare Reform that passed this session maintains the current AFDC and ASPIRE programs, but makes some significant changes. Many of these changes will require a waiver from the federal government before they can be implemented.

**Mandatory Participation in ASPIRE.** Until now, anyone (except those two parent families receiving AFDC due to unemployment) with a child under 3 years of age was exempt from mandatory participation in ASPIRE. The exemption has now been reduced to exempt those with children under 2.

The current requirement for "mandatory" families to participate in ASPIRE has never been fully enforced in Maine because Maine does not have the resources to serve everyone. Further, Maine law essentially requires the Department to serve "volunteers first." Because there have always been so many volunteers, this "mandate" has not been reached. The volunteers first provision has been maintained in the law, although the exceptions to it have been expanded.

**Teens.** AFDC recipients under 18 will not be able to receive cash assistance—instead they will receive vouchers from the Department. (Waiver required). Teens under 20 who have not completed high school must participate in ASPIRE regardless of the age of their youngest child.

**Family Contract.** Until now, AFDC recipients were required to sign a "contract" saying that they would comply with the requirements of the AFDC program. Under the new law, every family (whether exempt from ASPIRE or not) must sign a contract that may require them to do certain additional things. For example, they could be required to have their children immunized or to undertake a parenting course. Sanctions are a possibility for those failing, without good cause, to comply.

**Home Visits.** At the last minute, an amendment was offered on the floor of the House to the welfare reform bill requiring home visits to every AFDC recipient upon their being determined eligible. (This will be applied to new applicants only). No funding was provided for this home visit program, so it is unclear how it will be carried out. This proposal was overwhelming supported (106 to 25) by both parties, and try as we might, we were unable to defeat it.

**Alternative Aid.** This would allow applicants for AFDC who are at risk of losing a job, or job offer, to have the choice of receiving up to three months of AFDC benefits in the form of vouchers immediately upon application in lieu of participating in the regular AFDC program. If during the three month period, they needed additional assistance, then they would still be able to receive regular AFDC. Any benefits in excess of what they otherwise would have received would be treated like an overpayment. The alternative aid would be entirely voluntary.

**Waiver of Vehicle Asset Limit.** A bright note in this new law is a provision requiring the Department to seek a waiver of the vehicle asset limit. AFDC regulations prohibit AFDC recipients from having a vehicle worth more than \$1500. This asset limit did not apply in Maine due to a legal challenge in 1990. However, the federal government has now required a new vehicle asset limit that would apply in Maine but for this waiver.

**Housing Special Needs.** The Housing Special Need (HSN) payment of \$50 per month for those whose rent exceeds 75% of their income remains in place. However, to help pay for it, the Legislature made AFDC recipients who receive the HSN payment ineligible for the "Circuit Breaker" program (The Maine Residents Rent and Property Tax Relief Program.) This is the program administered by the Bureau of Taxation that gives a one time payment to families whose property taxes or whose rent exceeds a certain portion of their income.

Although no one was happy about giving up the circuit breaker benefit for special needs families, it was the only way to avoid the loss of the HSN benefit. On average, the HSN benefit is worth double the amount of the Circuit Breaker benefit and it comes on a monthly basis when it is really needed as opposed to once a year.

People who do not receive the HSN payment are encouraged to apply for the circuit breaker program, as it has been expanded this year.

### ASPIRE CHANGES

While significant education and training opportunities will still be available through ASPIRE, some important changes have been made.

Upon entering ASPIRE the Department will conduct a "work evaluation" during the first 90 day period. During the "work evaluation" the Employability plan will be developed. **That plan must still reflect "to the maximum extent possible" the individual's preference.**

**Job Search.** Those two parent families receiving AFDC due to unemployment and those whose children are over 5 who are deemed "job ready" by the Department, will be required to engage in a job search immediately. Those who obtain a job via ASPIRE's job search program will be eligible for 1 year of transitional medicaid and child care even if they have not received AFDC for 3 out of the past 6 months as is required by current law. (For this, a waiver is required.)

**Education and Training.** Those who enter education and training, still have the opportunity to obtain two and four year degrees. *But*, after two years of education or training, the participant must be willing to also work 20 hours per week. Work study, practicums, part time work, or other work site experience can count toward the 20 hours.

**Work.** Those who are unable to find work after 2 years of education and training or after participating in job search will be required to work. If a job cannot be found in the private sector, various work programs will be developed by the Department. One such program is "MaineServe," where the hours are determined by dividing the grant by the minimum wage. The values behind "MaineServe" are couched in the language of serving one's community in the tone as VISTA or AmeriCorp. "ASPIRE-PIUS" will be a program affecting no more than 1500 people in 3 regions (DHS regions II, IV, and V) in the state that places people in a private sector job, then uses the AFDC grant to subsidize the person's wages for up to one-half the minimum wage.

### COMMISSIONS

Two commissions were also established:

**The Commission to Study Poverty Among Working Parents** is charged with studying the relationship between the low wage job market and the various programs that support or could support people, such as AFDC, unemployment compensation, the earned income tax credit, and health care.

**The Time Limits Commission** is charged with looking at the various groups of people who receive AFDC, how long they stay on AFDC, and how the economy, health care access, housing subsidies, workers' compensation and other programs affect families. The Commission may submit legislation resulting from the Commission in the next session of the legislature.

### REMINDER

Check your mailing label; it includes the date your membership expires. Please help us save office costs—use the form on the back page of the newsletter, and send your membership renewal in today! Thanks.

## MEET OUR INTERNS:

This year, we are fortunate to have two student interns working in the Lobby Office for the entire academic year. They are:

Ellen Hodges is a student at the University of Southern Maine, with a major in Anthropology and minors in Political Science and Philosophy. She lives in Raymond with her husband, Ray, and their two children, Pierce (9) and Alexandra (7). Ellen has been very active as a volunteer in local schools and related programs. In addition, Ellen has been politically active with the Republican party, and among other activities, worked on the recent campaigns of Susan Collins and Jeff Butland. Ellen selected the Women's Lobby for her internship because she wants to contribute to the future of the women of Maine and recognizes the Lobby's work as relevant and important to that future.

Leanne Barschdorf lives in Yarmouth and also attends the University of Southern Maine, majoring in both Women's Studies and Political Science. Leanne is skilled in several computer operating and applications systems, which will be tremendously helpful in completing much of our administrative work. In addition, Leanne has experience in research as well as in organizing events. She brings to the Lobby a passion for women's issues and a strong interest in working in an environment that employs political action in securing equality for women.

We welcome both women, and look forward to a stimulating and productive year.

### 1995 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH POSTER

If you haven't received your 1995 poster, you're in luck; there are still some available. This year's poster celebrates Woman Suffrage in Maine. Though Women's History Month is officially over, the value of this poster endures. Do you know a classroom or library that needs one? Send in a mere \$5 for one, \$3 for each additional poster, which covers postage and handling. Make checks payable to MWL, and send to PO Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347.

## BOARD NEWS:

Martha Sterling-Golden, MWL board member and Director of Community Affairs for WCYY radio, attended the June session of the Women's Campaign School at Yale University. The session, offered in conjunction with Yale's Women's Studies Program, brings together women from all over the United States. Participants study with guest lecturers from Yale, George Washington University, and Rutgers, among others. Prominent political figures and political analysts bring their expertise to the program, which accepts a maximum of 40 applicants each session. This year, the Campaign School saw its first international participants, two women from Kenya who hope to see their experiences at Yale as a model for a similar program in Nairobi. Martha reports it as a stimulating and challenging week, one which the Lobby will certainly benefit from.

Each June, the Board welcomes some new faces. But in doing so, we must also say goodbye to the experience and contribu-

tions of veteran Board members. So, we'd like to thank our outgoing members for their time, energy, enthusiasm and hard work: Libbey Seigars, Coopers Mills; Penny Plourde, Augusta; Joyce Grondin, Hallowell; Susan Aaronson, Portland.

As with most non-profit boards, the Lobby experiences openings resulting from moves, job commitments, and other circumstances. We find ourselves in the position of filling these positions sporadically throughout the year, in addition to regular Board elections held in the spring. If you're interested in becoming a Board member, please contact the Lobby office, or a current Board member listed on the last page of this newsletter. Someone will be in touch with you as vacancies arise. So, please get involved--we always welcome the energy and new ideas of our membership!

## GRANT NEWS:

We are pleased to acknowledge two grants recently awarded to the Women's Development Institute (WDI). The Maine Women's Fund has recently granted \$5,000 in support of the Women's Economic Security Project. This grant will make possible the publication and distribution of the body of research resulting from WESP, and will enable WDI to complete its mission of educating public policy makers and the general public on the complex issues entailed in the welfare debate.

In addition to this grant, WDI has been named a beneficiary of the Karen Kalustian Memorial Fund. For those of you who did not have the opportunity to know her, Karen was a strong advocate for women and cared deeply about women's issues in many arenas, including abortion rights, physical and sexual abuse, health care access, economic opportunity and political power. Among her notable contributions to the medical community was her role as leader and resource person for HIV and related issues.

Both gifts will strengthen WDI's presence and assure continued work in support of women and girls in Maine. Many thanks to the Maine Women's Fund and the Karen Kalustian Memorial fund for their generous support.

## WANTED:

### TREASURER, MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY

The Lobby is fortunate to have had the services of Barbara Tribou as Treasurer. However, we must say farewell and offer our best wishes to Barbara as she moves to North Carolina this fall. We will certainly miss her. Her departure creates an opportunity for a person with the following skills:

- accounting, including preparation and filing of taxation and other documents, preparing monthly financial reports, and review and audit of reports prepared by office staff (CPA not required).
- ability to work well with staff without a background in financial management.
- good communication and collaboration skills.
- flexibility to ensure twice monthly visits to the Lobby office as well as attendance at Executive Committee and Board meeting (each meet monthly).
- strong support of the Maine Women's Lobby and its legislative priorities.

**MWL BOARD**

**Executive Committee**

**Chair:** Pierrette Lambert Kelly, Rome  
**Co-Chair:** Janice Bork, Thorndike  
**Treasurer:** Barbara Tribou, Gardiner  
**Secretary:** Lucinda Coombs, Leeds

**Legislative Committee**

Lillian Pease, Dresden, Chair  
 Laura Fortman, Executive Director  
 Eileen Fingerman, Oakland  
 Mary Ann Turowski, Hampden

**Membership and Member Relations Committee**

Martha Sterling-Golden, Lewiston, Chair  
 Lynne Cole, Canaan  
 Amy Locke, Yarmouth  
 Jessie Marin, Canaan  
 Shirley Barlow, Whitefield

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

Helen Payne, Waldoboro, Chair  
 Sandy Butler, Bangor  
 Jan Conley, Portland  
 Wendy Betts, Portland

**Women's Issues Leadership Council (WILC)**

Karen Hobson, Lewiston, Chair  
 Barbara Price, S. Portland

\*MWL Board Member



Maine Women's Lobby  
 P.O. Box 15  
 Hallowell, Maine 04347  
 (207) 622-0851  
 FAX: (207) 621-2551

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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

**Maine Women's Lobby**

\$125 Supporter  
 \$ 60 Household  
 \$ 35 Individual  
 \$ 10 Student  
 \$ Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$ 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 prefer to pay with my:  
 MasterCard # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Visa # \_\_\_\_\_

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

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to pay in installments. \_\_\_\_\_

My contribution is \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Senate District \_\_\_\_\_ House District \_\_\_\_\_

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

BULK RATE  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 AUGUSTA, ME  
 PERMIT NO. 452

Dec 1, 1996

Ann Schonberger  
 40 Garland St.  
 Bangor, ME 04401

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

*Breakfast of Champions*  
 coming this fall  
 watch for your invitation!