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## The Lobbist No. 22 (August 1998)

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

*Maine Women's Lobby*

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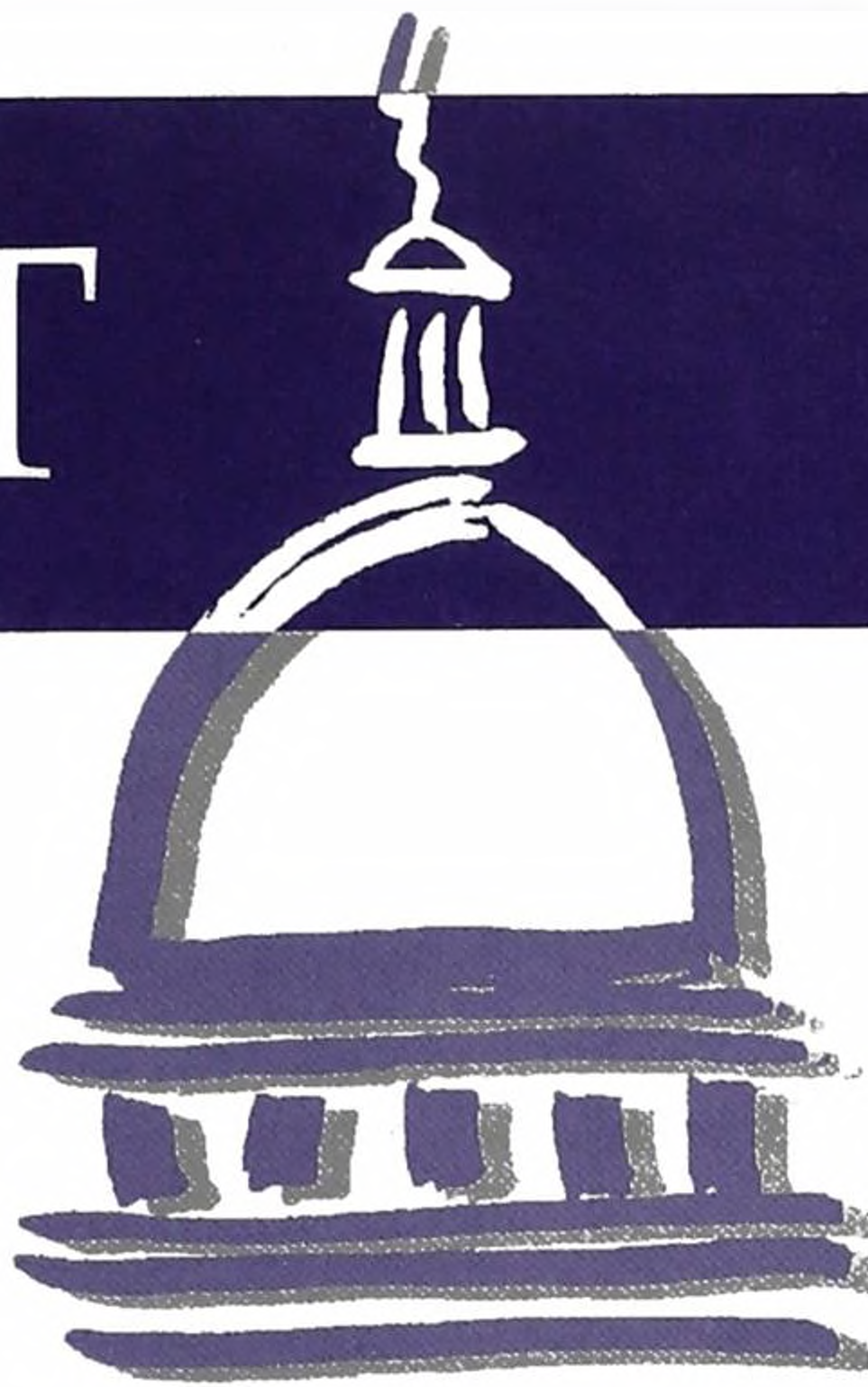
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# THE LOBBYIST

AUGUST 1998

Number 22



a publication of the

## MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY

and the Women's  
Development Institute



Speaker of the House Elizabeth Mitchell welcomes Board Chair Carol Kelly to the podium at MWL's 20th Annual Meeting  
photo by Annie Rose Photography

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY BASH A SMASH!

by Lucy Berkitt

Apparently, I was not the only one to break a record for the longest case of goose bumps or become afflicted with cheek ache from smiling so hard. Our 20th Anniversary Party was inspiring, exciting, educational, fun, but for me, it was most of all a confirmation of why I am a member of this incredible and essential organization.

This birthday bash brought together 350 thoughtful and committed women and men who filled the ballroom at the Radisson Eastland Hotel in Portland on May 14 with energy overflowing the brim. The bountiful program was commenced by Maine's first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives, Elizabeth Mitchell and was Emceed (back by popular demand) by Maine progressive activist (and humorist) Betsy Sweet. During the dinner, Miscellania, an a capella singing group from Bowdoin College graced us with a stirring concert. Four awards were given in the areas of reproductive rights, civil rights, violences against women, and economic justice.

The anniversary was also a catalyst for the production of two education and marketing tools which were featured at the party. The MWL documentary video Persistence & Progress was viewed on an enormous screen, thanks to Bath Iron Works and Mike Nutter. The film, which was directed by Polly Bennell and filmed by Mike Nutter (of BIW), is a concise and compelling synopsis of the Maine Women's Lobby and Women's Development Institute.



Women of the Maine Senate (l to r) Senate Minority Leader Jane Amero, Senator Sharon Treat, Senator Betty Lou Mitchell and Assistant Senate Majority Leader Chellie Pingree  
photo by Annie Rose Photography

We have multiple copies to lend out for maximum viewing opportunities (thanks again to BIW!). The other enticement piece, a timeline (the shape of the State Capitol) cleverly describes some of the key accomplishments of the MWL and WDI and parallels them with milestones in the women's movement. Thanks and praises go to Marianne Williams and Kirsten Schultz Design for this creative display.

In addition to getting a great start on fundraising for the year by raising over \$10,000, we cultivated many new members and potential funders.

Heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who contributed to the party's success.

(more photos on page 2)

## MWL SEEKING ENERGETIC, VISIONARY BOARD MEMBERS

The Maine Women's Lobby is currently seeking nominees to fill several spots on our Board of Directors. Board members serve a 3-year term, with new board members starting this Fall. Board members are expected to serve on at least one committee, and attendance at monthly meetings in Augusta and other MWL functions is required.

Individuals who have the time and energy to help move us into the 21st Century are encouraged to apply -- just send us a brief letter of intent and your resume by August 14, or call the office at 622-0851 with any questions. Elections will take place at our annual meeting, October 7, 1998.





(from page 1 MWL 20th Annual Meeting)  
Board member Laura Hudson chats with State Representative Elizabeth Watson before dinner.



(from page 1 MWL 20th Annual Meeting)  
Dr. Eileen Fingerman celebrates 20th anniversary gala with daughter Kira.

## "WOMEN'S WORK" SYMPOSIUM AT USM

This fall USM will host a series of programs that examines the meaning of work in women's lives. Local speakers, including Laura Fortman from the Maine Women's Lobby, will join national experts to discuss women's work experiences, the interaction of work and family, and examine the ways Maine women are working for change. The events are free and open to the public. The series may also be taken for USM credit or as a continuing education course. Each program will be followed by a reception and the "Women's Work" film series. For more information call (207) 780-4862.

Friday, September 18: "Why Women Work." 3 pm, Portland Campus

Friday, October 30: "Rethinking Women's Work." 3 pm, Lewiston Auburn Campus

Friday, November 20: "Women and Work: The Future." 3 pm, Portland Campus

## CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF SENECA FALLS

by Lauren Grousd, MWL Intern

This year commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention with which Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, among others, began the women's movement. Because of their frustration with women's inability to vote, divorce their husbands, own property, or attend college, Stanton and Mott decided to arrange a convention to discuss these social and civil inequalities. In preparation for the convention, the women created the Declaration of Sentiments, which identified a vast array of grievances ranging from women's disenfranchisement to the deterioration of women's self-confidence as a result of male political and social domination. The document was modeled after the Declaration of Independence, and made evident the differences between the notion of freedom in the original text and the actual circumstances in which women found themselves in the year 1848. The assertions found in the Declaration of Sentiments and voiced at the convention represented the first major challenge to women's social and political subordination in the United States.

Held at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York on July 19 and 20, 1848, the Seneca Falls convention drew about 300 people by the end of the second day. Out of the eleven resolutions proposed in the Declaration of Sentiments and voted on by 68 women and 32 men, only one did not pass. Women would have to wait another seventy-two years to gain the right to vote, but the convention was immensely successful in the sense that it set a precedent for the public discussion of women's rights. In the 150 years since the Seneca Falls convention, women have carried on its legacy by making their voices heard and demanding their civil rights, and the summer of 1998 will commemorate this birth of the women's movement in the United States.

The Seneca Falls Maine group has organized several events to commemorate the 150th anniversary. On March 14 at the University of Maine at Augusta, the group organized a day long conference which featured speaker Ellen DuBois from the University of California at Los Angeles, and other scholars from Bowdoin and Colby Colleges, the University of Southern Maine, the University of Maine School of Law, and the Maine and Pejeboscot historical societies. On April 15, seven female inmates at the Charleston Correctional Facility reenacted the Seneca Falls convention, and written accounts of their impressions and views will be sent to the Seneca Falls Maine gathering later on this summer. Seneca Falls Maine also sponsored a group to attend the anniversary celebration at Seneca Falls National Park on July 19 and 20 which included a dramatization of the original convention and a ceremonial renewal of the Declaration of Sentiments.

Recognizing the vision and goals of the earliest members of the women's movement is significant because of their continued relevance to the work of the Maine Women's Lobby. Women such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton worked towards changing the structural roots of women's inequality through supporting women's suffrage, the right to divorce, and the right to own property. Like all of those who support and donate their time to the Maine Women's Lobby, these women sought to improve women's lives through increasing access to the political decision making process. Florence Brooks Whitehouse, a Maine woman active in the suffrage movement, wrote in the February 25, 1917 edition of the Portland Sunday Press, "In charities we skim off the top of a stagnant pool, but we do not touch the drainage of the pool to clean up the conditions which cause the stagnation." The Maine Women's Lobby is committed to seeking out the "causes of stagnation" in order to create better opportunities for Maine women and enable them to continue fighting for their rights. It's because of our members that we are able to pursue that goal.



## AN URGENT CALL TO MEMBERS: NOW IS THE TIME TO GET INVOLVED!

We need your energy, skills and enthusiasm to help defeat the ban and preserve access to safe, legal abortion services. Please contact us if you would be willing to:

\_\_ Organize a house party. This issue can be a difficult subject to talk about. Get five or six friends and neighbors together to discuss the issue and build skills to respond to it — we'll provide a speaker and materials!

\_\_ Staff a table at a fair or conference. There are several events throughout the summer and fall we want to attend, and you may know of others in your area.

\_\_ Make phone calls to other pro-choice Mainers;

*Help us send a message that Mainers are positively pro-choice* — gather signatures for our statement in support of women's reproductive rights and privacy! We know you're committed to choice, but we need you to talk to five of your friends who are not necessarily Lobby members. Please have them sign the form below and then return it to us. If you can gather more than five, feel free to attach an addition sheet or call us for more.

I firmly and positively support a woman's right to reproductive choice and privacy, and will actively work against legislation that puts women's lives and health at risk and violates their constitutional rights. Furthermore, I support policies that address the root causes of unintended pregnancy, including access to health care, sexuality education, information about contraceptives, and funding for family planning services. If there is a ballot initiative to restrict access to safe, legal abortion procedures in November 1999, I pledge to vote "No."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel/Fax/Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please express your support to our pro-choice Congressional delegation and  
pro-choice candidates running for office!

Please turn this sheet over to gather signatures for our petition.

To return this form or if you can volunteer a few hours  
a month to help out in the office, contact:  
The Maine Women's Lobby, P.O. Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347.  
Tel. (207) 622-0851; fax (207) 621-2551; Email MWomenL@aol.com

**I firmly and positively support a woman's right to reproductive choice and privacy, and will actively work against legislation that puts women's lives and health at risk and violates their constitutional rights. Furthermore, I support policies that address the root causes of unintended pregnancy, including access to health care, sexuality education, information about contraceptives, and funding for family planning services. If there is a ballot initiative to restrict access to safe, legal abortion procedures in November 1999, I pledge to vote "No."**

Name

## Address

**Phone**

## Email

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# THE FUTURE OF CHOICE IN MAINE



You've probably seen the headlines, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor already. In what is sure to be a high-profile, statewide debate, the Maine Christian Civic League, the Maine Chapter of the Christian Coalition and the Maine Right to Life Committee have initiated a bill that attempts to ban safe and legal abortion procedures under the guise of a bill to ban "partial birth" abortions. They've recently been joined by the Catholic Diocese of Maine, which, in a break from traditional policy, is allowing petitioning on church grounds across the state. This initiative is part of a national strategy to further the extreme right's anti-choice goal of eroding reproductive rights for women.

The Maine Women's Lobby has been adamantly pro-choice for 20 years and we intend to fight this referendum along with any other efforts to infringe upon women's reproductive freedom. We had a table at Portland's recent PRIDE celebration, where we began collecting signatures for a statement in support of women's reproductive choice and privacy. In conjunction with the Maine Choice Coalition, we've had strategy meetings with staff from national organizations that are tracking the issue, including NARAL and the ACLU's Reproductive Freedom Project. And, along with the Maine Choice Coalition, we're developing a campaign to fight the ban at every step along the way — with voters, legislators, and in the courts. As always, the support and involvement of our members is crucial to our success.

## What does the initiative ask?

The initiative asks: "Do you want to ban a specific abortion procedure to be defined in state law except in cases where the life of the mother is in danger?" We are urging people to decline to sign this petition and actively work against legislation that restricts access to safe, legal abortion.

## Why should Mainers oppose the bill?

The language of the bill is intentionally broad and vague. It could make most standard and safe methods of abortion illegal and does not protect the health of the woman.

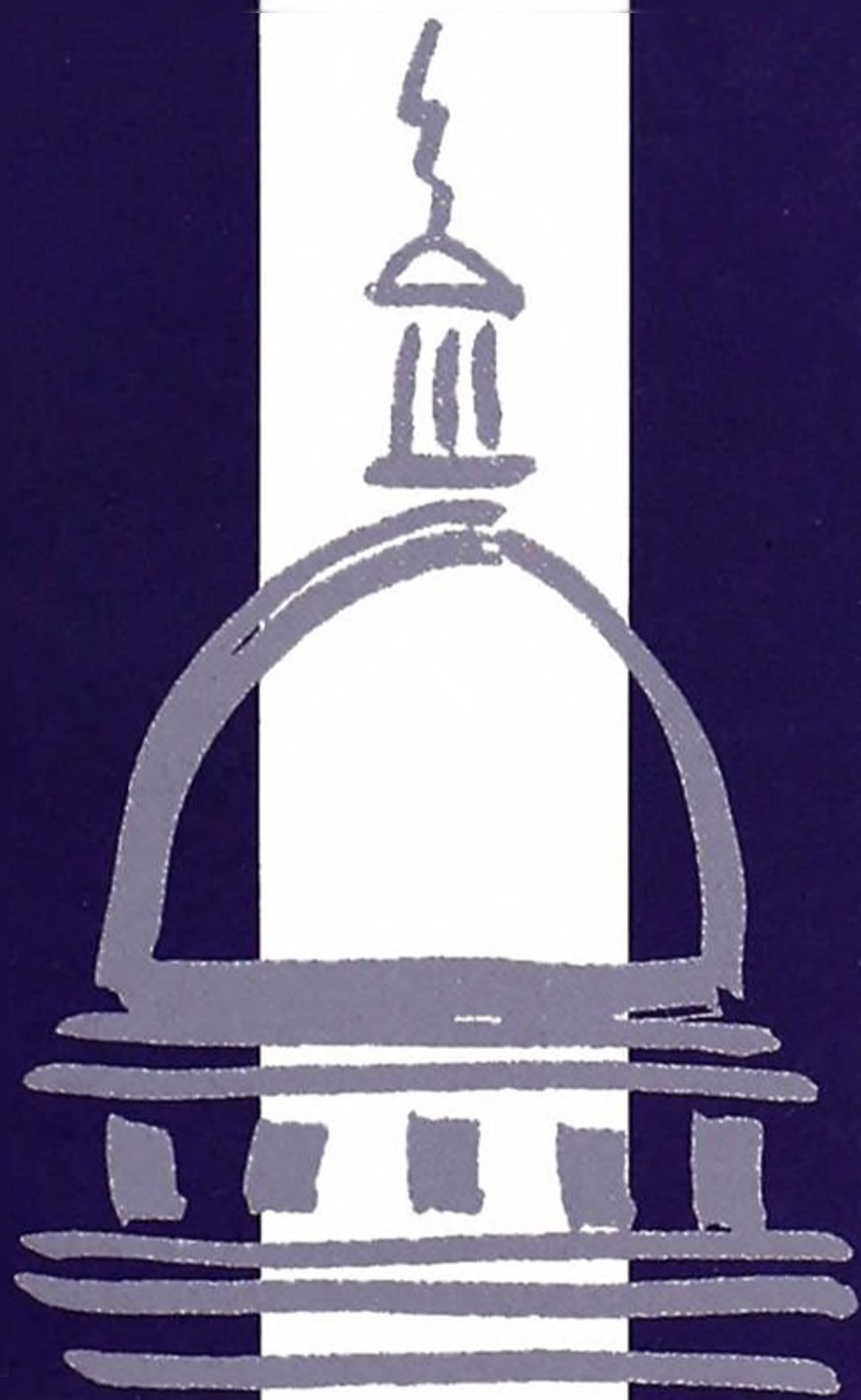
Private medical decisions should be made by women with their doctors and their families, not politicians.

This is anything but a common medical procedure. Only two late-term abortions have taken place in Maine in the last 14 years. We trust Maine women to make responsible decisions about their reproductive health.

Instead of making abortion more difficult and dangerous for women, lawmakers should promote policies that prevent unintended pregnancy such as: comprehensive sexuality education, contraceptive coverage, and adequate funding for family planning.

## G.R.O.W. TO SPONSOR ORGANIZERS' WORKSHOP IN SEPTEMBER

A Grassroots Organizers' Workshops conference on the weekend of September 18-20th will kick off a new program to reinvigorate and sustain statewide efforts for progressive change. Activists and organizers from all over the state will convene at Camp Kieve in Nobleboro, on Lake Darmiscotta. Workshops will cover skill building in media, fundraising, strategizing, sustaining groups, and more. There will be time for fun, too: theater, dancing, music and great food. Costs have been kept as low as possible to enable full participation. For a brochure, contact: G.R.O.W., RR1 Box 1013, Stockton Springs, ME 04981; email: [gallander@acadia.net](mailto:gallander@acadia.net); or call Nancy Galland, 567-4075 or Larry Dansinger, 525-7776.



## RAFFLE SENDS TEN WINNERS TO GREAT ESCAPES!

This year's "Great Escapes" raffle awarded 10 prizes — more than any other year. Congratulations to winners Shelia McDonald, Representative Elizabeth Watson, Shelia Comerford, Carol Goloff & Al Andraski, Rebecca Albright, Barbara Tribou and David Toothaker, Angelique Delano, Tobi Schneider, and Sam Jones. Rena Heath was awarded a \$500 savings bond for selling the most tickets.

Our thanks to everyone who participated and the generous businesses that contributed prizes. And many thanks to Diane Alexander, who organized this year's event. The raffle raised nearly \$3000 for MWL activities this summer. Your support is greatly appreciated!



# NARROWING THE WAGE GAP

Equal pay for equal work has been the law in Maine since 1965, but over 30 years later paychecks for women are still coming up short. Despite gains in obtaining employment, women are often paid less than men — even when we do similar work and have the same education, skills and experience. In 1996, women were paid just 74 cents for every dollar men received. African American women earned only 65 cents of every dollar and for Latina women, the gap widens to 57 cents to the dollar. Over a 30 year career, the wage gap means over a quarter of a million dollars less — that's \$8,434 less per year to send on housing, groceries, health and child care. The wage gap means women are more likely to retire poor, too. Because pension and social security checks are based on lifetime earnings, the checks we depend on for a secure retirement are only half as big as men's.

Maine's equal pay statute explicitly states that no employer in Maine may pay an employee less on the basis of gender for comparable work on jobs that have comparable levels of skill, effort and responsibility. This includes men and women who do the same job or jobs that have different titles or job descriptions, as long as they meet the "comparable worth" requirements. Under this law, for instance, a teacher at a day care center could not be paid less than someone who shovels snow for that center if the value of their work to their employer and the skills they use are equal. A female lawyer would be entitled to the same pay as a male counterpart in the firm who holds the same position, as long the pay difference is not based on seniority, experience or other legitimate factors. And general office clerks — mostly women — could have the right to the same pay as stock and inventory clerks — mostly men — who now earn over \$100 more a week, on average.

Unfortunately, rules were never put in place to ensure that this law was understood and enforced by employers. At the urging the Maine Women's Lobby and other advocates, the Maine legislature recently passed a Resolve directing the Department of Labor to adopt rules to implement the equal pay law. The rules will provide incentives for employers to comply with the law and a way to measure their accountability. Many employers may have inadvertently allowed pay inequities to develop in their workforce, and we're confident they will correct this problem themselves. By highlighting the issue and establishing clear guidelines, the rules will help Maine employers who don't believe in discrimination by giving them tools to examine their pay structure.

Equal pay is not just good for working women — it's good for Maine families and our economy. If women were paid fairly, family incomes would rise. Parents would have more to spend on household needs, more to save for their children's education, and more to put towards a secure retirement. Securing fair pay for women can help ensure that all work is valued in a fair, equitable way.

As part of the process of examining pay discrimination in Maine, the State will hold public hearings to help make sure the rules reflect people's experiences in the workplace. It's crucial that we identify and hear the personal stories of women who believe they have not been paid fairly. If you think you've been paid less simply because of your gender, please call us at 622-0851 or email us at [MWomensL@aol.com](mailto:MWomensL@aol.com).

## EQUAL PAY CHECKLIST

Working women are entitled to equal pay for equal work, yet they consistently say pay is one their biggest concerns. Regardless of their profession, many women feel they are not fairly compensated for their work.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau developed this list to help women further their job opportunities and improve earning power.

When was the last time you...

- 1.) Thought about what you do on the job, the skills you use, your contributions, and the value you bring to your employer?
- 2.) Compared your skills and responsibilities to those of others in your workplace and industry?
- 3.) Consulted trade journals or the Department of Labor wage information to get a sense of salary ranges for someone of your qualifications within your industry?
- 4.) Had a performance review and used it as an opportunity to discuss your responsibilities and the value of skills to the company?
- 5.) Asked for a raise if you feel you are being underpaid based on your skills and responsibilities?
- 7.) Sought training, special projects or other skill building opportunities that could lead to a better job?
- 6.) Shared ideas and concerns about compensation issues with others in your workplace?

## MWL TO HOST NATIONAL LEADERS IN PORTLAND

The Maine Women's Lobby and the Women's Development Institute have partnered with the Rockefeller Family Fund and the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Policy Alternatives to host the second annual Grassroots Leadership Retreat. On July 31 - August 2, women leaders from across the country will gather in Portland to discuss how to protect and promote women's economic rights.

The Retreat will build upon the groundwork laid at last summer's event, held in Colorado. Organizers hope to provide a forum where leaders can strategize, share experiences, and form alliances that cross state lines. The focus will be on developing and advancing a women-led economic agenda that places women's concerns front and center. It will be an inspiring and invigorating opportunity for national leaders to organize and activate for economic change.

The kick-off event for the weekend is a reception at Portland City Hall on Friday night. Representatives of organizations who we work in partnership with on our legislative agenda will attend, along with state representatives and senators. Linda Tarr-Whelan, President and CEO of the Center for Policy Alternatives and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women, will present CPA's blueprint for action in four areas: economic self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship, health care and security, and family and work. The blueprint is the heart of a recent CPA report, *America's Economic Agenda: Women's Voices for Solutions*, that emerged from a Women's Economic Leadership Summit last year.

For a copy of the report, contact: Center for Policy Alternatives, 1875 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20009; phone: 1-800-935-0699; fax: (202) 986-2539. Or visit CPA's web site: [www.cfpa.org](http://www.cfpa.org).



## REPORT SPOTLIGHTS WOMEN'S HEALTH

Did you know:

*Only 63% of women in Maine have employment-based health insurance, and eleven percent have no health insurance at all.*

*Tobacco use accounts for one of every four cancer deaths among women in Maine;*

*Sixty-four percent of Maine women who have been hospitalized at Augusta Mental Health Institute since 1988 report having been physically abused at some point in their lives;*

*Fifty percent of women over the age of 40 have not had a mammogram or CBE in the past year.*

These are just a few of the pertinent health statistics documented in the recently published Women's Health: A Maine Profile. A Project of the Women's Health Equity Campaign, of which MWL was a founding member, First Lady Mary Herman, and several state agencies, the report spotlights health issues that disproportionately affect women in Maine.

Women's Health is two-fold: Part I, Selected Facts on Women's Health in Maine, is a fresh analysis of existing health and economic data. Part II, A Maine Perspective on Women's Health, is a summary of focus group interviews with 77 women across the state. The discussions centered on issues of access, information seeking, education and service needs, and risk factors. Twenty-three health professionals were also interviewed on health problems, possible solutions and needed resources.

Several themes emerged from the interviews. Overall, Maine women desire information about health changes over their life cycle. Providers highlighted the neglect of adolescent girls health concerns as a critical issue. For adult women, the focus of women's health as "maternal" health distances them from health services after their childbearing years and excludes women who do not have children. And older women often do not have access to services that help them cope with problems associated with aging.

Many of the women interviewed stressed the need support around health care, including adequate finances and affordable health insurance and services. They also cited the importance of child and elder care, time off from work, transportation, availability of nutritious foods and, most importantly, time for exercise and rest.

In terms of patient/provider communication, Women's Health confirmed that Maine women want to be listened to. In a respectful, trusting relationship with a provider, women are more likely to address issues relating to their health and change health behaviors. Established and supportive relationships with providers would also help women address the physiological health issues that concern them, in particular cancer, depression, domestic violence, heart and lung disease.

This September, Laura Fortman will represent the Maine Women's Lobby at a Women's Health Summit to discuss issues raised in the report. Recognizing that health is influenced by a variety of factors, organizers plan to develop strategies that incorporate public health, behavioral health, and access to medical care.

For a copy of Women's Health: A Maine Profile, contact Diane Campbell, Medical Care Development, Inc., 11 Parkwood Drive, Augusta, ME 04330; phone (207) 622-7566, fax (207) 622-3616.



## DATES TO REMEMBER:

**September 6, 1998:** We Were There!, a multi-media women's labor history show. Luther Bonney Auditorium, U.S.M. Did you know that women were and still are on the front lines of the Labor movement? We Were There brings history to life with voices, songs, and slides depicting women's struggles and victories, from Sojourner Truth fighting for women's rights to Dolores Huerta organizing with the farmworkers of today. For details call Vinny O'Malley, Maine AFL-CIO, at 874-1000, or Pat McKeen, Women's Labor Institute, 892-8017.

**September 18, October 30, November 20th:** USM iWomen's Work Symposium. For more information, call 780-4862.

**September 18-20:** Grassroots Organizers' Workshops. Camp Kieve, Nobleboro. Call Nancy Galland, 567-4075, or Larry Dansinger, 525-7776, for a brochure.

**September 28:** Maine Women's Fund Dinner: An Evening to Honor Maine Women and Girls. Holiday Inn, Portland. As in past years, a tribute book, Honoring Women and Girls, will be presented. For invitations, table reservations, or to make a tribute to an important woman or girl in your life, call 774-5513.

**October 7, 1998:** The MWL Annual Meeting. Please join us to elect new board members and celebrate the success of the Lobby. Call the MWL office at 622-0851 to RSVP or for directions.

**October 19 & 20, 1998:** Violence, Trauma and Recovery: Responding to the Impacts of Interpersonal Violence. Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland. The second annual clinical training conference, sponsored by the DMHMRAS Office of Trauma Services and the Center for Learning.

**October 21, 1998:** MWL Breakfast of Champions, Sheraton Four Points, Bangor Airport. Because of the array of intense political issues this year, it's more important than ever for MWL members all over the state to network and be involved. This year's Breakfast will be held in Bangor to give women from central and northern Maine more of an opportunity to connect. Please join us for a morning of thought-provoking political discussion. If you live in the Bangor area, we need your help organizing the event! Please call Sandy Butler at 581-2382 for details, or contact the MWL office: phone, 622-0851; email, MWomenL@aol.com.

### MWL BOARD

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