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Maine Women's Lobby

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a publication of the

MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY



GIRLS DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE A COMPLETE SUCCESS!

by Jocelyn Barret

On March 3, 1998, The Women's Development Institute hosted its second annual Girls' Day at the State House. Over eighty girls from all over the state of Maine gathered together for a day of learning in Augusta. This year at WDI our focus was on getting together a diverse group of young girls, ages eleven to fifteen. The goal was to take the legislative experience into the realm of understanding for girls from all economic and educational backgrounds.

The day began with girls flowing in between 8:30 and 9:15am, where they were greeted, registered, given a snack and taken on a scavenger hunt. They were asked to find such things as "Who was governor of Maine in 1887" and "What's the name of the only woman whose portrait hangs in the Hall of Flags?" At 9:30 everyone gathered together in the Moose Room for an official welcome and to begin the morning's activities. The girls were broken up into groups, and throughout the morning, each group participated in three different hands-on-activities. Some had the opportunity to act as pages in the House, while some were given a tour. Everyone got a chance to participate in a mock public hearing where they debated the crucial issue of pay equity for women in the workforce. After that, the girls had the chance to express their artistic side by making buttons supporting their position on "Equal Pay for Equal Work for Women."

We were lucky to have the Senate Majority Leader Pingree and Senate Minority Leader Amero greet the girls. They had much information and encouragement for the girls about the status and future of women in government. They took questions, answered from their individual viewpoints. The morning was made complete when Governor King addressed the girls briefly and had a picture taken with them. To our surprise and delight, when he asked if anyone had a question for him, the girls were neither shy nor uninformed. They piped right up with questions about what he was planning to do about daycare availability for teen mothers in the school systems, welfare reform, and how government money is being spent. As Laura told the girls later, usually when a group of well prepared and experienced adults confront the Governor, they don't even ask him better questions. We were all proud and impressed. One of the girls, when asked on an evaluation sheet what her favorite part of the day was, wrote My favorite part was when we met the governor, because we interrogated him really good. I think everyone involved (including the Governor) was encouraged by their knowledge and confidence.

GOOD LUCK ELISE!

After three years working in the office of the Maine Women's Lobby, Elise Brown has left the organization to pursue her one true love . . . farming.

Elise will be working full time at her home in Liberty and will continue her volunteer work with the local fire department, where she was recently promoted to Captain. Yeah Elise!

If you need organic vegetables, or just want to say hi, you can reach Elise at 589-4339.

Thank you Elise for your years of dedication and commitment to the Lobby.

GIRL'S DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE:

Continued from Page 1

After the lunch the girls got an opportunity to job-shadow their legislator for an hour or so. There was a good response from the legislators, who seemed happy to share their time. For many of the girls, it was the first time they had seen their legislator doing anything besides pamphleteering door to door at election time. They seemed impressed with the amount of work their legislators put in. One participant commented, I learned there is a lot more to politics than sitting around talking about stuff all day.

One of the high points of the day was when Speaker of the House Elizabeth Mitchell addressed the girls in the House Chamber. Although she was extremely busy, she managed to make room in her schedule to have a conversation with the girls. When Speaker Mitchell flew into the room, her energy and genuine interest sparked a real connection with the girls. She made them laugh, showed them how to pound the gavel to really get a group's attention, and talked to them, not at them, about how it feels to be the first woman Speaker of the House, and how important each of them is to the legislative process. Then, she fielded questions in the form of a session, coaching each girl on how to speak in session, letting them stand up and use the microphone, and honestly giving their statements as much validity as anything a representative could say to her. Their time together ended with a conversation in which many of the girls participated about changes in Drivers Education Policies. Before she left, sure she gave them information about the bill she is working on now, which will help ease the financial expenses of college education. The vast majority of the girls wrote on their evaluations that Speaker Mitchell was a high point of their day.

The day ended with the girls filling out evaluation sheets which we'll use to help us plan in the years to come, then a visit to the Museum where they were picked up by parents and chaperones.

Despite some logistical nightmares we had to fight through, in the end the Girls' Day came together and flowed pretty smoothly. I was truly impressed with the girls themselves, who were smart and bold and enthusiastic.

Jocelyn Barrett is a student at the University of Maine at Farmington, working toward an independent major combining Women's Studies, Literature and Writing. She's been an intern at WI and the Maine Women's Lobby since January and organized this year's Girls' Day at the State House.



SHADOWING SESSION BRINGS 30 WOMEN TO THE STATE HOUSE

On January 20, 1998, battling both snow and ice, about thirty women from across the state of Maine gathered at the State House to participate in a day spent learning about the legislative process and the ways ordinary citizens can impact the decisions made in Augusta. The day was made possible due to a grant awarded the Women's Development Institute by the Maine Community Foundation. We are very grateful for their commitment to the promotion of political awareness and education for Maine women.

The day began with breakfast and a welcome by several legislators. The women then received an overview of the legislative process. Following the introduction to life at the State House, the women participated in a mock public hearing regarding whether or not to increase the minimum wage. The public hearing was a huge success as the women truly acted the parts of opponents, proponents, and legislators working towards an understanding of the bill and what affect it would have on women, children, small businesses and the economy as a whole. Lunch followed with four representatives and senators speaking to the group about their jobs, responsibilities, wishes and roles as the voice of Maine people. Following lunch, the women processed the mock public hearing and learned about the background and goals of the Maine Women's Lobby. Representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services and from the Department of Labor then addressed the women, speaking to their direct concerns about child support, low wages, and welfare issues. The day concluded with a discussion of the importance of coalition building in forming alliances and pooling resources.

Throughout the day, the women were given many tips for making their voice heard and many different resources that they can use to access information or exchange it with others. The objective of the day, to learn about and explore the political process using a combination of fact-based training and hands-on experience interacting with public policy makers, was definitely accomplished, as shown by the positive feedback we received on the evaluation forms and the eagerness of the women to get involved with the process and understand how their government works. Our hope is that the women will use the day as a means to continue to become involved in the government and make their voice heard. Many people made this day possible and we would like to thank all those involved for making the day such a success.

At the Maine Women's Lobby's 20th Anniversary Celebration on May 14th at the Radisson in Portland, the Lobby will be honoring women of Maine who have made a difference in the lives of other women in our state. Courage awards will be presented in four areas: Economic Justice, Civil Rights, Violence Against Women and Reproductive Rights.

The award for Economic Justice will be given to **Maria Escobar**. Maria is an egg packer at DeCoster Egg Farms and has been a leader in the fight to unionize employees. She has demonstrated tremendous courage and perseverance in her commitment to fairness and equity for DeCoster employees, testifying at the legislature to assure overtime pay and to advocate for the right to unionize, and meeting with Governor King to urge him to sign the bill authorizing the union. Maria has done all of this at great personal sacrifice. She was fired and denied unemployment benefits and returned to her job only after a hearing into the firing determined it was ungrounded.

Lin Gould, a teacher at Mount Desert Island High School is receiving the award for Civil Rights. Lin has taught science and math at MDI High for nine years. Previously, she taught at a junior high school north of Old Town. It was there that she discovered prejudice and discrimination, being forced to resign after a parent accused her of being gay. She is now an outspoken advocate for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered and questioning youth and is a founding member of Downeast GLSEN (Gay/Lesbian/Straight Education Network). This past winter, Lin formed the first Gay/Straight Alliance in a public school in Maine. 52 students and three teachers attended the first meeting and more continue to join.

For her work to combat Violence Against Women, **Marty MacIntyre**, Executive Director of the Sexual Assault Crisis Center (SACC) of Androscoggin County, will also be honored. Marty has been working at SACC since its inception in 1984 and has expanded the agency's programs from a 24-hour hotline service to include a broad range of intervention and support services for victims/survivors and significant others, and a comprehensive community education and awareness program. In 1995, Marty was appointed by Governor King to serve on the Board of Osteopathic Licensure and the Justice Assistance Council, and in 1997, she was invited to serve on the faculty of the National Victim Assistance Academy in Washington, DC.

The final award - for Reproductive Rights - will be presented to the pro-choice women of the Maine Senate as a group: **Jane Amero, Mary Cathcart, Beverly Daggett, Jill Goldthwait, Marge Kilkelly, Susan Longley, Betty Lo Mitchell, Peggy Pendleton, Chellie Pingree, Anne Rand, Mary Small and Sharon Treat**. The Lobby recognizes these senators for their courage in standing up for choice in the battle last session to preserve a woman's right to choose. Each of these senators spoke out against a ban on so-called "partial birth" abortions and prevailed.

We are proud to present these Courage Awards and hope all Lobby members will join us on May 14 to celebrate the difference these individuals have made in the lives of the women of Maine.



THERE'S STILL TIME TO REGISTER FOR THE 20TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION!

Thursday, May 14, 1998 at the Radisson in Portland

6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Just fill out the attached information, return it to the Maine Women's Lobby with your check by May 11, 1998

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

No. of tickets ____ @ \$40=____ Please reserve a table of 8 for \$280 ____

Meal preference ____ Chicken ____ Vegetarian

____ I would like information about place an advertisement in the program booklet.

____ I would like information about the child care provided.

____ ASL interpreter needed.

____ I am sorry I can't attend. I've enclosed a contribution to the Lobby's work.

VISA/MC # _____ Exp. _____

Name on card _____ Signature _____

Event Highlights

- ✓Maine Speaker of the House Elizabeth Mitchell
- ✓Performance by *Miscellania*
- ✓Courage Awards
- ✓MWL Video
- ✓The Lobby Story
- ✓The Next 20 Years

MWL HAS SUCCESSFUL LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Second Regular Session of the 118th Maine Legislature came to a close in the early morning hours of Thursday, April 9, 1998. The second regular session is frequently referred to as the short session. It is called that because fewer bills are allowed to be presented. New legislation must have received the support of a majority of the Legislative Council before it can be introduced. Carry over bills from the first regular session are also acted on.

Following is a brief summary of the content and status of a few of the bills we worked on during the second session. (FYI --P.L.-- stands for Public Law this information is being included for bills that have been signed by the Governor at the time the Newsletter is being printed.)

Most bills that were passed become effective 90 days after adjournment (July 1998) Emergency bills take effect immediately.

HEALTH CARE

L.D. 2225 An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Maine Commission on Children's Health Care. Key components are expansion of Medicaid coverage to children in families with incomes up to 150% of poverty and a separate program, Cub Care, with almost identical benefits, for children in families with incomes between 150% - 185% of poverty. The projected start up date for the Cub Care program is July 1998.

Chapter 118, Resolve, to Establish the Commission on Eating Disorders Presented by: Rep. Poulin MWL worked with Mainely Girls on this legislation. As a result of that collaboration, several high school students from the Camden area spoke in support of this bill. It received unanimous committee support. The Resolve, establishes a 19 member study commission staffed by the Dept. Of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services and has representatives from the Dept. Of Human Services, the Dept. Of Education, service providers, persons who have eating disorders and other members of the community on it. The Commission is responsible for studying methods of providing education, prevention services and support to persons with eating disorders and their families. The first meeting will be held no later than May 30, 1998. Emergency.

PERSONAL SAFETY

P.L. 1998, Chapt. 615: An Act to Inform Crime Victims about the Disposition of Charges Presented by: Rep. Richard Nass

This requires that crime victims be notified when charges are dismissed.

BUDGET

TANF Benefits--- Sen. Rand's bill to increase the basic grant by 5% from \$312./mo to \$328/mo. (for a family of 2) was included in the Budget. The increase will take effect in July 1998. This increase does not apply to families who receive the earned income disregard.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

P.L. 1998, Chap. 667 An Act to Address the Crisis in Access to Dental Care for Low-Income Children Presented by: Rep. J. Elizabeth Mitchell
Key components of this legislation include having DHS establish a telephone referral service, increasing available providers by working with dental associations and producing an annual report documenting the progress of the Dept.'s efforts to increase access to services. Emergency

P.L. 1998, Chap. 695 An Act to Amend the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family Program - Senator Anne Rand This clarifies for Maine families who are subject to the 60 month federal TANF time limit that they will continue to receive benefits as long as they are complying with the TANF program rules. Exceptions are persons who have been sanctioned 3 or more times --in those cases the amount of the adult's benefit will be removed from the grant until a penalty period is served. The penalty period will be the amount of time imposed by their last sanction. No family that has a good cause exemption will be sanctioned.

P.L. 1998, Chap. 745 An Act to Implement the Majority Report Recommendations of the Commission to Study the Unemployment Compensation System. After much legislative debate, the Department of Labor was directed to develop a solvency plan for the unemployment compensation program and necessary legislation to implement it to the 119th Legislature by Jan. 1, 1999. The Dept. Of Labor must consider the following issues when developing the plan and legislation: equitable tax structure, adjustments to the taxable wage base, recommending a target solvency reserve amount, benefit structure and examining how the Unemployment Compensation Fund is administered.

L.D. 2243 An Act to Encourage Accountability and Return on Investment for Maine Taxpayers from Economic Development Initiatives Presented by Sen. Pingree. Key components of the legislation include: authorizing the Dept. Of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to collect data from companies receiving state economic development assistance, creates an 11 person Commission to study how Maine's job creation programs are working, and extends the ETIF wage and benefit standards to the Jobs and Investment Tax credit program.

L.D. 568 An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Poverty Among Working Parents with Regard to the Minimum Wage. This bill would have increased the minimum wage by .25 an hour from \$5.15 to \$5.40. It was passed by the legislature and vetoed by the Governor.

If you are interested in becoming more actively involved with the legislative process please call the Lobby office 622-0851. We would love to have you join the Legislative Committee!

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

I Three Years Later -- Where are they Now?

Highlights of follow-up report on AFDC families surveyed in 1994

In 1994, on the eve of a major overhaul of this country's welfare system, the Women's Development Institute in cooperation with the Maine Department of Human Services, distributed mail surveys to 3,000 randomly selected AFDC households. This study was conducted to examine the labor market experience and opportunities of these women. The response rate was 30%. The results of that survey were published by the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy in *Living on the Edge: Women Working and Providing for Families in the Maine Economy, 1979-1993*.

In November 1997, a follow-up survey of 569 respondents to the 1994 survey was conducted by the Women's Development Institute and the Maine Center for Economic Policy. Of those who could be located (352), 32% responded. The purpose of this survey was to assess, three years later, the economic status of families responding to the 1994 survey. Because numerous families were anticipated to have moved off welfare, it was also designed to provide a picture of how this group is faring relative to those on TANF and to learn more about the characterizes of those who continue to need assistance.

Demographics of Respondents

The characteristics of those responding to the 1997 survey are very similar to those who responded in 1994. The most significant difference is that 45.5% are no longer on AFDC (now TANF). Other differences include a higher percentage that are working for pay and higher educational attainment.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE			IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON NEED FOR HELP			
CHARACTERISTIC	1994 SURVEY	1997 SURVEY	ED. ATTAIN.	% EMPLOYED	% ON/OFF ASSISTANCE On TANF Off TANF	MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE OF WORKING
% receiving TANF	100%	54.5%				
% female	95.9%	96.4%				
Median Age	30.1	34				
Ave. # children	1.85	1.71				
% with children under 5	54%	36%				
Educational attainment						
Less than HS diploma	22.1%	12.5%	Less than HS diploma	0.0%	15.8% 7.9%	N/A
HS diploma or GED	48.3%	49.1%	HS diploma or GED	20%	54.4% 41.2%	\$5.58
Some college/technical	24.3%	30.4%	Some college/tech.	54.9%	26.3% 25.5%	\$6.25
Bachelor's degree	4.8%	8.0%	Associate degree	65.2%	2.2% 9.8%	\$6.25
% working for pay	21.1%	51.8%	Bachelor's degree	88.9%	2.2% 15.7%	\$7.57

What state policies do we recommend?

- ✓ Increased access to health insurance for children and adults
- ✓ Expansion of education and training programs such as Parents as Scholars.
- ✓ Expansion of earned income disregards
- ✓ TANF benefit increase
- ✓ State minimum wage increase
- ✓ State earned income tax credit
- ✓ State economic development strategies that promote high wage jobs and security.

The full report is available for \$8.00 by contacting the WDI office 622-0851, P.O. Box 85, Hallowell, ME 04347.

FAIR PAY ~ DO YOU GET IT?

Do you believe you have been paid less in a job simply because of your gender?

Paying one worker less than another because of their gender is against the law in Maine. This means that a man and woman at the same workplace must be paid the same wage for

doing the same job, OR

doing jobs that require equal levels of skills, effort and responsibility, even if the job has a different title or description.

The Maine Department of Labor will be stepping up its enforcement of this law in the upcoming year. The Maine Women's Lobby wants to be able to identify people who feel as though they have not been paid fairly under this law.

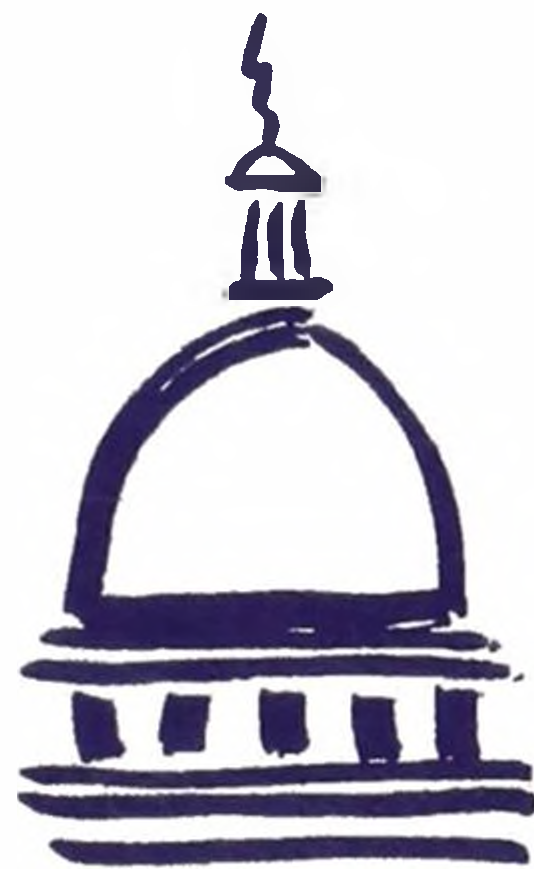
If you believe that you have not been paid fairly we would like to hear from you. Call us at 622-0851 or email us at mwomenl@aol.com

DATES TO REMEMBER:

May 8, 1998: Women's Health Conference, UNE

May 14, 1998: 20th Anniversary Celebration of MWL

6-9:00p.m., Radisson Portland



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