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## The Lobbyist No. 24 (February 1999)

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

*Maine Women's Lobby*

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# THE LOBBYIST

## a publication of the **MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY**

and the Women's  
Development Institute



Sen. Pingree, Sen. Amero, Rep. Townsend and Rep. Marvin join grassroots women leaders to endorse and enact a legislative agenda that closes the gap between women's real economic power and unrealized economic potential.



### **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AGENDA IN THE STATE HOUSE SPOTLIGHT** (for at least one day!)

The Maine Women's Lobby and her members of the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition held a breakfast meeting with legislators last month to highlight legislation that promotes women's economic security, entrepreneurship, and health and safety. The event was part of the Challenge to Secure America's Future, a national effort organized by the Center for Policy Alternatives to focus attention on economic issues affecting women. In all, nineteen states participated in the Challenge.

Laura Fortman, Executive Director of the Maine Women's Lobby, facilitated the meeting, which was attended by Republican and Democratic legislators from both the House and Senate, a number of whom are in leadership positions. The event opened with a policy briefing by Sen. Chellie Pingree (D), Sen. Jane Amero (R), Rep. Eliza Townsend (D) and Rep. Jean Ginn Marvin (R).

Senate Majority Leader Pingree discussed women's role in the economy, pointing out that women are a key to future economic growth in Maine. She will be supporting bills to raise minimum wage, expand health care coverage to working parents, and provide insurance coverage

for contraceptives. Senate Minority Leader Amero called for a renewed commitment to education, in particular education for women in nontraditional and technical fields. Rep. Eliza Townsend, House Chair of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, emphasized the importance of early childhood care and promoted a child care bill that addresses availability, affordability and quality. Rep. Jean Ginn Marvin, a member of the Business and Economic Development Committee, endorsed policies that bring business and government together to create jobs and that addressed the special needs of women in the workforce, including child care and health care.

A number of other legislators shared their initiatives, which include bills to increase the TANF benefit, make prescription drugs more affordable for the elderly, replace older, heavily polluting cars with cleaner ones for low income people, and reimburse hospitals for rape or sexual assault tests so victims aren't hassled by creditors or others seeking payments.

The Breakfast provided a means for legislators and representatives from women's organizations from across the state to connect and discuss ways to work together. Spirits were high as legislators pledged bipartisan cooperation in the upcoming session. If you are interested in finding out how you can support any of the initiatives above, please call the Lobby offices at 622-0851.

### *Inside this issue*

- Breakfast of Champions
- Legislative Update
- Choice Update
- Combating the Attack on Choice
- Social Security: A Woman's Economic Lifeline
- Annual Girl's Day at the State House
- Women's Leadership Project

Participating members of the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition included the League of Women Voters, Family Planning Association of Maine, American Association of University Women, Business and Professional Women, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, Maine N.O.W., Women Unlimited, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, Maine Centers for Women, Work and Community, Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods.







# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROJECT ~ PORTLAND

By Corey Hascall, WLP Participant

This past fall the Women's Development Institute, working in association with the Maine Equal Justice Project and the Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods, began the Women's Leadership Project, a statewide training program for low-income women. The major plan behind the training program is to get low-income women involved in the political arena—helping to influence the legislative decisions that affect us directly. Training sessions, facilitated by Laura Fortman, WDI, Chris Hastedt and Mary Henderson, MEJP, began with four training sessions for women in the Portland, Augusta, Bangor, and Presque Isle areas.

I was one of the 13 Portland participants who got together once a week for four weeks to learn and practice the skills needed to influence the legislative process. Each of the four sessions began with a different introductory exercise to help us get to know each other and break the ice. At the first meeting each woman received a reference notebook which included the text of current AFDC and TANF regulations, information about the economic status of women in Maine, tips on lobbying your legislators and working with the media, information about how the legislative system works in Maine,

information on the Parents as Scholars program, etc.

Each week, the group discussed the different elements involved in planning a successful grassroots legislative campaign. Many of our first activities involved ways to get to know each other better. We also looked at the ways, often unnoticed, in which terms such as "welfare mother" have become negative stereotypes in our culture. We were all given a "Mom Quiz" which asked us to answer questions to the best of our knowledge concerning the economic status of women in the state. Even though many of the women in the Portland group experienced financial hardships every day, we were shocked to see our economic reality in black and white. In later sessions we discussed the history of welfare legislation in Maine, how to develop a "do-able" campaign to influence legislation, how to develop a message, to organize, how to identify spokespeople to get a campaign message across, and the "give and take" of coalition building. In addition to our group discussions, we also had two very dynamic speakers lend their own experiences with the legislative process. The first, Susan Chisholm, from Maine Public Radio, discussed media strategies when developing a campaign and how to

~ more on page 5

## SOCIAL SECURITY: A WOMAN'S ECONOMIC LIFELINE

by Corey Hascall

"The face of America is changing. She is growing older." Terrie Wetle, deputy director of the National Institute on Aging.

This year our national leaders will be addressing an issue of vital importance to women—Social Security. Despite Social Security's enormous impact on our lives, many of us don't understand the implications. In preparation for the debate in Washington D.C., Americans Discuss Social Security (ADSS), a non-partisan effort funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, sponsored January 23rd's "Teleconference '99: What Every Woman Should Know About Social Security." The mission of "Teleconference '99," chaired by Hillary Rodham Clinton and Co-chaired by Rep. Jennifer Dunn (R-WA), was to connect lawmakers and citizens across the country via satellite and wireless electronic keypads in order to begin a nationwide conversation about Social Security so that as many Americans as possible will understand the various options being proposed and how possible decisions could affect each of us in the future.

The Maine Women's Lobby, which co-sponsored "Teleconference '99," would like to reinforce the economic importance of Social Security in the lives of women as a defense against poverty. Some facts to keep in mind this year as the Social Security debate gets under way are.....

- ✓ 55% of working women have service jobs where pension plans are unusual.
- ✓ Only 26% of women over 65 received a pension or annuity payment in 1995, compared with 46% of men.
- ✓ The average pension for women is \$6,684; The average pension for men is \$11,460.
- ✓ The poverty rate for women over 65 was 13.6% in 1995—without Social Security the rate would have been 52.9%.
- ✓ The average married woman will outlive her husband by 8 years.



# Maine Choice Coalition

Augusta, ME 04332

## Combatting the "Partial-Birth Abortion" Myth

*The following article is reprinted from a recent newsletter of the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (Reproductive Freedom News, Nov. 1998, Vol. VII, No. 8), providing a detailed analysis of so-called "partial-birth abortion" bans. Proposals identical to Maine's initiated bill have been declared unconstitutional by eighteen courts in other states. Maine's bill, like others using the same cookie-cutter language, are deceptive, extreme, dangerous, and unnecessary. Please contact the Maine Choice Coalition (see page 4) if you have questions or need additional information.*

For two years, pro-choice activists have been making a concerted effort to emphasize the critical differences between "partial-birth abortions," as described in the nebulous laws proposed by foes of women's right to choose, and late-term abortion. But many in the media and many politicians seem slow to grasp this distinction, trumpeting "partial-birth abortion" bans as bans on a single abortion procedure that is used late in pregnancies. This pervasive myth causes a tangle of public confusion.

The proposed federal "partial-birth abortion" ban, for example, doesn't contain any of the language that is central to defining late-term abortion. Late-term abortions are determined by a time period -- trimester of the pregnancy or weeks of gestation -- and by fetal viability, or the point at which the fetus can survive outside the womb. But no time periods whatsoever are mentioned in the proposed federal bill on "partial-birth abortion" or in any of its state copycat laws. Only two states -- Kansas and Utah -- passed laws that limit the procedures to late term. Without such specifics, the ban applies to abortions performed at any stage of pregnancy.

The very term "partial-birth abortion" has no independent meaning. "Partial-birth abortion" is not a medical term, nor does it refer to an actual

medical procedure. It is a term coined by the National Right to Life Committee and other anti-abortion lobbyists. As federal district judge Richard G. Kopf wrote when he permanently enjoined a "partial-birth abortion" ban in Nebraska: "We know the legislators wanted to ban 'partial-birth' abortions, but that term is unknown in medical circles and it was poorly understood, if at all, by the legislature."

Although proponents of "partial-birth abortion" bills publicly assert that they are really talking about the procedure known as "intact dilation and extraction," it is never mentioned in most laws, including the federal bill. The federal bill instead defines the prohibited procedures in an all-encompassing way that includes any abortion in which the fetus travels through the vagina -- virtually all abortions.

"The 'partial-birth abortion' bans are written using such broad language that almost all abortion methods may be outlawed by these criminal statutes," says CRLP staff attorney Bebe Anderson. "Contrary to the proponents' claims, the laws are not limited to a particular stage of pregnancy and use of even the commonest abortion method, during the first trimester, can fall within the definitions of prohibited conduct."

*(Continued on Page 2)*

*Partner Organizations: American Association of University Women of Maine; Business and Professional Women of Maine; Colby Pro-Choice Coalition; Family Planning Association of Maine; Concerned Women Lawyers; Family Planning Providers; League of Women Voters/Maine; Mabel Wadsworth Health Center; Maine Association of Family & Consumer Sciences; Maine Civil Liberties Union; Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance; Maine Public Health Association; Maine State Nurses Association; Maine Women's Lobby; National Council of Jewish Women, Southern Maine Section; National Lawyer's Guild, Maine Chapter; National Organization for Women, Maine Chapter; Planned Parenthood of Northern New England; Portland YWCA; SAFE, Inc.; Students for Choice; YWCA of Lewiston/Auburn.*



*(Continued from Page 1)*

In fact, most states that have passed "partial-birth abortion" bans already have laws that limit late-term abortions. Arkansas is a good example. When its legislature passed a "partial-birth abortion" ban, a law was already on the books limiting post-viability (late-term) abortions.

The blurring of "late-term" and "partial-birth" may be exactly what anti-choice crusaders wanted. What was once nothing more than particularly graphic and misleading anti-choice imagery -- a full-grown infant virtually on its way out the birth canal when an abortion occurred -- now lurks behind much of the debate on the topic. Montana's law "goes way beyond banning the type of abortion depicted in the illustrations," said Judge Jeffrey M. Sherlock when he enjoined Montana's statute.

This anti-choice charade was exposed most recently in Georgia, where a court settlement revised a "partial-birth abortion" law by limiting it to post-viability abortions that use the intact dilation and extraction procedure, and insisting on exceptions for the woman's life and health. Georgia Right-to-Lifers marched on the capitol to protest the settlement, claiming that the law had been gutted, even though it outlawed the very procedure that they say they want to stop.

"Partial-birth abortion" laws have been severely limited or enjoined in 19 out of the 20 states

in which legal challenges were mounted. Judges the laws vague and overly broad. But even this incredible number of favorable rulings may not be enough to stem the tide since the media continues to use inaccurate language in supposedly objective articles. For example, a West Virginia paper reporting on that state's "partial-birth abortion" ban includes the following: "Legal questions surrounding West Virginia's recently passed law banning a form of late-term abortion will be argued Thursday in Charleston federal court." "Partial-birth" and "late-term" abortion are considered interchangeable in newspapers across the country.

When the American people are educated about the topic of "partial-birth abortion," they come down squarely against the bans, according to a poll conducted by CRLP (see accompanying story). But inaccurate coverage may inhibit that education process.

Reproductive right activists are increasingly doing that educating themselves -- making the effort, as part of their lobbying and educational campaigns, to point out that "partial-birth abortion" bans have nothing to do with "late-term" abortions and everything to do with curtailing a woman's right to choose. It's a differentiation they may have to continually emphasize when confronted by a media that seems unable, or unwilling, to make that important distinction.

## **Where Do American -- and Maine -- People Stand?**

As the controversy over "partial-birth abortion" rages on -- in Congress and state legislatures, the media, and the nation's courts -- a new poll shows that by a margin of 44 to 34 percent, voters support President Clinton's veto of the federal ban on "partial-birth abortions."

The poll, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. in July, used a cross section of 1,002 registered Democrats, Republicans, and Independent voters throughout the country.

"When given the facts, Americans recognize that this legislation is an extreme effort by powerful conservative religious groups opposed to a woman's right to choose," said Geoffrey Garin, President, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. *(Continued on Page 3)*



Regarding the current federal legislation, voters expressed strong concern about the lack of protection for the health of the woman, the deceptive language that can be interpreted to ban virtually all abortions, the interference of the government in private medical decisions, and the fact that judges have held similar state laws unconstitutional.

By a margin of 65 to 23 percent, Americans say that there should be an exception to the ban in cases when "the woman's doctor determines that the procedure is necessary to prevent serious harm to the woman's health."

The poll is one of two CRLP had commissioned this term. With anti-abortion forces targeting Maine's two pro-choice Republican senators as critical to the Senate's override vote, CRLP President Janet Benshoof decided to conduct a survey of **Maine voters**. "Time and time again, we see that the American people are extremely concerned about the unconstitutionality of these bans," she said. **"Our hunch was that if Maine voters were educated about the misleading nature of the federal law, they'd strongly object to it."** The poll, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and American Viewpoint, Inc., showed that by a margin of 58 to 35 percent, Maine voters opposed the current federal ban.

## **Deceptive**

The "partial-birth abortion" ban proposed in Maine -- identical to those in other states using the same cookie-cutter language -- could encompass virtually all abortions. These laws don't merely target one procedure, they potentially restrict the safest and most commonly used abortion methods.

▼ "Partial-birth abortion" bans were written by anti-choice special interests that oppose a woman's right to choose in **all** cases. These bans are the cornerstone of a carefully crafted strategy to eliminate all legal abortions.

## **Unconstitutional**

"Partial-birth abortion" statutes -- whether on the federal or state levels -- directly attach *Roe v. Wade*. Most judges, when faced with these cookie-cutter laws, reject them as unconstitutional.

▼ These statutes make no exception to protect a woman's health -- also clearly required by *Roe* in all trimesters.

▼ These statutes fail to give doctors adequate notice of what conduct is prohibited and they are unconstitutionally vague.

▼ These statutes violate a woman's right to privacy.

▼ "Partial-birth abortion" bans are an attempt to ban all abortions, regardless of fetal viability, and are therefore unconstitutional as determined by the Supreme Court in *Roe* and reaffirmed in *Casey*.

## **Extreme**

The proposed "partial-birth abortion" ban is an extreme measure that doesn't make exceptions for serious harm to a woman's health and is clearly designed to eliminate a woman's legal right to choose.

▼ The ban jeopardizes women's health and criminalizes most abortion procedures.

▼ The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, representing over 39,000 physician specialists, rejects this law as "inappropriate, ill advised and dangerous."



***E***ighteen courts have determined that “partial-birth abortion” laws have significant defects that render them unconstitutional. Courts have found that the laws are written so broadly that they could outlaw the safest and most common abortion procedures used at every stage of pregnancy, including the first trimester, and that the vagueness of the statutes’ language does not give doctors and women sufficient notice as to what procedures are subject to criminal prosecution.

“First, the statute, as written, has the potential effect of banning the most common and safest abortion procedures.”

*Judge Charles P. Kocoras*  
U.S. District Court, Illinois



“Clearly, there is confusion in the medical community as to exactly what conduct is prohibited.”

“The problem here is that [the legislation] goes way beyond banning the type of abortion depicted in the illustrations shown to the legislature and this Court. The legislative language is not precise and it impacts otherwise constitutionally protected rights to obtain other types of abortions.”

“(I)ndeed, it appears that the legislature was advised by its own attorney that this bill was probably unconstitutional.”

*Judge Jeffrey M. Sherlock*  
Montana First Judicial District

“One simply cannot ascertain from the legislative history precisely what the legislature wanted to ban. We know the legislators wanted to ban ‘partial-birth’ abortions, but that term is unknown in medical circles and it was poorly understood, if at all, by the legislature.”...

*Judge Richard G. Kopf*  
U.S. District Court, Nebraska



“This statute may endanger the health of women who might seek abortions and deprive them of their constitutional right to an abortion prior to the viability of the fetus.”

*Judge Donald L. Graham*  
U.S. District Court, Florida



*Articles reprinted with permission from documents published  
by The Center for Reproductive Law & Policy  
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### **Maine Choice Coalition Legislative Committee**

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### All Maine Women's Lobby members receive:

- Our quarterly newsletter
- Legislative alerts
- Support to become effective advocates for women and girls
- Invitations to participate in our annual events

### Membership

\_\_\_ \$60 Household  
\_\_\_ \$35 Individual  
\_\_\_ \$10 Student \_\_\_\_\_ Name of School  
\_\_\_ Other\* \_\_\_\_\_

*\*MWL is committed to representing women of all economic means. Any contribution you are able to make entitles you to membership.*

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be interviewed effectively. At our final session, State Senator Anne Rand spent two hours with us giving her own legislative perspective on lobbying and campaign building. She emphasized the importance of getting involved in your community and communicating with your local legislators. By our final meeting, all of us were feeling as though we wanted to continue meeting and communicating with each other. We made sure that everyone left that final training session in Portland with the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of all of our friends.

All four of the groups got a chance to meet each other finally on December 2nd in Augusta at the swearing in ceremony of our new state legislators. We also got a chance to familiarize ourselves a bit with the State House, and put names to faces. After the ceremony, we got together at the University of Maine at Augusta where we discussed possible legislative issues for the upcoming sessions that might be important for us to work on as a group. We had a teleconference link set up between UMA and UM Presque Isle so that the WLP participants from the Presque Isle area, who could not make the long trip to Augusta for the day, could be part of our discussion. We found that the issues that concerned the Women's Leadership Project members ranged from Medicaid funding for abortion and increasing the minimum wage, to expanding health care for working parents and providing increased access to dental clinics. We ended the day with lunch while we talked about the ways that we could all get together, keep in touch, and provide a resource system to each other. We all felt very enthusiastic about what we had learned together in our training sessions and felt it was important to put what we had learned to good use. The four groups plan to meet again February 18th at the State House where we hope to meet with our own local legislators to introduce ourselves and discuss issues that are important to each of us.

Thanks to Maine Women's Fund and Haymarket People's Fund for funding our project.

## MWL WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Maine Women's Lobby elected five new Board members this fall. Elaine Connolly, Stephanie Clifford, Barbara Ginley, Janet Mills, Betsy Ruff and Sherry Miller Welch are all off to a running start, contributing to the Lobby's legislative, fundraising, and marketing efforts. We're delighted to have them on the Board and look forward to a fun and productive year ahead!

# e-mail

### Join our Email Action Brigade!

Because so many legislative issues demand immediate action, we are increasingly using email as a way to inform and mobilize our members. If you have access to the internet and would like to join our email alert list, please email us at MWomenL@aol.com. Don't have email but would like to be on our list? Getting a free account might be easier than you think if your local library has internet access. To find out more, call Liz Keith at the Lobby office at 622-0851.



# LEGISLATIVE ALERT

As you know, the legislative session has begun and over 2900 bills have been introduced. Below are a few of the many bills that the Lobby is following. This is by no means a complete list. Many bills that the Lobby will be working on have not been printed yet. For example, we will be supporting legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation however, we do not have the exact language at this time. Some of the information below has been taken from drafts of bills and that is why there are no LD numbers listed.

## **REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

L.D. 571: An Act to Prohibit "Partial-Birth" Abortion Sponsor: Rep. Mack (R-Standish). This bill is modeled on the Abortion Ban Act of 1997 passed by Congress and vetoed by President Clinton in 1997. This bill contains no health exception for the mother and does not distinguish between pre and post viability abortions. It also contains civil and criminal penalties for physicians. The language is vague, deceptive and has the potential to prohibit almost all abortions. **OPPOSE** (See our special insert for additional information on the Abortion Ban referendum)

L.D. 137: An Act to Require Parental Notification for Minors Seeking Abortions Sponsor: Rep. Ahearn (D-Madawaska). This bill requires parental notification before an abortion is performed or induced on a pregnant minor. Maine currently has an "adult involvement" law that has served as model legislation across the country. **OPPOSE**

L.D. 516 An Act to Restore and Improve Family Planning and Prevention Services Sponsor: Rep. Townsend (D-Portland). This bill provides an increase in General Fund appropriations during the 2000-2001 biennium to purchase family planning and pregnancy prevention services. **SUPPORT**

## **HEALTH CARE**

L.D.598: An Act to Mandate that Insurance Companies Cover Eating Disorders. Sponsor: Sen. Pingree (D-North Haven) This bill requires health insurance policies and contracts to provide coverage for eating disorders. **SUPPORT**

An Act to Promote Healthy Maine Families. Sponsor: Sen. Pingree(D - North Haven)This bill takes the much needed step of increasing access to health care for the parents of children covered by the Medicaid Program. It would provide Medicaid coverage to parents whose family incomes are under 150% of the federal poverty level—\$20,484 for a family of 3. It would also provide access to Medicaid for the parents of Cub Care children if and when federal matching funds become available. **SUPPORT**

An Act to Increase Access to Prescription Drugs for Elderly and Disabled Persons. Sponsor: Sen.Pingree (D - North Haven) This bill would provide the Medicaid drug benefit to people with disabilities or elders 62 and over whose family income is under 185% of the federal poverty level—\$14,896 for a single person and \$20,091 for a couple. Medicaid eligibility is currently limited to elderly and disabled persons under the poverty level—\$8,052 for an individual and \$10,860 for a couple. While most elderly and disabled people have Medicare coverage, the Medicare Program does not cover prescription drugs. **SUPPORT**

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

An Act to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking. Sponsor: Rep. M. Saxl (D-Portland) This bill would prohibit discrimination in employment against victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Employees would not be penalized for attending court proceedings or for asking for workplace accommodations such as, a changed phone number or seat assignment. **SUPPORT**

An Act to Assist Victims of Sexual Assault. Sponsor : Rep. Norbert (D-Portland) This bill would permit hospitals and other health care facilities to bill the Victim Compensation Fund directly for costs associated with evidence collection in cases of sexual assault. Currently, victims/survivors are billed for these costs. **SUPPORT**

## **CHILD CARE**

A broad based Coalition has been formed to support a package of child centered legislation. The Coalition has adopted the theme "Start ME Right" to talk about the wide ranging proposals that are being introduced to create public policies that support healthy, safe, thriving children. The prime sponsors of the legislation are Speaker Steve Rowe, Senator Susan Longley and Rep. Tina Baker. The legislation has not been printed yet but the Women's Lobby **SUPPORTS** the concepts.

## **ECONOMIC SECURITY**

Joint Study Order Establishing the Legislative Task Force on Transportation Access, Air Pollution Reduction and Family Self-Sufficiency Sponsor: Sen. Sharon Treat (D-Gardiner). This initiative would establish a vehicle exchange program that replaces older, polluting cars with newer, less polluting ones for low-income people. It would complement the state's TANF and welfare to work program by providing reliable transportation people who meet the income guidelines. It would also help to reduce ozone and air pollution. **SUPPORT**.



# MWL BREAKFAST IN BANGOR SELLS OUT!

The Maine Women's Lobby's held its annual Breakfast of Champions to a sell-out crowd in Bangor in October. This was the first time the Breakfast was held in Bangor, and the reception was warm and enthusiastic. Over 150 people attended the event, which featured a forum on women, jobs and the economy with Sen. Chellie Pingree, Sen. Mary Cathcart, Sen. Jane Saxl and Rep. Tina Baker. The panelists highlighted issues that are critical to women's economic progress, including pay equity, affordable and accessible child care, education, and increased participation in political and economic leadership. Senator Pingree captured the spirit of the morning in paraphrasing Laura Liswood, a documentary filmmaker and speaker on women's issues: "Women are like snowflakes: alone we melt; together we stop traffic."

This year's Breakfast raised over \$2,300 to support MWL programs and legislative efforts this year. Thanks to everyone who welcomed us so warmly to Bangor and helped make this event such a success. We'll be back!



## Choice Update

The Maine Women's Lobby has just completed a membership survey on the proposed bill to ban abortion procedures. We called or mailed the two-page survey to our entire membership and over 30% replied. Ninety-seven percent of those who responded support the Lobby's position to oppose the ban. Thanks to everyone who took the time to answer our questions. It was great to talk to so many of you in person! Your feedback is much appreciated and will help ensure that we provide the pro-choice majority in Maine with the information they need on the issue. Voters in Washington state and Colorado defeated similar bans at the ballot box last November, and with your support we can defeat it in Maine.

## GIRLS' DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE SLATED FOR MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup>

In celebration of Women's History Month, WDI will be hosting the third annual Girls' Day at the State House in Augusta during the fourth week of March. We are planning similar activities to those of last year's Day. This field trip to the State House is designed to educate participating girls, aged 12 to 15, about what legislators do, how laws are made, and the role that women play in politics in Maine. The girls will have the chance to participate in a mock hearing to discuss a bill, act as pages in the House and Senate, and shadow legislators to find out what their jobs are like. Steve Rowe, the current Speaker of the House, will speak to the girls and answer their questions, and Gov. King will stop by to say "hello" and take a picture with the girls.

Last year, over eighty girls attended the Day. WDI sought to recruit a variety of girls from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and academic achievement levels. This year WDI will continue that effort by reaching out to at-risk girls and reserving at least twenty spaces for them. The response rate for the past two years has been wonderful, and we expect nothing less for this year's Girls' Day at the State House. What better way to celebrate Women's History Month than to educate and inspire Maine's girls to participate in the legislative process!

If you'd like to be an adult mentor for the day, call Lauren at 622-0851 for more info.

As you've probably heard, the debate over the so-called "partial birth" abortion ban is intensifying. The Christian Civic League and allies turned in their petition signatures in mid-January, followed by a flurry of media coverage of the issue. Last month the Maine Women's Lobby and other pro-choice advocates held a press conference to announce the Campaign to Protect Women's Health. The press conference was the official launching of the campaign to defeat the ban, although pro-choice organizations and individuals throughout the state have been working for months to lay the groundwork for the year ahead. Spokespeople included Linda Smith Dyer with Lawyers for Choice, Rev. Fred Pease of the Maine Interfaith Council for Reproductive Choice, Karen Stram, former Republican party Chair, and Karin Anderson, on behalf of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and the steering committee of the Campaign to Protect Women's Health.



Join the  
**MAINE  
WOMEN'S  
LOBBY**



*All Maine Women's Lobby members receive:*

- Our quarterly newsletter
- Legislative alerts
- Support to become effective advocates for women and girls
- Invitations to participate in our annual events

*Membership*

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\_\_\_ \$35 Individual  
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\_\_\_ Other\* \_\_\_\_\_

*\*MWL is committed to representing women of all economic means. Any contribution you are able to make entitles you to membership.*

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Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Please do not give my name to other groups.

be interviewed effectively. At our final session, State Senator Anne Rand spent two hours with us giving her own legislative perspective on lobbying and campaign building. She emphasized the importance of getting involved in your community and communicating with your local legislators. By our final meeting, all of us were feeling as though we wanted to continue meeting and communicating with each other. We made sure that everyone left that final training session in Portland with the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of all of our friends.

All four of the groups got a chance to meet each other finally on December 2nd in Augusta at the swearing in ceremony of our new state legislators. We also got a chance to familiarize ourselves a bit with the State House, and put names to faces. After the ceremony, we got together at the University of Maine at Augusta where we discussed possible legislative issues for the upcoming sessions that might be important for us to work on as a group. We had a teleconference link set up between UMA and UM Presque Isle so that the WLP participants from the Presque Isle area, who could not make the long trip to Augusta for the day, could be part of our discussion. We found that the issues that concerned the Women's Leadership Project members ranged from Medicaid funding for abortion and increasing the minimum wage, to expanding health care for working parents and providing increased access to dental clinics. We ended the day with lunch while we talked about the ways that we could all get together, keep in touch, and provide a resource system to each other. We all felt very enthusiastic about what we had learned together in our training sessions and felt it was important to put what we had learned to good use. The four groups plan to meet again February 18th at the State House where we hope to meet with our own local legislators to introduce ourselves and discuss issues that are important to each of us.

Thanks to Maine Women's Fund and Haymarket People's Fund for funding our project.

## MWL WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Maine Women's Lobby elected five new Board members this fall. Elaine Connolly, Stephanie Clifford, Barbara Ginley, Janet Mills, Betsy Ruff and Sherry Miller Welch are all off to a running start, contributing to the Lobby's legislative, fundraising, and marketing efforts. We're delighted to have them on the Board and look forward to a fun and productive year ahead!

**e**mail

### Join our Email Action Brigade!

Because so many legislative issues demand immediate action, we are increasingly using email as a way to inform and mobilize our members. If you have access to the internet and would like to join our email alert list, please email us at MWomenL@aol.com. Don't have email but would like to be on our list? Getting a free account might be easier than you think if your local library has internet access. To find out more, call Liz Keith at the Lobby office at 622-0851.



## DATES TO REMEMBER:

### February is Black History Month

**February 22, 1999 6:30 - 9:00 p.m., Portland YWCA: Feminist Forum on Choice.** The forum will provide indepth information about the proposed referendum on so-called "partial birth" abortions and a conversation about how feminist individuals and organizations can work together to protect women's right to choice. Call Kim at 829-3360 for more information.

### March is Women's History Month

#### March 8: International Women's Day

#### March 23, 1999 Girls' Day at the State House

### April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

#### April 8th: Pay Equity Day

**April 18, 1999, 3 p.m. Bangor Theological Seminary public forum Against the Odds: Womanism and the Moral Wisdom of Black Women with Katie Cannon.** Katie Cannon is a social ethicist and professor of religion at Temple University in Philadelphia. She is the author of *Black Womanist Ethics*, and more recently *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. The event is co-sponsored by the Maine Women's Lobby and is free to the public. It will be held at the State Street Church in Portland.

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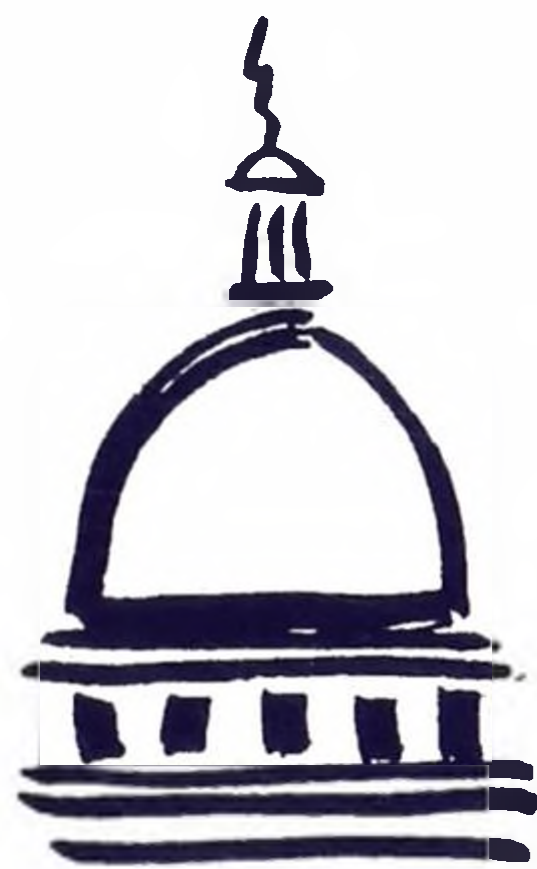
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