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## Inform - A Quarterly Newsletter for Maine Women (April-May 1987)

The Maine Commission for Women Staff

*The Maine Commission for Women*

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# Inform

Published by The Maine Commission for Women

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

The 113th Legislature is now in full swing; bills are being printed by the hundreds, committee hearings are happening fast and furiously and the hearings on the Part I Budget are about to get underway. The Legislative process got off to a relatively slow start as the Legislators and the new Administration got to know each other and the rest of us tried to get to know all the new players. That process is a continuous one, but the pace seems to be quickening all around.

With any change comes new opportunities. We at the Commission feel that there are new windows of opportunity to talk about, develop and garner support for the issues we care so much about both in the Legislature and with the Administration. The Maine Commission for Women did a lot in the first weeks and months to get to know the Legislature and gave them the opportunity to get to know us. After the election, we sent out a packet to each legislator letting him/her know about the MCW, sent our three year goals and objectives and some of our most recent publications. Then after the session began, we held an informal luncheon and orientation session to give new legislators the opportunity to meet with our seventeen Commissioners and talk about our legislative priorities. We also tried to sort out for them "who's who" in the women's movement in Maine — an issue that keeps all of us confused because there are so many of us and we are all so active!

But now the hard work begins. This year, the Maine Commission for Women has set out legislative priorities as follows: child care, income maintenance and

job training for low income women, and teen pregnancy.

Child care is an area where, after almost a decade of hard work, people are starting to recognize the seriousness of the issues for all parents and families. We are very excited about Governor McKernan's interest and fiscal commitment to this issue and are confident that the legislature will build on this initiative. We are also excited that women are not the only advocates any more; businesses, community agencies, civic groups and educators have all recognized the need for child care and are interested in helping us to do something to address the crisis.

There is much to be done in the area of income maintenance and job training. The AFDC standard of need continues to be much lower than it should be, despite our successful efforts to get incremental increases over the last five years. This year we will need to get a straight increase, but we are also working to tie AFDC payments to the cost of living as AFDC is the only entitlement program that is not indexed to the COLA. We must also work to maintain the capabilities and funding of the very successful job training programs like WEET, JTPA and Displaced Homemakers as federal cuts threaten to erode the excellent work they do. We are especially concerned for the dislocated workers in Maine and are working to ensure that they get trained for decent paying jobs and have the support services necessary (like child care) to get re-trained.

(Cont'd page 2)

## SPEAK OUT

### "Women in the Maine Legislature"

by Representative Ruth Joseph

The saying that "we have come a long way" is an accurate description of women who are serving and who have served in the Maine Legislature since 1922. The women who do serve are 28½% of the total membership of the 186 members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The actual number of women are 43 Representatives and 10 Senators. There are six women who have been appointed Chairs of the nineteen joint standing committees of the Legislature. One woman in the 113th Legislature has been elected to leadership by her colleagues as Senate Majority Leader, Senator Nancy Randall Clark (D) of Freeport. Rep. Priscilla Attean represents the Penobscot Indian nation as their only representative.

(Cont'd page 2)

## IN THIS ISSUE:

From the Director .....	1
"Speak Out" .....	1
Women's History Month .....	3
Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC) .....	4
Women's Group... National Agenda .....	6
Find Out About Legislation .....	6
You CAN Make a Difference .....	7
Events Calendar .....	8

## Speak Out, continued...

In the past sixteen years, the number of women has significantly increased from 19 House members and only one Senator in 1972. The number of women who sought elective office to the Maine Legislature in 1986, the number who were successful and those women who presently serve is the largest number of women to serve in the history of the State of Maine. Maine became a state in 1820 and this is the 113th Legislature so the process has been slow since women were given the right to vote in 1920. We rank second to New Hampshire in the nation in percentage of women in the Legislature. There were eight women elected in the 1986 elections with the total of 24 Democrats and 19 Republicans in the House, 4 Democrats and 6 Republicans in the Senate. More statistics show that the number of women in Maine Legislature has doubled between the years of 1968 to 1978.

Yes, Dora Pinkham (R) of Fort Kent and Lucia Maria Cormier (D) Rumford, we have come a long way. Representative Dora Pinkham was the first woman to serve in the Maine Legislature in 1922. Representative Lucia Cormier (D) of Rumford was the first woman elected to leadership as the House Majority Leader in the 99th Legislature.

Those are the numbers but we have also distinguished ourselves as women past and present by being involved in some of the most important pieces of legislation that are now law — Rep. Edie Beaulieu (D) Portland for turning around the minimum wage increase from an 11-2 committee report; Rep. Merle Nelson (D) Portland responsible for the displaced homemaker program; Sen. Judy Kany, one of the foremost authorities in our country on low level and high level nuclear waste disposal; the tenacity of Rep. Polly Reeves in opposition to mandatory local measured telephone service; Rep. Libby Mitchell's long tenure and leadership. The list of accomplishments and services are too long to mention without omitting some worthy, hard-working legislator. The probability and the danger of such omissions is assured but I felt that it was necessary to touch upon some examples of the high quality of the women who have served and do serve presently.

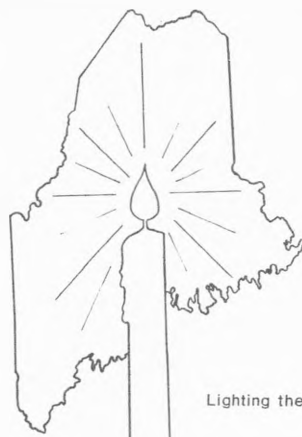
Congressman Joseph E. Brennan, former Governor, Attorney General, Senator and Representative has often stated that of the ten most outstanding legislators, in his opinion, eight would be women.

Speaker John L. Martin in his other career as a classroom teacher has stated often that he would rather have a woman as a legislator anytime. As Speaker, he says, "Women who serve in the House do so with a high degree of distinction. Generally, they are among our most able and capable members and routinely make

significant contributions to major public policy."

Talking with the oldest legislator, Rep. Alberta Wentworth (R) Wells in her seventh decade, the youngest legislator Rep. Dorothy Rotondi (D) Athens, elected at 23 years old and in her third term, the woman who had served the longest Rep. Lorraine Chonko (D) Topsham and a new legislator Rep. Judy Paradis (D) Frenchville/St. Johns Valley — the consensus is that women are very effective in the Maine Legislature, they are heard and listened to. They bring a different perspective to the issues, they are generally more socially responsible, they are not egotistical and it is agreed by all women legislators that they are respected as individuals and are not treated differently than male legislators. All of the women interviewed say there are still more challenges to meet. One would be by electing more women to leadership positions. Women want more access to information and want input into the behind-the-scenes decision making that affects the routine of the legislative process and how to present those beliefs as statutes and laws to enhance the quality of advantages and opportunities to women and girls and to families, spouses, daughters and sons. We are interested in responding to your needs, your concerns, and working towards effective solutions.

*Ruth Joseph is a Representative of District 98 in Waterville and a long-time member of the Maine Commission for Women.*



Lighting the way

## RAPE CRISIS ASSISTANCE

Rape Crisis Centers offer 24 hour, free, confidential services to victims of sexual assault (past or present) and their families.

For more information, call the Center closest to you. Also, you may write to the Maine Coalition on Rape at P.O. Box 5326, Augusta, ME 04330.

## From the Director, continued from page 1

Teen pregnancy is an area we will most likely be dealing with for years to come. This year, there will be efforts to begin the implementation of the Recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Teen Pregnancy. (The full report is available from the Department of Human Services or your legislator.) There will be several bills that attempt to deal with funding for services to teens, the development of local councils to create local solutions to the problem, training for professionals and educators around this issue, and services for teen parents. Obviously not all of the recommendations of the Task Force can be implemented immediately but the MCW is committed to working on the problem both in the long and short term.

The MCW continues to be a vital part of the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition which has grown from an organization of ten groups to now over twenty. On the inside of INFORM is a list of the organizations involved, a list of the specific legislation, and WLAC's mission statement. I urge you to look at all of that information carefully.

Clearly there is a lot of work to be done. There is no more effective person to do it than you! Being involved in the legislative process is not only our right, but our responsibility as Maine citizens. This issue of INFORM is designed to give you all the information you need to be involved. I hope that you will take the time to read the information and, more importantly, use it. There are lots of issues of critical interest to women and their families in the 113th Legislative Session. YOU should have input into how those decisions are made and you can if you will take the time to contact your legislators and give them your opinion. Please — get involved. The life you improve will be your own.

Center	Hotline
Auburn	795-2211
Augusta	626-0660
Bath/Brunswick	725-2181
Farmington	1-800-221-9191
Norway/South Paris	743-9777
Portland	774-3613
Presque Isle	1-800-432-7805
Waterville	873-0270

# What IS Women's History?

Women's History is a whole new way of looking at the events and individuals who have made this country what it is today. The multicultural study of women's lives and roles throughout the history of this nation brings to light entirely new aspects of American life, images to which all girls and boys, women and men can relate.

History, as it has been traditionally taught, has focused on the political, military and economic events of the times, virtually excluding women, people of color, and the mass of America's ordinary citizens. To the children of those ignored groups, history has come to be seen as remote and lifeless, a tale having little bearing on their own lives. By expanding the focus of what we consider "history" to include multi-cultural women's history, we give students an understanding and appreciation of American history that lasts longer and has more relevance to real life.

The events and individuals, the ideas and attitudes which have shaped the lives of the vast majority of Americans throughout our history have often had quiet beginnings. Whether in small communities or big cities, important ideas have often begun with ordinary people who were able to see things a little differently than their neighbors and who, perhaps slowly at first, began to speak and act with the courage of their convictions in ways which changed the course of history for us all. Such small events, which grew until they encompassed the national consciousness, are the core of women's history. The changing nature of family life in America; the evolution of the nature of work and the composition of the work force itself; the interrelationships of people from different cultural, social and economic backgrounds; the rise of movements for social progress and constructive change; such stories are the content and focus of women's history.

## WHY WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

National Women's History Week was first initiated as a special time each March to recognize and celebrate the lives of countless women of all races, ages, cultures, ethnic traditions and ways of life. Women's History Week celebrations have taken many forms in schools, communities and workplaces, honoring women who have participated in history by living out their lives, whether in ways grandly eloquent or steadfastly ordinary, and in so doing made their contributions to our shared history.



When Women's History Week was first initiated there was so little information available on women's history that some teachers probably wondered if there was, in fact, enough material on the subject to fill an entire week. Over the past six years, however, women's history has come to be accepted as a valid academic field, extensive research has been undertaken on a wide variety of topics, hundreds of books have been published at every grade level, and the contributions of women to the building of our communities have been rediscovered and celebrated in many states and in hundreds of cities and towns across the country. Colleges and universities now offer degree programs in women's history, and women's organizations and educators have developed a myriad of communities and schools.

In fact, the wealth of information now available and the number of wonderful programming ideas which have been generated to recognize the unique multicultural history of women in the U.S. have made it impossible to contain the celebration within the confines of a single week. For the past several years, many states and cities have been celebrating March as Women's History Month, with community programs, museum exhibits, media pieces, and school events occurring throughout that time. Many people have urged us to expand our focus to the entire month of March because of the logistical problems and expense of organizing exhibits, programs and events for just one week.

Therefore, the Commission encourages schools, organizations, and communities to join the national movement to expand the celebration of Women's History into the entire month of March.



### Women of Courage Essay Competition

Who are our female heroines and role models for children today? Who in your neighborhood is a woman of courage? These were the questions asked by the Maine Commission For Women in their third annual essay competition. The competition, for Maine students K-12, was one of the many activities occurring statewide in celebration of Women's History Month — March. The Commission sponsored the competition in an effort to encourage a whole new way of looking at the events and individuals who not only shaped the history but influence the future of our country.

This year's national theme was "Honoring Generations of Compassion, Courage and Conviction." Statewide, the competition focus was "Women of Courage" and was intended to raise students' awareness of Maine women who are trail blazers and who have dedicated themselves to non-traditional occupations and activities.

Children are the future and good role models are essential. However, the role models which most readily come to mind are so frequently the traditional ones — teachers, nurses, secretaries, bank tellers. The Commission wanted to expand on those options. It wanted students to investigate the lives of women who are engineers, boatbuilders, electricians, scientists, machinists. The Maine Commission For Women believes it is critical to honor women of the past, as well, women whose vital accomplishments have so frequently gone unnoticed and unrewarded.

The first, second, and third place winners in the 4 categories will be greeted by the Governor at an April Blaine House Reception. Winning essays will be published and awards will be distributed.

## WLAC Mission Statement

The Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition (WLAC) was formed in 1983 to improve the social, economic, and political status of women and to work for equality for all Maine citizens. WLAC will put forward a legislative agenda during each state legislative session that will improve women's immediate economic and social conditions and will institute laws and policies to enhance women's economic and social status. WLAC is comprised of a wide range of member organizations who agree with our overall objectives and who are willing to initiate legislation and to contribute to the research, lobbying and public education necessary to make our legislative efforts successful. Each piece of legislation WLAC supports will move all Maine citizens to the goal of full equality.

## Press Statement of January 20, 1987

Good morning. On behalf of the 22 member organizations of the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition, I would like to welcome you to the kick-off of our 4th Legislative "season" and ask you a very important question: If you had to choose between your family's economic security, health or personal safety, which would you choose?... The obvious answer is you can't. And neither could we when we put together this year's legislative agenda. Our package of 18 bills is aimed at strengthening Maine's families in each of these critical areas: Economic Security, Healthcare and Personal Safety.

### *Economic Security:*

We would like to see all Maine's citizens participate fully and benefit equally from Maine's growing economy. To this end we will be asking the 113th Legislature to increase the availability of child care for low and moderate-income parents and for parents in job training programs. We will ask for the removal of maximum age limits from apprenticeship programs. We will ask that AFDC payments be indexed to the cost of living. We will ask for the expansion of the Displaced Homemaker Program and the WEET (Welfare Education and Employment Training) Program, programs which have a proven record of getting women off the welfare rolls and into paying jobs.

### *Healthcare*

The health and general well-being of Maine families is threatened by the current crisis of teen pregnancy and the

growing number of teenage parents. The Governor's Task Force on the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy recently issued its recommendations — a well-researched, thoughtful and comprehensive plan of prevention and services. We will strongly urge the legislature to implement these recommendations. In addition we will continue our efforts to guarantee reproductive choice for all Maine people, regardless of age or economic status.

### *Personal Safety*

The personal safety of the members of our families continues to be jeopardized by incidents of domestic violence, incest and sexual assault by acquaintances. It is still tragically true that our homes are more dangerous than a dark alleyway at night. We will be asking the 113th to continue the fight to eliminate this violence by expanding the services of the State's battered women's shelters, rape crisis centers and programs for incest victims. We will also ask for the establishment of an exception to mandatory divorce mediation for abused persons and we will ask for the removal of statutory protection for those who assault "voluntary social companions".

The specific bills I have mentioned represent only a few of the 18 pieces of legislation we will present this session. A complete list is attached to your copy of the press statement.

I would like now to present representatives from the member organizations of WLAC (Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition) — a coalition of 22 diverse community and state-wide organizations representing over 12,000 Maine people. These groups have come together in the belief that achieving economic, political and social equality is of critical importance. We have worked together three years, acting as a diversified yet consolidated voice for women in the Statehouse. Our successes have been many, once again we join together, committed to do the work necessary to assure passage of this important package of legislation. Together we will do our research, work with our members, and articulate our positions to the public and to every member of the legislature. Together we will bring Maine families the economic security, healthcare and personal safety they deserve.

# Women's Legislat



## WLAC Legislative Agenda, 113th Session

### *Economic Security*

"An ACT To Increase the Amount the State Contributes to the Supplemental Security Income Program for Those Living in the Community" LD 427

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Dan Hickey

This bill ensures that when spouses are split due to the necessity of one member of the couple going into a home that adequate social security income remains with the spouse who resides outside the institution.

"An ACT To Establish a Dependent Care Tax Credit" LD 194

Prime Sponsor: Speaker John Martin

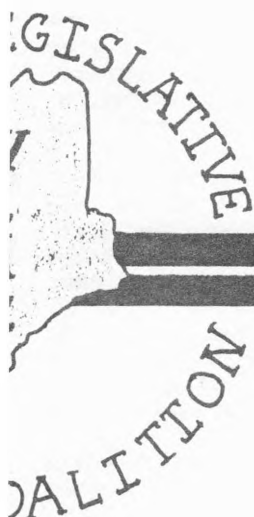
This bill extends the child care tax credit to those who care for and/or pay for care of elderly relatives.

"An ACT To Increase the Availability and Improve the Quality of Child Care in Maine"

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Charlie Priest

This is an omnibus bill providing 1.9 million dollars to carry forth the recommendations of 1984 Child Care Task Force Report. It includes funding for child care for dislocated workers, for salary increases for those working in child care and a position in the Department of Educational and Cultural Services to assist schools

# e Agenda Coalition



in developing before and after school care.

"An ACT For an Appropriation to Fund the Development of Employer-Supported Day Care" LD 293

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Judith Foss  
This bill would provide \$25,000 to provide education and technical assistance to those private industries who wish to help employees with child care.

"An ACT to Remove Age Limitation Requirements for Apprenticeship Programs" LD 123

Prime Sponsor: Sen. Nancy Clark  
This bill removes the maximum age limits from Apprenticeship Programs.

"Displaced Homemakers Funding" LD 641

Prime Sponsor: Rep. John Lisnick  
This would provide \$105,636 (FY 88) and \$143,234 (FY 89) for five new permanent positions in rural areas for DH.

"An ACT To Ensure Job Training Assistance to All AFDC Recipients" LD 653

Prime Sponsor: Rep. John Lisnick  
Reallocation of existing WEET funds to support services via AFDC plus \$250,000 to make up federal deficit for staffing of offices.

"An ACT to Provide Annual Increases in the AFDC Standard of Need" LD 664

Prime Sponsor: Rep. John Diamond  
This bill would index AFDC payments

to the cost of living annually. AFDC is the only entitlement program not tied to COL increases.

FY 88	FY 89
\$458,744	\$995,659

"An ACT to Increase the AFDC Standard of Need" LD 656

Prime Sponsor: Speaker John Martin  
This bill would provide a 10% increase in AFDC payments.

FY 88	FY 89
\$3,266,400	\$6,532,300

"An ACT to Provide Special Needs Payments to AFDC Recipients for Excess Housing Costs" LD 692

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Larry Connolly  
This bill will provide funds for special needs payments of up to \$100 per month to AFDC families whose shelter cost exceeds 75% of their income.

FY 88	FY 89
\$2,525,645	\$2,618,957

## Personal Safety

"An ACT to Fund Statewide Community Response Programs to Reduce Spouse Abuse in Maine" LD 439

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Pat McGowan  
This bill would extend a very successful pilot program to train community people in responding to abuse situations statewide. \$250,000.

"An ACT To Enhance and Expand Services Provided to Victims of Sexual Assault" LD 623

Prime Sponsor: Sen. Nancy Clark  
This bill would provide \$150,000 for full time staff at each of the nine rape crisis centers and establish a new center in Ellsworth, Me.

"An ACT To Remove Statutory Protection for Those Who Sexually Assault Voluntary Social Companions"

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Pat Paradis  
This bill would increase the severity of the crime for those who rape their dates.

"An ACT To Provide the Continued Treatment and Support of Incest Victims and Survivors"

This bill would provide \$88,769 for Looking Up — a group nationally recognized for its treatment and support for victims of incest.

"An ACT To Fund Increased Insurance Costs, Children's Programs, Rural Outreach Programs and Minimum Standard Requirements in the 9 Member Agencies of the Maine Coalition For Family Crisis Services" LD 302

Prime Sponsor: Rep. John Lisnick

## Health Care

"An ACT To Appropriate Funds for New and Existing Services for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy and To Reduce the Adverse Effects of Teenage Parenting" LD 655

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Don Carroll

This bill would provide 1.14 million (FY 88) and 2.28 million (FY 89) for the prevention of teen pregnancy and care of teen parents. The recommendations are those of the Governor's Task Force on Adolescent Pregnancy and include training for professionals, reproductive health care, teacher education, counseling services and Teen Parent programs.

"An ACT to Develop a Coordinated Local Response to the Problems of Teen Pregnancy"

Prime Sponsor: Rep. Marge Clark

This bill will provide \$120,000 (FY 88) and \$240,000 (FY 89) for "initiative" grants to stimulate the development of local action plans which avoid duplication and best utilize community resources.

## Member Organizations

Coalition for Maine's Children  
Common Cause  
Displaced Homemakers Project  
Family Planning Association of Maine, Inc.  
League of Women Voters of Maine  
Looking Up  
Maine Association of Handicapped Persons  
Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods  
Maine Civil Liberties Union  
Maine Coalition for Family Crisis Services  
Maine Coalition on Rape  
Maine Commission for Women  
Maine Division American Association of University Women  
Maine Federation of Business & Professional Women  
Maine Home Economics Association  
Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance  
Maine State Employees Association  
Maine State Nurses' Association  
Maine Women's Lobby  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Organization for Women-Maine  
Southern Maine Association for the Education of Young Children



# Women's Groups Unite to Push National Agenda in New Congress

*Women's Groups on the National Level Have Followed Maine's Lead!*

For the first time since 1981, major national women's groups began the new Congressional session with a united lobbying effort. In 1981 women's groups joined for a lobby day and rally to assert that they did not accept the New Right had won a mandate to repeal women's rights legislation or outlaw abortion via a human life amendment.

Five years later, the groups feel they have weathered the storm. The anti-abortion Constitutional Amendment was stopped in 1981 — but few legislative advances for women's rights were scored in the following years.

Restless from five years of virtual stalemate the major women's groups decided to launch a new Congressional initiative. Noting the new Senate was elected with a women's gender gap — nine of the eleven newly elected Senators won with the support of a majority of women's votes while the majority of men voted for the losing candidates — and noting the anti-abortion forces had *lost* state referenda in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Oregon, and Arkansas, the women's groups moved to push a forward-looking agenda.

On January 16, major national women's groups presented Congressional leaders with a *shared* agenda which seeks not only to stem the recent erosion of civil and economic rights for women, but also to press for major gains in both areas.

The agenda, which addresses issues that affect women of all ages and across the economic spectrum, was formulated by the Council of Presidents which represents most of the key women's groups. Represented at a press conference on January 16 by Sarah Harder of the American Association of University Women, Mary Ray Oaken of the Business and Professional Women, Eleanor Smeal of the National Organization for Women, and Irene Natividad of the National Women's Political Caucus, the council boasts more than 8,000 grassroots groups encompassing every Congressional district in the nation.

Demanding swift action on legislative priorities stalled in previous Congress-

sional sessions, such as the Civil Rights Restoration Act and a federal pay equity bill, the groups pledged to press their agenda through the 100th Congress and into the 1988 elections.

The agenda calls for:

- prompt passage of the Civil Rights Restoration Act (CRRA), which would protect women in education, minorities, disabled, and the elderly. Citing a commitment from the civil rights community to accept no riders, the groups said the CRRA will no longer be held hostage by the abortion issue;

- prompt passage of a federal pay equity bill. The federal government has lagged far behind individual states in addressing the pay equity issue; the near miss of a bill calling for a pay equity study of federal workers last session will not be tolerated in the 100th Congress;

- prompt passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which would provide a comprehensive national policy of unpaid leave for both men and women to enable them to fulfill their family responsibilities without sacrificing either their job security or seniority;

- reintroduction of the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress during the bicentennial of the Constitution to impress upon Americans the need for comprehensive coverage of women's rights;

- welfare reform proposals that provide essential training, education, and support services for recipients to gain access to jobs, while also recognizing the need for basic income assistance to be raised to a humane level;

- the resurrection of efforts to raise the minimum wage, which has remained stagnant for six years. The majority of minimum wage earners are women and minorities, and their income falls thousands of dollars below the poverty level;

- full federal funding for reproductive health care for all women, affecting especially low- and middle-income women;

- the development of comprehensive legislation that would provide affordable and accessible child care and dependent care to all families.

## DHS GIVES CHILD SUPPORT ASSISTANCE

Colby Jackson, Director of the Human Services Support, Enforcement and Location Unit has unveiled a statewide child support awareness program entitled "Child Support...It Works for Children." Federal and state laws have provided the department with the increased capability to collect child support.

Jackson said, "We want every Maine citizen to know about Maine's child support collection program. Historically, department child support collections focused on AFDC related clients. *However, changes in federal and state law have allowed full expansion of these activities to all custodial parents including non-welfare clients, if they so choose.* Presently, all fees will be waived."

Wage attachments, income tax refund intercepts and interstate compacts are among the many mechanisms used to collect child support. Additionally, the new laws impact the workplace of absent child support paying parents by providing employer incentives and penalties to discourage discrimination in employee wage withholding actions.

Nationally, it is estimated that 58% of the custodial parents, mostly women, have court-ordered child support agreements in place, but only half of this group receive child support. Furthermore, Maine's Office of Child Support estimates that there are at least 15,000 single parents who could avail themselves of the department's child support collection services. In Maine this past year about \$4.6 million was collected on behalf of non-AFDC clients.

For more information call: 289-2886.

## How to find out about issues or legislation important to you

Maine newspapers, radio and TV all report on important legislation. Most education, health and environmental organizations have monthly newsletters. Many have advocates in the State House with access to up-to-date information. Your legislator will be pleased to help you track down legislation and provide you with copies of any bills.

You can also write or call the Legislative Information Office, State House, Augusta, 04333, telephone: 289-1692. Copies of any bill are available free of charge by contacting the Legislative Document Room, State House, Augusta, telephone: 289-1408.



# You CAN Make a Difference

by Betsy Sweet

The Maine Commission for Women has some of the best lobbyists in the world — you! As a citizen of Maine and a constituent of both a Representative and Senator in the Legislature, you have the right *and the responsibility* to be involved in the legislative process. Unfortunately, very few of us take advantage of the opportunity to be involved. As I talk to people around the state, I find that people don't get involved because:

- They don't see the legislative process (especially at the State level) as having any impact on their lives.
- They are intimidated by talking to an elected official.
- They have been socialized to believe women shouldn't be involved in the Legislative process.
- They feel that since they are not experts on the subject their representative may ask a question to which they don't know the answer.
- They are too busy.
- They don't know the legislative process and therefore don't know how or when to be involved.
- They don't think one person can make a difference.

Most of these "blocks to involvement" are based on societal attitudes toward politics and that visit to the legislature in 5th grade when everything seemed big and separate from our lives. Being involved is really very easy and we must take it seriously.

In Maine, we have a special incentive because one person can have an enormous impact. Our legislature is small, our legislators are accessible (e.g., we are the only state that publishes legislator's home phone numbers), and most legislators really do want to know what their constituents think. Most importantly, very few people contact their elected officials, so when you do, they pay attention. A legislator once told me he had been overwhelmed with calls about issues. I decided to stop trying until I found out later "overwhelmed" was five calls!

Lobbying is nothing more than letting your legislators know how you feel about an issue and convincing them that your opinion is the correct one. When you discuss an issue which is important to you, you will find that lobbying is easy. Remember to use the skills and persuasions

you develop in your daily life and take into account the following pointers:

- Know the process. A bill is introduced, assigned to a committee, receives a public hearing where anyone can testify, has a work session to "mark up" the bill, and then is reported out. The earlier you get involved in the process, the better.
- Consider yourself an information source. Legislators must deal with hundreds of pieces of legislation and cannot know about all of them. You can help them to understand the issue.
- Tell the truth. Nothing will kill your credibility faster than misleading legislators. If you don't know the answer to something, admit it and agree to get back to them on it.
- Be specific. Make sure you are clear about exactly what you want: information, a yes or no vote, appearance at a hearing, etc.
- Be courteous. Never burn any bridges with your legislators. They may be on your side the next time around.
- Follow-up. Make sure you follow-up on whatever you have asked your legislators to do. If they voted "correctly," thank them. If not, find out why. They need to know you are watching and that you care.

The critical thing to remember when you lobby is that you are the boss. The legislators are your employees. Your taxes provide their salaries, desks, phones, and even the letterhead on which they write to you. When you lobby, take on the mind set of an employer with a task for the employee to do and you'll find it's easier than you think.

The most important thing about lobbying is to do it. When there is an issue or bill of concern, pick up the phone, go to the State House, or visit your representative at her or his home. Start with something easy, perhaps a "thank you" for something the legislator did or said with which you agree. Once you make that first call or visit, the rest will be easy (easier, anyway).

To be effective, you must be involved. Decide now that you will take full advantage of your rights and responsibilities as a Maine citizen. Visit the Legislature when it's in session, read the paper or call the Maine Commission For Women to find out what important issues and hearings are scheduled, and then get to work! You'll find that lobbying is easy, effective, and can even be fun.

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*"They tell us sometimes that if we had only kept quiet, all these desirable things would have come about of themselves."*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

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## How To Stay Current

There are official legislative publications available in public libraries and at town offices. Your legislator has access to them and can help you obtain information:

- House (Senate) Advance Journal and Calendars — printed each day the Legislature meets. These publications are daily agendas.
- Legislative Weekly Report — a weekly publication listing bills introduced as well as bills finally passed.
- Public Hearing Notices — lists all bills scheduled for public hearings by legislative committees during legislative session.
- Weekly Legislative Calendar — lists meetings of legislative committees (mostly relating to studies and confirmations), commissions, boards and task forces with legislators on their membership.

## How To Communicate With Your Legislator

Letters are extremely effective. Address them to "House of Representatives, State House, Augusta, Maine 04333," to reach your representative and "Senate of Maine, State House, Augusta, Maine 04333," to reach your Senator. Please include your name and address so the legislator can respond. Personal visits are also valuable. Personal postcards, phone calls and well written letters all help. Be sure to tell your legislator why you support or oppose a measure. Toll free telephone numbers to message centers operate when the legislature is in session. Representatives can be reached at 1-800-423-2900 and Senators at 1-800-423-6900.

## When To Contact Your Legislator

Each bill is referred to one of the Legislature's Joint Standing Committees (for example: Agriculture; Taxation; State Government; etc.) which holds an advertised public hearing which you may attend. In addition, each bill in most instances appears on the floor of the House and Senate a total of at least six days before final passage by the Legislature. There is ample time to let your legislators know your feelings, but the sooner the better.

## TYPES OF LEGISLATION

- Emergency Legislation — becomes law upon signature of the Governor. Requires 101 votes in the House and 24 votes in the Senate on final passage.
- Constitutional Amendments — require  $\frac{2}{3}$  votes of each branch of the Legislature and a vote by the people.
- Regular Bills and Resolves — after passage by the Legislature and approval by the Governor, become law 90 days after the Legislature adjourns.

*If you have any questions, feel free to contact Ed Pert, Clerk of the House, State House, Augusta 04333; Telephone 289-1400.*



# Calendar of Events

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	EVENT TITLE	DATE AND TIME	LOCATION	COST	FOR FURTHER INFO., CALL:
UM Women's Center	Holly Near in Concert	Friday, May 1, 1987 8:00 PM	Maine Center for the Arts, UMO	\$12.00 Orchestra \$10.00 Balcony	848-5359 947-3834
New England Association for the Education of Young Children	The Developing Child — A Wellness Approach	Friday 5/8/87 Saturday 5/9/87	Portland	Members \$60/\$40 Non Members \$65/\$45	879-4126 800-492-0846
Maine Association of Handicapped Persons	The Equal Rights and Opportunities Conference	Saturday, May 9, 1987	Augusta Civic Center		774-4360
Maine Civil Liberties Union	Parental Consent: The Desperate Attempt to Control Abortion	Friday 5/15/87	Bowdoin College		774-5444
Pine Cone Productions	Deidra McCalla	Saturday, May 16, 1987	First Parish Unitarian Church		772-2518
National Organization for Women	Maine NOW State Conference	Friday 10/17/87	Portland		
Maine Women's Lobby	SPRING FLING!	Saturday, April 4, 1987	Topsham Grange		Kathy Lyon 725-7690

## COMMISSIONERS

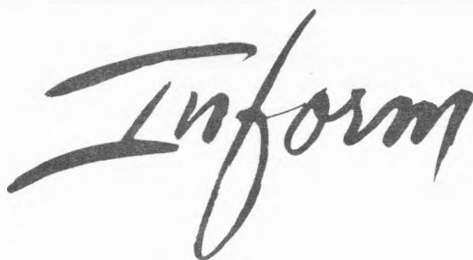
Patti Bourgoi, Augusta  
F. Celeste Branham, Lewiston  
Yolanda Bulley, Millinocket  
Mary Cathcart, Orono  
Joanne Clarey, Portland  
Rosemary Collings, Fort Kent

Joanne D'Arcangelo, Portland  
Robert Dworak, Mt. Desert  
Gwen Gatcomb, Winthrop  
Caroline Gentile, Presque Isle  
Sally Gibson, Brunswick  
Laura Gordon, Brunswick

Stephanie Irvine, Blue Hill  
Ruth Joseph, Waterville  
Stephanie Locke, Dover-Foxcroft  
Claudette Poulin, Winslow

## STAFF

Debbie Atwood  
Peg Ricker  
Betsy Sweet



MAINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN  
STATE HOUSE STATION 93  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333