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Gay rights issue in legislature

by Tammy Eves

While UMO's Wilde-Stein Club was making plans this week for the sixth annual Maine Gay Symposium, the legislature was confronting possible anti-homosexual legislation, sponsored by Rep. Stanley E. Laffin of Westbrook.

At a hearing Wednesday before the judiciary committee of the legislature, representatives debated a proposal made by Laffin to prohibit the expenditure of state funds for institutions promoting public support of homosexuality, such as UMO.

The Republican representative referred to homosexuals as "the lowest form of life," but others at the meeting were concerned over the generality of the bill and its possible unconstitutionality.

No action was taken on the proposal, but it may possibly be sent to the floor of the House.

The Maine Gay Symposium follows closely the controversy in the legislature.

A representative of the Wilde-Stein Club at UMO said he is expecting between 250 and 300 participants at the sixth Maine Gay Symposium to be held April 7 at the University of Southern Maine.

Although he said attendance for the most part will come from the Portland area, he estimated 75 to 100 people will attend from the Bangor area.

The Wilde-Stein Club is one of four groups in Maine sponsoring the event which will include social activities as well as discussions and lectures.

The UMO club has "raised a little money for it" but has been more involved with distributing information about the symposium.

The Wilde-Stein spokesman said "we've been an information center this year," sending out press releases, and that the club has had some input into the organization of the symposium.