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Spring 3-31-2005

## Maine NOW Times (Spring 2005)

National Organization for Women - Maine Chapter Staff

*National Organization for Women - Maine Chapter*

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# Maine NOW Times

Spring 2005

## **Roe v. Wade Celebrations Held Throughout State**

Thanks to the organizing efforts of the Maine Choice Coalition, led by chairperson Nicole Clegg of Family Planning Association, there were four events statewide marking the 32nd anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. We hope you all had a chance to see some coverage of these events whether or not you were able to participate. In Portland, there was a very good turnout despite the chill weather, and it was a large group that marched from the First Parish Church to Monument Square to rally in support of Roe. We had some nice photos taken of the event by our own NOW Intern, Megan Goudey. Below is a photo of MENOW Coordinator Lucinda McGinn holding a NOW round. See inside for more pictures of the event.

## **National NOW Conference July 1-3, 2005, Nashville, TN Loews Vanderbilt Hotel**

If you are interested in attending the National Conference as a delegate for Maine, please know that you must be a NOW member in good standing as of Saturday, April 2, 2005. If it is time to renew, be sure to send in your renewal promptly so that it will be processed in a timely manner. If you are reading this and are a nonmember, join NOW! Even if you miss the deadline to be a delegate, there's lots to love about attending a NOW conference! Check out [www.now.org](http://www.now.org) to plan your trip, check out what's in the area or to submit a workshop proposal.

Attention: Due to an error in printing, pages 2 & 3 in this issue are transposed. We decided to distribute it with this error rather than be wasteful of the paper. Thank you.



House (1 woman died in office and was replaced by a man), down 13 from our best year.

Two of the women who term-limited out of the House won Senate seats in 1996. In the 1997-8 Session, Maine had 13 women Senators with 22 men and 35 women Representatives with 116 men.

### 1998 & 2000 PATTERNS

The CAWP article on term limits looks at the six states, including Maine, whose term limit laws forced 203 legislators out in 1998, and the 12 states forcing 377 legislators out in 2000. Authors look, in particular, at the effects on women, minorities, and a group included in each of those groups, minority women. What they found surprised a few people.

In general, women, including minority women, lost more seats by being term-limited out in 1998 & 2000, than they gained by election to seats opened up by term limits. Equally surprising to some, minority men gained numbers, often by replacing either term limited minority women, or by replacing term limited longtime incumbent white males in predominantly minority districts.

In 1998, in 6 states including Maine, 47 women House members were forced out by term limits. Only 43 women won House seats where incumbents were forced out by term limits. In 2000, in 11 states, these numbers were 70 women out, and 65 women in.

Interestingly, women actually compensated for term limit losses by increasing their House wins in seats where they challenged incumbents and where seats were open for reasons other than term limits. The total number of House members in the 6 states remained the same - 145 - before and after 1998, and increased in the 11 states from 265 to 271 in the 2000 elections.

In Maine, after a special election in April 1999, the Maine House had 36 women,

one more than the prior session. The Senate reached an all-time high of 16! Only one (Kontos) of the 16 had been term limited out of the House. 12 were Senate incumbents.

In the 2000 election women House members increased to 41. But, they decreased again in 2002 to 37 and to 32 in 2004. The Senate dropped to 13 in 2002 and to 11 in 2004. In 2005 the Maine Senate and House have fewer women (43) than any time since the 1970s!

We don't have analysis yet for the effects of term limits in the 2 recent elections, but it's fair to say they haven't helped. Nationally, the CAWP research shows "term-limited women incumbents were replaced by other women in only about one-fourth of all cases in both [1998 & 2000] elections...and would have had to win many term-limited seats previously held by men in order simply to maintain their numbers." In fact, maintaining is exactly what women have done, representing 22.4% of state legislatures in 1998 and 2004, not varying more than .3% during that stretch.

Unfortunately, minority women, especially Black women, tended to follow the pattern for women more than for minority men. Indeed, among elected officials, Black women are the most under-represented.

### LAST THOUGHTS

At Feminist EXPO 2000, asked how we could turn it all around for women and create a more feminist world, Gloria Steinem quipped, "That's like asking, 'Describe the universe and give 2 examples.'" Ideas:

- Push our political parties, Dirigo Alliance, and other progressive groups to assertively recruit and encourage women candidates
- Adopt or improve existing affirmative action programs, even adopt quotas

## **A WOMAN'S PLACE is in the HOUSE & SENATE!**

Are Term Limits Hurting Women?  
JoAnne Dauphinee

Recently the Bangor Daily News and the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram lamented that the number of women in the Maine Legislature is shrinking, rather than expanding. This is, in part, part of a national "leveling off" trend in the number of women in state legislatures. What is happening? The feminist movement, in our 1970s heyday, frequently encouraged and trained women to run for public office. Maine NOW did this at most State Conferences. At Feminist EXPO 2000 an international panel on increasing women in elected and appointed office believed a strong and highly visible feminist movement is one key factor. Though going strong in many ways, feminist leaders are given precious little room and too few voices on the national "Bush Era" stage. Also, many progressive magazines, including most feminist magazines, have been forced out of business.

Several studies show that women who are encouraged to run are more likely to run. In the U.S., from preschool to Harvard, girls and women still do not receive much encouragement to lead or to enter civic life. One might argue that the backlash against feminism has allowed many stereotypes to continue to flourish in schools and beyond.

U.S. political parties do too little to recruit and encourage activist women to run for public office. In Norway, Africa (the A.F.C.) and several other countries with higher numbers of women in office, women have convinced political parties to implement Affirmative Action or outright quotas (from 33-40%) for women. In India they even amended the Constitution in 1993 to require 33% minimum representation for women. One Indian

feminist leader commented, "One million women came into public life in one stroke of the pen, because of affirmative action." Preferential voting, multiparty systems and proportional representation (instead of single member districts) all help. In 27 of the longest-standing democracies, proportional representation results in 2 to 5 times the percentage of women elected. Through the Center for American Women in Politics, <[www.cawp.rutgers.edu](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu)>, a Fall 2001 article, *Increasing Diversity or More of the Same? Term Limits and the Representation of Women, Minorities, and Minority Women in State Legislatures* by Susan J. Carroll and Krista Jenkins, Rutgers University, suggests term limits may also be a culprit. More on that below.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1923 Maine elected our first woman to the Maine House, and to the Maine Senate in 1927. I became a Maine Legislature junkie in the early 1970s during the early pre-Roe abortion battles and the heady ERA years. When I started lobbying there was only one woman Senator, Minette Cummings, among 31 men. Only 11% of the 151-member Maine House was women. And, the political leanings were decidedly Republican. Women's numbers crept upwards in both chambers until the House reached its highest number, 48, in the 1991 and 1993 sessions. In 1995 there was a big drop in the Maine House from 48 to 39 (only 38 serving due to a death). It's not clear why this happened. [The 1994 election was between the 2 Clinton Presidential victories in '92 & '96.] But, in one election we went from over one-third women (of the 186 House & Senate seats) to about one-fifth.

The first forced retirements due to term limits in the U.S. happened in Maine and California in the 1996 elections. Maine women gained 2 seats in the Senate in 1996, but we lost 4 more seats in the

(considered extreme only in the U.S.) to get women into leadership spots and push them toward elected positions.

- Encourage the media to seek out feminist voices on a wide range of issues, including term limits. Add your voice!
- Promote an active and visible feminist movement. Mix it up & take ACTION!!
- Defend Title IX and other confidence-building and opportunity-giving programs for girls.
- Create events and support existing events, similar to the Maine Women's Policy Center's "Girls' Day at the State House" March 24th.

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### Portland NOW Chapter Report

Jennifer Halm-Perazone, Coordinator

Thankfully, once again we were able to celebrate the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. This year marked the 32nd year that abortion has been safe and legal. It was good to see around 70 hardy people out

in -1° weather in Monument Square in Portland rallying for choice. It's hard to believe that for 32 years we have had to sigh a breath of relief that another year has gone by and women still have the legal right to choose an abortion. But *Roe* is not what it once was. With restrictions, waiting periods and medical students not being taught how to perform abortions, *Roe* is very much changed. We will be keeping an eye out not only for federal action against abortion, but state action as well. With the turnout for the big march in Washington, DC last April estimated at 1.15 million, it sure seems that we have the clear mandate to keep abortion legal. Don't forget to write your senators!

Come celebrate Women's History Month with Portland NOW. On Tuesday, March 29th from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at USM, in Campus Center, Room B. We will be showing the movie "*Chisholm '72 -- Unbought & Unbossed*." In 1972 Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman to run for President. (In 1872, Victoria Woodhull was the first woman to run for President.) Shirley Chisholm was a determined and unapologetically progressive black woman with a powerful message: Exercise the full measure of your citizenship - vote and assert your rights. This documentary reveals the run of Ms. Chisholm for the presidential nomination. It is sad to note that Ms. Chisholm has just passed away this year.

We are pleased to have Megan Goudey, the Maine NOW Intern, helping out with Portland NOW as well. Look for a Wal-Mart action that she will be putting together this spring. We are always looking for people to get more active in the chapter, and to take on leadership roles. If you have any good ideas for meetings, events, or actions, give Jennifer a call at 871-0618.

## Continuing the Fight

With the elections long past, and the inauguration of Bush for the next four years, it is time to put our disappointments well behind us and continue the fight for women, our families and our friends. There are plenty of issues out there that we will need to fight the radical right on. Here is a list of some of them:

- Fight **judicial appointments** - the resignation of Chief Justice Rehnquist is imminent due to health reasons. George W. Bush is poised to nominate an anti-abortion, anti-civil rights judge to the Supreme Court in the next few months.

- Stop **Social Security reform** - this is one of the Bush administration's top issues for the second term. The "reform" they suggest will devastate this program and will affect the present and the future financial retirement of women.

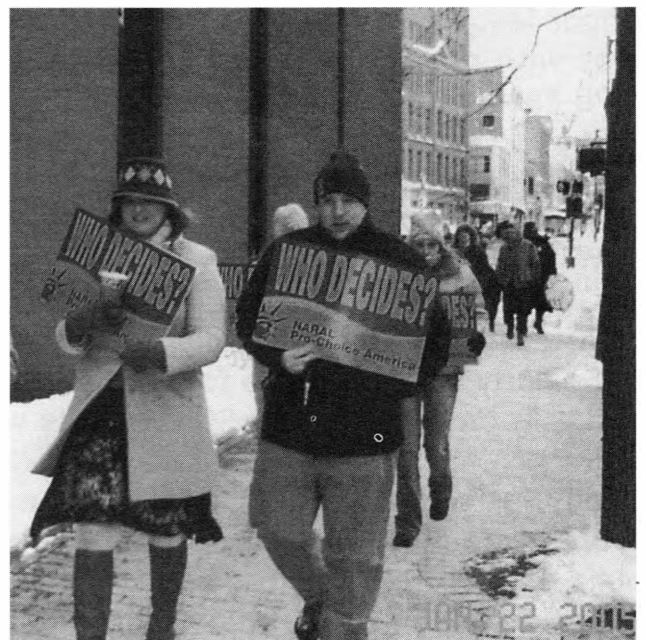
- Protest further **tax cuts** - the Bush tax cuts of 2002 benefited the rich, eradicated the surplus and created an enormous debt which will be passed down to our children. As pledged, Bush will continue on this quest to rewrite the tax code to benefit corporations and what he has called "his base," a.k.a. the rich. This will result in the evisceration of vital programs for women and girls such as head Start, housing subsidies, nutrition programs for children and more.

- Rise against **the war in Iraq** - this national tragedy has given rise to the loss of lives, not only of our women and men in our military, but of innocent Iraqis and foreign relief workers. It is time to support our troops by bringing them home. The national treasury is being ransacked by an approximate \$137 million per day being spent in this horrific quagmire. (And we

can only give \$350 million to the victims of the tsunami in Asia?)

- Promote **equal marriage** - the time has come in our country for the recognition of same-sex marriage. Attempts to amend the United States Constitution and those of the states should be met with resistance. Should we write discrimination in our Constitution rather than extend equal protection to all people? We must reject and work hard to prevent the radical right from codifying blatant and unfair discrimination against lesbian and gay couples.

- Fight for **emergency contraception** to be readily available - see the excellent fact sheet insert that discusses the need for "OTC" availability for emergency contraception. As we hear more and more about women having trouble even filling BIRTH CONTROL prescriptions at pharmacies, it is apparent that not only do we have to fight for accessibility to emergency measures, we need to make sure that our right to simple birth control is not restricted either!





## **GBNOW Chapter Report 2004-5**

JoAnne Dauphinee, Coordinator

Our chapter, while not holding meetings on a regular basis, has managed a few actions. Our biggest and most fun event was ROCK 4 CHOICE! My Rock & Blues band - the Sunset Strip Band - played a fundraiser dance at UM, Orono. And Maine NOW activists worked the event, too. We raised several hundred dollars to help folks attend the March for Choice in D.C., and had a blast in the process!

We endured some trouble-making by Old Town anti-choice activists. They tried to get our bass player in trouble (he worked in Old Town then), and they tried to intimidate the mother-daughter team at the RIVERTREE CAFE who donated coffee and snacks, but the women threatened to call the police on the intimidator! Our switch in venue (so the bass player could stay in the band) was accomplished due to our good friends at the Women's Resource Center at UM, who cosponsored the event!

GBNOW also provided sound equipment and some candles for the Charlie Howard Memorial Day events in Bangor last July. And, as always, GBNOW helps with the Peace & Justice Center's HOPE Festival every April, as well as tabling for NOW and the FAT Liberation Project. Our chapter helped organize our Maine NOW booth at Common Ground Fair as well.

GBNOW, sadly, had to drop one project. The Brewer Historical Society (BHS) flatly refused to go forward with the Harriet Tubman Freedom Statue. This was a hard project for me to let go. We had literally, as well as figuratively, laid the groundwork. We promoted it through public events and articles, had two miniatures made and displayed them at several events, studied grant writing, attended conferences, bought books and

materials, and applied for a grant. We didn't win the grant, but we did get a token amount and encouragement from the grant-giving folks. Ah well. Next, we have to try to get the donations directed to this project back from the BHS, though they were not too friendly to me at the meeting I attended.

I spent most of my NOW efforts in 2004 on the Maine elections and Maine NOW PAC projects. I did also testify for NOW at the Public Health Commission's hearing on obesity and health issues! Sen. Martin cut my remarks short, and Rep. Faircloth was cranky, but I got some positive feedback from attendees, including a few Commission members. Also, a National NOW activist saw my remarks printed in a news report and sent me a great note!

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### **Bush Budget Proposal Heavy on Defense, Light on Domestic Spending**

The Bush administration's proposed budget for FY 2006 slashes spending on key domestic programs. Major areas of decreased U.S. governmental spending include Medicaid, the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the environment, and farm subsidies. Places where the budget is seeing larger expenditures include border, airport, and seaport security, anti-terrorism programs, and food and drinking water safety. The budget proposal counts on Bush's tax cuts remaining in place, reinforcing the intent to make them permanent. The new budget does not include the cost of privatizing Social Security, which could reach into the trillions, or the continuation of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Sources: *New York Times*, "Bush Unveils Budget That Favors Security Over Social Spending," David Stout, Feb. 7, 2005; *Washington Post*, "President Sends '06 Budget to Congress," Peter Baker, Feb. 8, 2005.

<[www.thetruthaboutgeorge.com](http://www.thetruthaboutgeorge.com)>

# Over-the-Counter Emergency Contraception: Fact Sheet

## MORNING AFTER PILL

### Over-the-Counter or Behind-the-Counter?

It is obvious to most people that the current prescription-only status of the Morning-After Pill must be changed. It requires women to get (and pay for) a doctor's appointment, which is a major obstacle for a drug most effective to prevent pregnancy when taken within 24 hours-and fairly effective up to 72 hours-after sex.

But some have argued that making the Morning-After Pill an over-the-counter drug, like aspirin and cold medicine, is going too far, and that although the Morning-After Pill is safe, women should be able to obtain it only through a "pharmacist prescription," a status sometimes known as "behind-the-counter."

We completely disagree. We believe the Morning-After Pill should be immediately made an over-the-counter drug, and that it should be affordable and accessible to women of any age and in all parts of the country. We believe that the U.S. should follow the lead of dozens of other countries which already provide women access to this safe backup birth control method without any restriction.

The Morning-After Pill is marketed under the brand names Preven® and Plan B® (levonorgestrel) and is also known as "post-coital contraception" or "emergency contraception." Plan B®, the progesterone-only Morning-After Pill, consists of two pills to be taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse to prevent unintended pregnancy. The first pill is taken immediately and the second 12 hours later.

Why not pharmacist prescription "behind-the-counter" status?

1. Pharmacist prescriptions will force a woman to stand in the middle of a drug store, in front of other customers, and discuss the last time she had sex, when her last period was, and other private information. This will discourage a lot of women.
2. Pharmacists are not necessarily knowledgeable about the Morning-After Pill. In studies conducted in New York and Pennsylvania, pharmacists had alarmingly little knowledge of the Morning-After Pill, and many disseminated misinformation.

In a 2003 survey of 315 Pennsylvania pharmacists:

- \*13 percent of the pharmacists incorrectly stated the time parameters for using emergency contraception.

- \*5 percent said it was not available in the United States.

- \*28 percent did not know a brand name.

- \*13 percent confused emergency contraception with the abortion pill or thought it caused an abortion.

3. Some pharmacists will counsel women that they don't need the Morning-After Pill based on where they are in their menstrual cycle, even though it is possible to get pregnant any time in the cycle, or they will throw up other obstacles. We know pharmacists will do this because this is the experience we have now, with doctors and physicians assistants who tell us we do not need the Morning-After Pill for various reasons.

- \*Some women report being left alone in a room with a calendar by their medical practitioner, and told to try to figure out the date of their last menstrual period. If they can't remember, they're told they can't have the Morning-After Pill.

- \*Women have been told by medical professionals that they shouldn't put "all those chemicals" (meaning the Morning-After Pill) in their bodies, and are then told they should get on daily birth control pills. (Daily oral contraceptives can have serious long-term side-effects not associated with the extremely short duration dose of hormones in the Morning-After Pill).



4. Women should be able to have the Morning-After Pill around before a problem arises. But we don't know whether pharmacists will be willing to give women the Morning-After Pill to have "just in case." Based on our experience with other medical professionals, we suspect that some will and some won't, and again our wellbeing will be in the hands of someone else.

If the Morning-After Pill is over-the-counter, women can make sure they have a current dose in their medicine cabinets at home, for themselves and friends who need it. Although some drugstores are open 24 hours a day, most do not have pharmacists on duty more than 10 or 12 hours a day. And when a pharmacist is there, there is frequently a long line for service.

In consciousness-raising, women talk about the difficulty of getting time off during work or school hours to obtain the Morning-After Pill quickly. The terrible squeeze for time can be explained by the fact that in U.S. we already work the longest hours in the industrialized world, and women are still burdened with extra unfair responsibilities at home. We should be able to send a man to pick up the Morning-After Pill for us. This is only feasible if the drug is over-the-counter.

5. In our experience, some pharmacists will refuse to dispense the Morning-After Pill because of personal religious beliefs.

How widespread is this problem? A phone survey of 315 Pennsylvania pharmacists reported in the October 2003 issue of the journal *Contraception* noted that of the 65% of "pharmacists surveyed who could not fill a same-day prescription, 7 percent cited personal beliefs as the reason, while 6 percent said it was against store policy." ("Study: Pharmacists not informed on morning-after pill," Marie McCullough *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 21, 2003.)

There is even an organization, Pharmacists for Life International, founded by pharmacists who refused to fill women's prescriptions for oral contraceptives "because they believed they cause abortion," according to a 2002 article by Patti Miller. "The organization... has been effective in expanding the right of health professionals to refuse to provide reproductive health services such as contraception and emergency contraception." (Patti Miller, "Do No Harm: Far-Right Medical Groups and Religion Don't Mix," [www.rcrc.org/news/commentary/do\\_no\\_harm.htm](http://www.rcrc.org/news/commentary/do_no_harm.htm))

6. Some argue that women who are raped should be encouraged to seek counseling and medical help, and say that if the Morning-After Pill is available without talking to a pharmacist, women will be less likely to get this counseling.

We say no woman should have her right to control her body held hostage until she reveals a sexual assault. We must be allowed to access all our options in these difficult situations, and women know that we are often blamed and punished when we come forward.

## **Conclusion**

Requiring women to reveal the details of sexual activity to a pharmacist—who may be a stranger, or worse, an acquaintance—is humiliating and unnecessary unless there is an overwhelming safety reason. There isn't, according to the more than 60 organizations, including the American Medical Association, that support over-the-counter status.

**Take Action:** Let the FDA know that you support over-the-counter access to Emergency Contraception. Write to them at: Lester Crawford, Acting Commission, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

*Thanks to Gainesville Women's Liberation for providing content for this fact sheet.*

## **The Greatest Story Never Told** by NOW Intern Megan Goudey

March is Women's History Month and there is sure to be plenty of fanfare about the women's suffragist movement, women gaining the right to vote, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the like. These are all things we use to help us realize, as women, we have come a long way, but still have a long way to go. What most people will not be discussing is our own personal history. This is the history that will not be written in books, yet is nonetheless important to us and to others. I believe in the light of Women's History Month it is important for each of us to reflect on our personal history and find the personal history of other women. The individual history of one woman is as important as the history of any other woman.

Each woman has their own history. These stories are relevant to women as a whole and to individual women. Our individual histories as women and as feminists have the ability to inspire others to action, give a sense of sisterhood, and encourage women to share their history with others. Women have handed down their histories by generation, through family, friends, and anyone else who will listen. Typically the people keeping the history of women have been other women. By looking at our own history as women and sharing it with others we assure there will be no lack of history as there have been in times past. We can surpass the saying, "Herstory, the greatest story never told."

It is no secret that women's experience, though tied together by the commonality of being women, varies tremendously by virtue of our lives and situation. My situation as a white, middle class, lesbian is far different from the new American women who are my neighbors. Furthermore, both of our situations are far

different from women in Asia, South America, and most other women around the world and probably on my block. There is no one history of women. There are too many different women to make such a generalization. What we can do is look at our own experiences to find what has made our own history important, and share that as well as to learn other women's histories. This will help us learn what issues are important to women globally what our differences and similarities are.

Finding the history of individual women sounds like it can be a challenging task. It is true; we will never be able to know the individual history of all women. However, having a good knowledge of many women is not as daunting a task as it sounds. Finding that history first hand doesn't have to be as complicated as one may think. We have the resources all around us; there are women in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, schools, and everywhere else we turn. The point is, by finding our own stories and sharing them with others we may find certain things in our histories that bind us together. We can also be enlightened as to what our differences are and the issues that are important to women in all situations. Such knowledge is enriching to all of us.

While Title IX, The March for Women's Lives, and Susan B. Anthony are all very important to women's history, and I am in no way discounting them. There are other histories to be learned. So, for Women's History Month I propose a different kind of celebration of the history of women. Each person should find at least five women whose history is unknown to them. These women may be a boss, a stranger on the bus, or even your own mother. Then strike up a conversation and ask questions. Most people, if given the chance, enjoy talking about themselves, especially if they

perceive a genuine interest in what they have to say. Find these histories. You never know what you may find. In addition, you can feel good by knowing that someone has bestowed upon you a story that is important to them. They can also feel good by knowing there is someone who finds their story important. Women's History Month does not have to be about famous names and events. Women's history can be found wherever there are women. The history of every woman is as important as the history of the famous women who are typically celebrated in Women's History Month.

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### **Equality Maine**

The following is an appeal from our sister organization, Equality Maine. They are doing some great work on voter ID-ing, and keeping on top of current legislation. Please consider making a pledge to contact your legislators in support of non-discrimination laws in Maine.

[Dated 2/1/2005] Hello Friends and Family,

As you know, I am working hard at Equality Maine to build support throughout the state for an anti-discrimination law here in Maine. Maine has the dubious distinction of being the only state in New England without a gay civil rights law. Governor Baldacci will be introducing a gay rights bill to the legislature this session, and it is vitally important that we let our elected officials know that we support this bill.

I am sending this to you because I know you care about this issue, and because I need your help. It is not enough to just support a civil rights law: we need to **DECLARE IT**. We need to let our legislators know that we support an anti-discrimination law in Maine, and then we

need to give our friends, family, neighbors and coworkers an opportunity to do the same.

The Equality Pledge is a public declaration of your support for LGBT rights

*I pledge to contact my legislators in the coming weeks in support of non-discrimination laws in Maine.*

Please sign the pledge to get informed and stay informed. In return, Equality Maine pledges to keep you informed on progress and votes in the legislature.

[Go] here to sign the pledge:  
<<http://tinyurl.com/6vjuv>>

Please also allow friends, family, and neighbors to help. Forward this [message] to 10 supporters of equality and fairness. Straight allies must be given the chance to publicly support equality for LGBT people in Maine.

Working together we can secure equality for all.

Thanks in advance for your support....

Darlene Huntress, Project Coordinator  
Equality Maine  
P.O. Box 1951  
Portland, Maine 04104  
207.761.0110  
207.749.4628 cell  
[dhuntress@equalitymaine.org](mailto:dhuntress@equalitymaine.org)  
<<http://www.equalitymaine.org>>

Founded in 1984, Equality Maine (formerly Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance) acts in support of people of diverse orientation and gender identity through education, legislation and collaboration in Maine.

Become a Member of Equality Maine Today!

## REFLECTIONS ON THE 122ND MAINE LEGISLATURE

by JoAnne Dauphinee

Beth Edmonds Leads the  
122nd Maine Senate!

The big news for NOW members is the election of Beth Edmonds to the Presidency of the Maine Senate! <[www.maine.gov/legis/senate/offices/president](http://www.maine.gov/legis/senate/offices/president)> Beth is a former NOW State Coordinator and National NOW Board Representative. She follows NOW member Beverly Daggett (term-limited out last session) as Senate President, making Maine only one of three states to ever have 2 women Senate Presidents.

Though the number of women in the House and Senate have been dropping in recent years [see separate story], Maine is still above the national average of 22.4% with 23%. Over half of our legislative Committee Chairs are women. Governor Baldacci's chief of staff and over one-third of his cabinet are women. And Chief Justice Leigh Saufley presides over Maine's highest court.

A Wing and A Prayer?

The Legislature still starts each day with a prayer to a male god or gods. A 1983 U.S. Supreme Court ruling allows this non-separation of church and state (and, of course, the sexism) as tradition and part of shared values. Still, Rabbi Susan Bulba Carvutto is among clergy who decline to do prayers at public functions, believing in a more strict definition of church and state. She's quoted in a Bangor Daily News article as noting, "Society is getting more and more pressure to blur the line between public domain and the religious... prayer does not belong in the Legislature, public school or other public buildings." A(wo)men. Christian conservatives across the nation are pushing anti-choice bills, anti-stem-cell research bills, anti-same-sex marriage

bills, bills requiring "intelligent design" to be taught in classes on science rather than religion, anti-sex education bills, abstinence-only, and more. Whether these are Christian positions is up for debate, but feminists must be clear. Women's bodies and the definition of our humanity are at stake. Failure to see this "morality play" from feminist perspectives is to miss the main reason for it - to keep women in our place, like the "good old days."

Moral issues? Social issues? Family issues? Women's health and liberty depend on the ability to separate sexuality from procreation, women's humanity from current definitions of "femininity," and deity from democracy. According to a recent Steinem editorial, Thomas Jefferson noted, "In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot..."

We not only have to elect more progressives, we have to elect more women. Otherwise, "our issues" are the ones ignored, or traded away, or dismissed, or "compromised" as mere "social issues" — even by the good guys.

The Motherhood Protection Act puts women first.

Over the past few years Maine lawmakers have debated and defeated legislation modeled after the national Unborn Victims of Violence Act (signed into law by President Bush last year). While proponents claim that this legislation is intended to prevent violence against pregnant women, in reality, the bills do little more than serve to promote an anti-abortion agenda by defining a fetus as a person in criminal law. In the Maine legislature, a bill sponsored by Rep. Brian Duprey called *An Act to Protect Unborn Children from Acts of Violence* seeks to establish a separate crime for harm to a fetus and create a new cause of action on

behalf of the unborn. This bill changes the focus of the crime from the pregnant woman exclusively to the fetus. In fact, Representative Duprey's bill makes no mention at all of the crime against the pregnant woman, nor acknowledges her pain or her loss

The disturbing fact is: the leading cause of death for pregnant women is homicide. Clearly, pregnancy can serve as a flashpoint for domestic violence. For this reason, the Maine Women's Lobby will work to defeat *An Act to Protect Unborn Children from Acts of Violence* and work to pass the Motherhood Protection Act. The Motherhood Protection Act, sponsored by Senate President Beth Edmonds, allows for special weight in sentencing against murders of pregnant women *without* undermining critical tenets of *Roe v. Wade*. The bill was developed with the input of various domestic violence experts and women's groups, and its intention is to ensure that the focus of the legal system is on the primary victim of the violence - the pregnant woman. Please stay tuned for ways you can help promote this important legislation while defeating the misguided attempts to use the issue of violence against women as a strategy to undercut reproductive rights.

#### Term Limits & Clean Elections

Bills to repeal or extend term limits should get a feminist look. Research indicates term limits are forcing more women out of office than they are opening seats up for women. There are also proposals to abolish the Clean Elections Act; abolish "Leadership PACs" or reform them; require the popular election of constitutional officers; increase the legislative salary to \$15,000 annually, and other election/structure proposals.

#### If You Give Lesbians Rights Everyone Will Want Them

Legislators have submitted a typical

2100 bills, and Baldacci is submitting his package, including a bill to include sexual orientation as a protected class under the Maine Human Rights Act. This legislation was first submitted in 1976. We thought Mainers might want a decade or two or 3 (!?!) to think. Maine NOW and a group we founded to promote the bill, the Maine Coalition for Human Rights, were the only groups to play an active role promoting the bill in '76. We were able to get other groups - MCLU, Democratic Party, etc. - to lend their names in support.

Maine NOW took the lead on this legislation until 1985-7, and first passed it in the Senate in 1983. In 1985 many of us helped found MLGPA (now called Equality Maine). Today, Maine is the only New England state that has no civil rights protection.

There are bound to be other bills of interest, including a same-sex marriage bill, but adding sexual orientation to the MHRA is the main event. A Bangor Daily News (BDN) editorial noted that in his State of the Union Address Governor Baldacci failed to use the word "gay" or "homosexual" [or "lesbian"], and the BDN quipped "How can he protect what he can't bring himself to say?" Let's hope the weight of the Executive will push a little harder! 30 years is too long.

#### Opposing the Right to Choose, Let Me Count The Ways

From the President and potential U.S. Supreme Court changes, to the local circle-the-Capitol crowd, the onslaught is relentless. And, now the Legislature is in session too. In an editorial about the idea of reaching middle ground on gun control, a small gem by John Porter, Maine Sunday Telegram, "It's easy to see why the abortion question festers. There's no middle ground there, really. The same is true for gay rights and the death penalty. It's funny sometimes to watch politicians try to create middle ground on these

questions. They always look silly... My favorite is: 'I'm personally opposed to abortion, but I support a woman's right to choose.' ...In the end, one has to come down on one side or the other."

### Sexual Abuse & Battered Women

The Governor's Advisory Council on Domestic & Sexual Abuse recommendations are due out in February. Many will cost money, such as statewide access to computerized criminal histories. (There is no money.) There was also a suggestion to have a State Director of Domestic Violence Services. Think prevention!

### Healthy Maine

Biomedical ventures are likely good news for Maine. Job and income generating and progressive, they are making positive connections between several research, educational and medical facilities. Go team!

2005 Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Sports, Health and Wellness is part of the overall new emphasis on fitness, triggered by society's desire to have fewer fat people. It's a mixed bag, but the pedometer program, the Maine in Motion program, to the extent they emphasize fitness, not slimness, are great investments. According to some, it is now downright unpatriotic to not exercise and improve our diets! Though you gotta love the baby steps toward preserving health vs. disaster-based health care, whatever happened to pushing for universal, single-payer, national health insurance?

Then there's the tort reform gang trying to cap financial awards on malpractice cases, targeting "pain and suffering" awards. Where is the Pain and Suffering Prevention Committee?

Health care, particularly mental health care, needs a lot of attention. The Governor's Task Force on Youth Suicides may come up with some suggestions, but even there don't expect any increase in

funding.

On a grander scale, Maine's 39 hospitals account for about a third of health care costs. A state commission has offered a number of ways to make hospital care more accessible and affordable. Primarily, they recommend cooperation. Duh. Dirigo Health is also still trying to improve access to quality health care, with affordable premiums.

Lawmakers will also have to study MaineCare again this session, the Medicaid Program serving 300,000 Mainers. Medicaid spending has risen 63% over the last 5 years. Maine relies on about \$2 in fed money for every \$1 it pays. Less money from the Bush Administration and precious little wiggle-room in the state budget requires more thought on how we will pay hospitals, nursing homes and doctors.

Are you sensing a lack-of-funding theme? Meanwhile, the national Medicare coverage of "lifestyle-improving" drugs like Viagra is expected to cost taxpayers \$500 billion over the coming decade.

And then there's that pesky tougher seat belt bill, touted as a way to save millions in health care costs. Who knew? I'm sure it's a good thing, there's just one problem. The belt in my car doesn't fit me. Seat belt extender, anyone?

### Wide Range of Bills

The new session got off to a good start when Gov. Baldacci and Legislative Leaders agreed to a budget. Now, as they say, the devil is in the details. Many bills deal with tax reform and budget issues, including General Assistance flat-funded; poverty, housing, wage and work issues; education quality and funding; children's issues; environment and development issues. Many bills aren't written yet and I've already lost track of the others. Here's a peek at some of the issues.

The Labor Dept. wants to improve

severance pay law. There are competing proposals to change the unemployment insurance system. In Bangor, someone making minimum wage would need to work nearly 80 hours a week to afford an average 2-bedroom apartment. Bangor is typical, not the exception. Like good news-bad news, things are bad all over. Maine is the most affordable state in New England.

Will there be a call to increase the minimum wage again? Affordable housing is definitely on the table. Sprawl and attempts to encourage the consolidation of services will enter the debate on several issues.

In 2002, there were 3,746 cases of child abuse in Maine. Three children died. Government programs with proven results helping parents (through in-home teaching visits) include Parents as Teachers, Parents Are Teachers Too and Healthy Families Partnership. Preventing abuse is linked to preventing later violent crimes. More funding here would be both humane and judicious, but, of course, isn't likely. There's also a bill to prohibit video voyeurism, but I don't know anything about it yet.

Education debates include the funding formula, what role the State should have in University restructuring and a proposal to link school financial aid to employment in Maine, enticing college graduates to stay in Maine. Currently there is an incentive program for teachers.

The Dept. of Environmental Protection will be shrinking a bit due to flat funding. They're thinking of raising licensing fees. Of course, the main environmental thing is sustainability. Issues may include a bill to keep chemically treated construction debris manufactured elsewhere out of Maine landfills, regulation of water use, ongoing talks about LNG (liquified natural gas), strict restrictions on cruise ship pollution, climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Sears Island,

costs and disposal of hazardous chemicals in homes and schools, conservation issues and enforcement of the "Low Emissions Vehicle Program."

There are bills on everything from making Moxie Maine's official beverage to raising a monument for Maine's Women Veterans - from phone and internet services to crossbow use. Check things out at <[www.mainelegislature.org](http://www.mainelegislature.org)> and <<http://janus.state.me.us>> and then lobby someone!

House of Representatives, 2 State House Station, Augusta ME 04333-0002  
Representatives 1-800-423-2900  
TTY 207-287-4469  
House Clerk 207-287-1400  
Senate, 3 State House Station, Augusta ME 04333-0003  
Senators 1-800-423-6900  
TTY 207-287-1583  
Senate Secretary 207-287-1540

### **Bush Addresses Anti-Choice Marchers**

During the annual "March for Life" in January, Bush spoke with anti-choice marchers who descended on Washington D.C. In a message broadcast to the marchers, Bush promised that his administration was working to foster a "culture of life" through legislation like the so-called "partial birth" abortion ban and the "Unborn Victims of Violence" Act. Bush also told the marchers that a U.S. without abortion is slowly coming into view. "We're making progress in Washington," Bush said.

Sources: The White House, "President Bush Calls "March for Life" Participants," Jan. 24, 2005; *National NOW Times*, "Second Term Could Mean the End for Roe," Winter 2004/2005.

<[www.thetruthaboutgeorge.com](http://www.thetruthaboutgeorge.com)>





## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN



### Maine's Leading Feminist Grassroots Organization

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### Northeast Regional NOW Board Members

Melody Drnach, RI (Regional Director)

Melody Towne, RI

Austin Lin, MA

Mary Fosher, NH

## JOIN US!

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION\*\*

Our vision: to empower women to take feminist action to effect feminist social change.

Our top five priorities: ERA, economic justice, lesbian rights, reproductive freedom,  
eliminating racism..

NAME: (Please PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Sign me up for (a) Greater Bangor NOW \_\_\_\_ (b) Greater Portland NOW \_\_\_\_ (c) At-large \_\_\_\_

Dues rate includes membership at the national, state and, if chosen, local level.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ dues enclosed. \$35.00 regular dues. A sliding scale of \$20.00 -\$34.00 is  
available, if needed. Print page and send, along with your check made payable to Maine NOW,  
to Maine NOW, 665 Saco Street, Box 172, Westbrook, ME 04092.

\*\*Membership application is for new members only. If you are renewing OR reinstating a  
recent lapse in membership, please send your renewal to NOW, 1100 H Street, NW, 3rd floor,  
Washington, DC 20005.

## **Bush Flip-Flops on Civil Unions**

In an Oct. 24 interview with ABC correspondent Charlie Gibson, Bush claimed he disagreed with the Republican Party platform opposing civil unions of same-sex couples and that the issues should be left up to the states. "I don't think we should deny people rights to a civil union, a legal arrangement, if that's what a state chooses to do so," Bush told Gibson during the interview. Gibson then noted that the Republican Party platform opposed civil unions, to which Bush replied, "Well, I don't." Gibson then asked, "So the Republican Party platform on that point, as far as you're concerned, is wrong?" "Right," Bush said. However, Bush opposes same-sex marriage, continues to support a constitutional amendment to

define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and despite these latest remarks, White House officials have said that Bush would not have endorsed civil unions as the governor of Texas. In Oct. 2003, Bush issued a proclamation endorsing Marriage Protection Week, a week of anti-gay family events sponsored by more than two dozen right-wing religious organizations, which called on elected officials to sign a pledge not only opposing marriage equality for same-sex couples, but also opposing civil unions and domestic partner benefits.

Sources: *New York Times*, "Bush Says His Party Is Wrong to Oppose Gay Civil Unions," Elisabeth Bumiller, Oct. 26, 2004; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "Bush and today's civil unions statements," Oct. 26, 2004

(source: [www.thetruthaboutgeorge.com](http://www.thetruthaboutgeorge.com))



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