

EQUALITYNEWS

Advocacy for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities since 1984

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Spring 2005

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for how you can
make a difference
on issues affecting
the lives of LGBT
people in Maine.

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Non-Discrimination Bill Gets Another Try

For the 11th time in Maine history, a non-discrimination bill protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination has been sent to the Legislature for consideration. However, it is the first time in Maine history that the bill has been submitted by a governor.

Governor Baldacci, a long-time supporter of fairness and equality for LGBT people, sent an important message when he submitted this legislation. We hope this message seeps into the hearts and minds of the good people of the state of Maine, because if the bill passes, Michael Heath is sure to pursue a People's Veto referendum campaign.

The bill is LD 1196, An Act to Extend Civil Rights Protection Regardless of Sexual Orientation, and is sponsored by Senator Karl Turner (R-Cumberland) and Representative Anne Perry (D-Calais).

LD 1196 is similar, yet slightly different, than the non-discrimination bills of the past. The intention of previous bills has been to include sexual orientation as a protected class in the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA), just as race, age, sex, disability, religion, and marital status are protected classes. This bill is no different, except that it inserts sexual orientation in *every* section of the MHRA, including educational opportunities, an area not addressed in previous bills.

The bill defines sexual orientation as "actual or perceived heterosexuality, bisexuality, or homosexuality, or gender identity and expression." Although it may be more desirable to define and include gender identity and expression as its own protected class, we had to weigh the risks that strategy might involve.

The bill allows religious exemptions based on sexual orientation in the same way it allows religious exemptions based on all other protected classes. Religious organizations and corporations are no more or no less exempt based on sexual orientation than the other classes.

Continued on page 5



Governor Baldacci is a long-time supporter of LGBT equality. Here he speaks at an EqualityMaine (still MLGPA then) press conference in support of the domestic partner inheritance bill that he signed in 2004.

EqualityMaine

Acting in support of people of diverse orientation and gender identity through education, legislation and collaboration in Maine.

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EqualityMaine Gets Branded

EqualityMaine is pleased to finally present its new logo. After months of work, which were not without bumps and bruises, we have a fresh and contemporary logo. Among other things, we hope this new logo will appeal to a broader audience.

The broader audience includes businesses, corporations, community groups, legislators, major donors, and grant foundations.

We thank members of the Marketing Committee—John Hennessy, Carol Hammond, Mark Fitzgerald, Michelle Hustus, and Julie Motherwell—for their wisdom and advice and also Dick Harrison for his time and talent in creating designs.

We especially thank Gary Lebrun, our designer, who brought experience, insight, skill, talent, and endless amounts of patience to our marketing and branding process. Gary not only designed our logo but also prepared our letterhead, envelopes, business cards, and upcoming brochures. •



Have You Registered as Domestic Partners?

A year ago, Maine became just the 6th state in the country to recognize same-sex couples on a statewide basis. The Maine Legislature passed a domestic partner inheritance rights bill that established a statewide domestic partner registry.

People often ask us why they should register as domestic partners, especially if they already have wills and other legal documents. The answer is simple—political power. The state's domestic partner registry list may very well become the most effective lobbying tool we have when it comes to advancing non-discrimination and marriage equality.

Legislators constantly ask us to quantify our arguments for equality, such as how many people have been discriminated against and how many same-sex couples live in Maine? We can't possibly know the answer to those questions.

The DP registry list, especially if it grows to 1000, 2000, or 5000 couples, can be used to show legislators how many people are impacted by every decision they make on LGBT equality.

And the opposite is true as well—if only 400 couples register (currently the number of registered couples), our opponents could argue that 400 same-sex couples are hardly worth passing legislation for.

If you and your partner have not yet registered, please go to EqualityMaine's website (www.equalitymaine.org), click on the DP Registry link, and get the information you need to register. •



Fay Brodell (center), EqualityMaine's new treasurer, and her partner Sue Davis recently registered as domestic partners with the state of Maine. Board member and attorney Matthew Dubois witnessed and signed their application.

Voter ID Project Ramps Up for Campaign

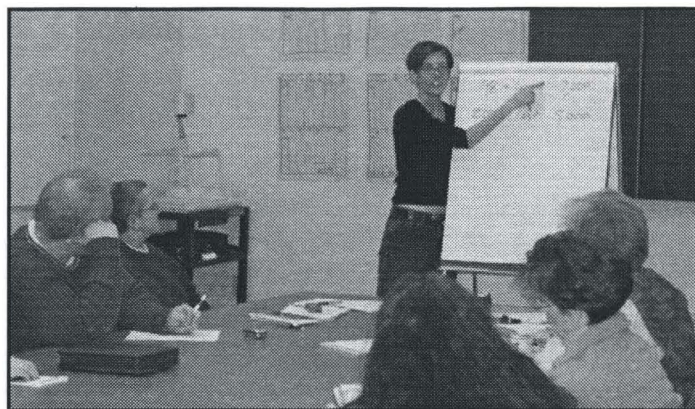
EqualityMaine kicked off the EqualityKnocks Project in March 2004, and in one year our volunteers have talked with nearly 7,000 voters about civil rights and marriage. Support for a non-discrimination law has been strong, and surprisingly more than half of the voters we've talked with support marriage equality as well. While this is good news, we know that 7,000 conversations aren't nearly enough to secure a win at the polls.

Should the current non-discrimination bill pass, our opponents will begin a campaign with 50,000 identified voters—the number of signatures required for a People's Veto petition. In order for us to match and surpass that number, we have a lot of work to do in the next couple of months.

Winter has been a challenge considering that our most effective work is done through door-to-door canvassing. However, we have still managed to talk with nearly 1,200 new voters since January, and 194 of those have signed up to be volunteers.

We held three phone banks in Portland and Brunswick where we spoke with more than 400 voters. We attended campus performances of the Vagina Monologues at Bowdoin College and the University of Maine at Augusta, where we spoke with 136 supportive voters and recruited 26 new volunteers.

After three months of outreach efforts by volunteers Sue Comyns and Betsy Parsons, we are now working closely with local faith communities. And thanks to the effort of volunteer Dee Hutchins, our friends at Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist provided members with "voter ID ballots." More than 50 percent of the supportive members we identified also signed up to become volunteers. At EqualityMaine's Annual Awards Banquet on March 5, more than 40 people signed up for current actions while another 70 signed up for future actions.



Monique Hoeflinger, a campaign trainer from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, meets with EqualityMaine voter ID volunteers to help ramp up efforts in preparation of a referendum campaign on the non-discrimination bill.

We were very fortunate to have Monique Hoeflinger from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force spend three very long work days with us in early March. During that time, we developed a four month voter ID plan that called for ramping up our current efforts to the level necessary to defeat a People's Veto of the non-discrimination bill. Fourteen volunteer leaders from across the state braved a blizzard to join Monique, executive director Betsy Smith and project coordinator Darlene Huntress for a work session on how to implement and carry out this plan. Those in attendance were Dee Hutchins, Sue Comyns, Niki Norman, Jenn Curran, Betsy Parsons, Jim Bishop, Steve Ryan, Kevin Gilgan, Matt Small, Lisa Kinney, Sue Deliberto, Julie Bedard, Terry Morrison and Kim Berry. Many thanks to Diversified Communications for lending us their conference room for this critical meeting.

Continued on back page

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Guide to 2005 Maine LGBT Legislation

EqualityMaine Supports the Following Bills :

LD 1196, **An Act to Extend Civil Rights Protections to All People Regardless of Sexual Orientation.** This is the non-discrimination bill that prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, credit, public accommodations, and educational opportunities based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. The bill is spearheaded by Senator Karl Turner (R-Cumberland) and Rep. Anne Perry (D-Calais).

LD 19, **An Act to Clarify the Law Regarding Transfer Tax Liability for Deeds Between Domestic Partners,** sponsored by Rep. Edward Mazurek (D-Rockland). This bill would include domestic partners in the real estate transfer tax exemption for deeds between certain family members.

LR 21 (doesn't yet have an LD number), **An Act to Repeal the Prohibition of Same-Sex Marriage,** sponsored by Senator Ethan Strimling (D-Portland). This bill would repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passed in 1997 that defines marriage as one man and one woman.

LR 991 (doesn't yet have an LD number), **An Act to Legalize Same-Sex Marriage,** sponsored by Rep. Brian Duprey (R-Hampden). This bill is disingenuous because it was submitted by a right-wing, anti-gay conservative legislator, who vehemently opposes it. Nevertheless, when the public hearing is held later in the spring, we will be there to support marriage equality.

EqualityMaine Opposes the Following Bills :

LD 1294, **Resolution to Amend the Constitution to Define Marriage,** sponsored by Rep. Brian Duprey (R-Hampden). This bill would amend Maine's constitution to define marriage as one man and one woman. It must pass the Legislature with a 2/3 majority vote, then go to the voters for approval in a referendum campaign.

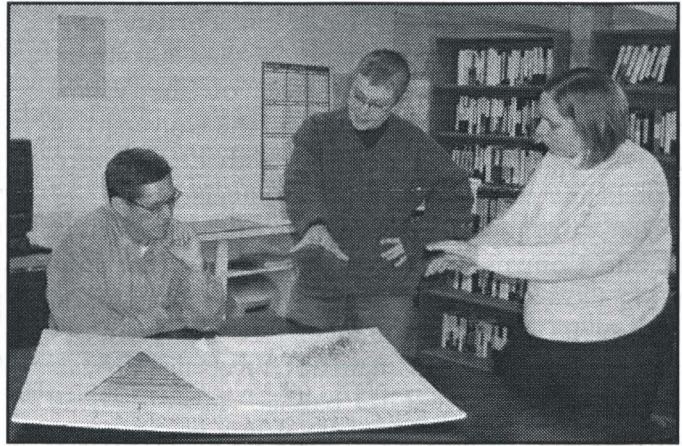
LD 908, **An Act to Protect Homosexuals from Discrimination,** sponsored by Rep. Brian Duprey (R-Hampden). This is an anti-choice abortion bill designed to drive a wedge between groups that have worked together to protect and defend a woman's right to choose *and* eliminate bias based on sexual orientation. The bill states that if a fetus is determined to have a "gay gene" (which doesn't exist), then it would be illegal

to abort it. EqualityMaine supports a woman's right to make her own reproductive decisions.

Some bills still do not have LD numbers because the process through which they travel from a concept to a printed bill is often slowed down by the number of bills the Revisor's Office is handling. All bills will eventually have LD numbers.

Once a bill has an LD number, its full text and progress in the Legislature can be tracked on the State's website at: <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/LawMaker-Web/search.asp>. Type in the LD number.

If you do not know your legislators, you can find them on EqualityMaine's website, www.equalitymaine.org, under Political Action, and then Non-Discrimination Bill, and typing in your address under the letter set-up. •



Rick Jung, National Program Officer of the Gill Foundation, talks with EqualityMaine staff members Darlene Huntress (center) and Erica Quin-Easter about voter ID efforts on a recent trip he made from Colorado. Gill Foundation funded EqualityMaine \$25,000 this year for our voter ID project.



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Non-Discrimination Bill Gets Another Try

Continued from page 1

Headed to Referendum?

Because Michael Heath makes it his life's work to deny us equal rights, he is sure to wage an effort to collect signatures to send the bill, should it pass, to a People's Veto. He will have 90 days from the day the Legislature adjourns to collect 50,519 valid signatures. The Secretary of State will then have 30 days to validate the signatures. If the signatures are validated, the People's Veto election will be set for the first general or primary election day that occurs not sooner than 60 days from the date the signatures are validated.

What this means is that if the Legislature adjourns on June 15, Heath has until September 15 to collect his signatures. The Secretary of State then has until October 15 to validate the signatures. A People's Veto election must occur on the first general or primary election day but since November 1, 2005 is within 60 days of October 15, the election would be set for the next general or primary, which is June 2006.

There is a slight chance that the bill could pass by the end of March, which is slated as an adjournment date for budget purposes. If this were to happen, then Heath would have until July 1 to collect his signatures and the Secretary of State would have until August 1 to validate them. The election would then be set for November 2005, as it would be the first general or primary election day to occur.

For several reasons, we would prefer November 2005 to June 2006, but it is not in our power to control the timing. The reason we would most want it in November is because there is always a bigger turnout for a general election than a primary election.

We don't have much further to go in public opinion to tip the balance of votes in our favor, and any advantage we can get, we'll take. On February 10, 1998, we lost a People's Veto referendum campaign by 7,000



Tom Pilsbury (4th from right) and Stan York (6th from right) hosted a house party for EqualityMaine in their home town of Palermo. Who knew LGBT people hung out in Palermo!

votes—just 2½ percent of the vote. We lost the 2000 referendum campaign by 5,000 votes—less than one percent of the vote. The trend is encouraging and we believe this time it will tip in our favor once and for all.

There are three reasons why we believe we can defeat a People's Veto referendum:

- Americans' attitudes toward LGBT issues have evolved in light of recent advances for marriage equality. Although these advances have outraged and ignited the conservatives, we hope and believe they've made job and housing discrimination less tolerable.
- EqualityMaine began campaign efforts a year ago, through our voter identification project, in anticipation of this scenario. We've spoken with nearly 7,000 voters and have found a common thread—Mainers support a non-discrimination law and are not afraid to talk about marriage equality.
- A group of local experienced political leaders have recently designed a model for advancing LGBT rights here in Maine over the next ten years. The model includes EqualityMaine, who focuses on the legislature, and a campaign entity (Mainers for Equality) who will always be prepared to fight and win referenda campaigns. These two entities will be linked together to enable us to use all available resources to be successful in both legislative work and campaigns. The campaign entity is forming now and is about to hit the ground running.



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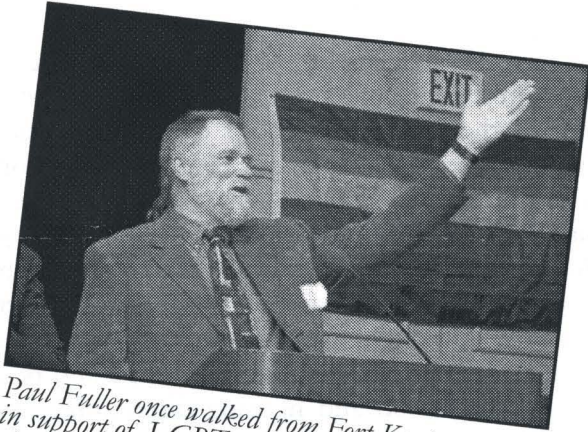
EqualityMaine's 21st Annual Awards Banquet



Recipient of the Youth in Leadership Award is the Youth Leadership Advisory Team from the Muskie School of Public Service. Penthea Burns (2nd from right) serves as supervisor.



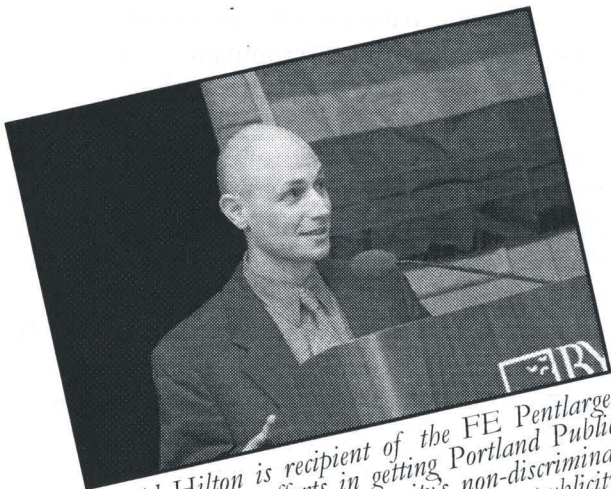
Advisory Board member and recent chair of the Maine Democratic Party Dottie Melanson received the President's Award from EqualityMaine president Rodney Mondor.



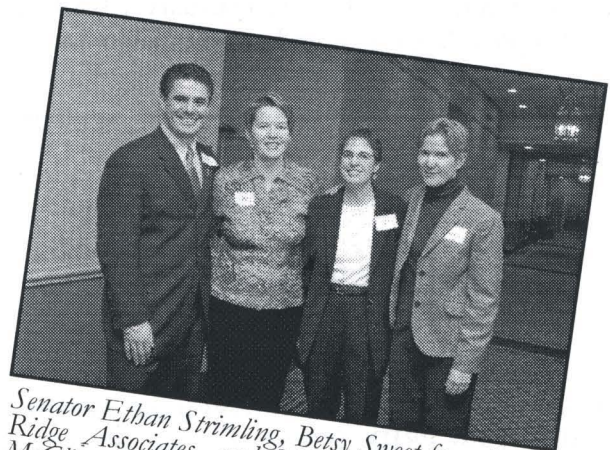
Paul Fuller once walked from Fort Kent to Kittery in support of LGBT equality. His community service, especially in the area of HIV and AIDS, was honored at the banquet.



Recipient of the Great Pioneer Award, Mary Bonauto delivered an inspiring and motivating acceptance speech on LGBT equality and progress.



David Hilton is recipient of the FE Pentlarge Award for his efforts in getting Portland Public Schools to comply with the city's non-discrimination ordinance in relation to Boy Scouts publicity.



Senator Ethan Strimling, Betsy Sweet from Moose Ridge Associates, and Merle Muller and Jan McClintock from Brunswick enjoy the evening's political conversations.

All photos by Joan Seidel

EqualityMaine's 21st Annual Awards Banquet



Gloria Leach received the Cameron Duncan Award for her near-lifetime efforts in the area of HIV and AIDS treatment, prevention, and education.



Enjoying the evening are (L to R) former Board member Sive Neilan, sponsor/member Nancy Field, first EqualityMaine/MLGPA president Dale McCormick and Mayor of Portland Jill Duson.



EqualityMaine president Rodney Mondor poses with Media Award recipient the Jewish Film Festival—Eleanor Goldberg (board president) and Bess Weldon (executive director).



Banquet Committee chair Cele Burnett (left) and partner Ann Swanson enjoy a very well deserved moment of satisfaction. Cele played a key role in helping EqualityMaine pull off the most well attended banquet ever.



Michael Heath calls Rep. Ben Dudley, award recipient of the Larry Connolly award for outstanding legislative achievement, "the poster child for everything gay." As a straight ally, Ben is proud of that reputation.



Jamie Gibson (center) received a Community Service Award for her outstanding volunteer services to so many groups in the LGBT community. She poses here with her partner Marty and daughter Meagan.

All photos by Joan Seidel

Thanks to our Sponsors for Standing up for Equality!

On Saturday, March 5, we held our biggest party ever. EqualityMaine's 21st Annual Awards Banquet drew more than 450 people and raised more than \$15,000 to support EqualityMaine Foundation.

Just after our awards banquet, Michael Heath of the Christian Civic League issued a press release condemning our banquet sponsors for their support of "tolerance" and "diversity." In his statement to the press, Heath warned our sponsors that "You ought to give careful consideration to offending those who buy your products and services. Although your support of EqualityMaine shows that you have no ethical concerns, we are sure, as practical-minded people, you still have a concern for the bottom line."

But our sponsors already know the bottom line—Equality is good for business. The sponsors of Equality-

tyMaine's 21st Annual Awards Banquet have made a smart business decision to invest in diversity in their workforce and in the community.

Why? Civil rights protections, equitable workplace policies and fair treatment for all families are an important factor in attracting businesses, recruiting and retaining employees, and keeping young people in Maine. The Governor knows that. We know that. And our sponsors know it too.

Kudos to Michael Heath and the Christian Civic League for shopping their values. Now let's do the same. **Please join us in saying thanks to all our sponsors who care about our community**—pick up the phone, pick up your pen, and pick up your pocket-book to let our sponsors know they've made a sound investment. •

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Laying the Groundwork for Referendum Campaign

We dread thinking about another statewide referendum campaign. However, dread gets us nowhere. So a group of people has begun thinking about what it would take to win this time, whether it's a People's Veto or a Legislature-approved referendum.

Out of this thinking was born a model for advancing LGBT rights in Maine over the next ten years.

The model includes EqualityMaine, who will continue to work in the legislature, and a campaign entity, currently called Mainers for Equality, who will always be prepared to fight and win referenda campaigns. Unlike in the past, these two entities will be linked together to enable us to use all available resources to be successful in both legislative work and campaigns.

The campaign entity is forming right now by setting

up its committees, which will oversee fundraising and finances, coalitions and field operation, message and media, and legal considerations. We have not yet determined the cost of a campaign or what our messages will be. Although we're not waiting for the bill to pass to launch this campaign, it will help to know when the election will take place so as to plan more effectively.

Several people have been instrumental in designing this new model. In addition to EqualityMaine's executive director, Betsy Smith, they include Susan Koen, Pat Peard, Mary Bonauto, Brenda Buchanan, Marsha Greenberg and EqualityMaine Board member Matthew Dubois. Dan Crewe will be EqualityMaine's board representative to the campaign, with some help from vice-president Barb Wood. •

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Please contact us if you can provide any of these: info@equalitymaine.org or 761-3732

Non-Discrimination Bill Gets Another Try

Continued from page 5

Please Take Action

There are several things you can do to help pass LD 1196:

1) Go to www.equalitymaine.org and sign our Equality Pledge. The pledge is a public declaration of your support for LGBT rights. With your pledge to take action, we pledge to keep you informed every step of the way, providing you with all the information you need to be involved and active.

2) Write a letter to your legislators, asking them to support LD 1196, the non-discrimination bill, and support it without sending it to referendum for approval. You can write a letter and send it by mail or you can go to the EqualityMaine website (www.equalitymaine.org) and send a letter via email. If you do not know who your legislators are, there's an easy way to find them on the EqualityMaine website. Click on "Contact your Legislators" for instructions.

3) Attend the public hearing of the non-discrimina-

tion bill, scheduled for March 23 at 1:00pm. We need a very large turnout in order to show the Judiciary Committee how much support there is for this bill.

4) Attend the EqualityMaine lobby day on March 22, 8:30am-1:00pm, at the State House. If you've signed our EqualityPledge, you will receive all the necessary details. In addition, lobby day information will be posted on our website.

5) Write a letter-to-the-editor of your local newspaper. Letters-to-the-editor have an enormous impact on legislators, as they help determine the sentiment of their constituents. Use talking points on our website at www.equalitymaine.org as a guide.

Many thanks to Pat Peard, Mary Bonauto, Brenda Buchanan, Matthew Dubois, and Moose Ridge Associates for their extraordinary efforts on this legislation.

For more info or to get involved, contact EqualityMaine at 761-3732 or info@equalitymaine.org. •

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All EqualityMaine members receive a subscription to our quarterly newsletter, voting rights at the annual meeting, advance notice of community events, membership in the email Action Alert Network, opportunities to volunteer and the satisfaction of supporting equality for all. Contributions of any amount are counted towards membership—whether you can give \$1.00 or \$1,000.00, your membership makes a difference in promoting diversity and protecting the rights of LGBT people in Maine.

YES! I want to be a member of EqualityMaine! Enclosed is my contribution of:

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☐ Sign me up as a Sustaining Partner! Please start charging my monthly gift of \$10 / \$25 / \$50 / \$_____

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Voter ID Ramps Up

Continued from page 3

To date, we have spoken to 6,639 voters in Maine.
On civil rights, we've identified 6,011 supportive voters:

- 1,039 1's (actively support)
- 4,972 2's (will vote in our favor)
- 184 3's (undecided)
- 422 4's (will vote against us)
- 22 5's (actively oppose)

On marriage, we've identified 5,294 supportive voters:

- 1,000 1's (actively support)
- 4,294 2's (will vote in our favor)
- 515 3's (undecided)
- 777 4's (will vote against us)
- 53 5's (actively oppose)

The efforts of our volunteers over the past year have been extraordinary. But in order to win a referendum campaign, we must ramp up our voter ID efforts to a much higher level. We need to start that ramping NOW. To volunteer, contact Darlene Huntress at 761-0110 or dhuntress@equalitymaine.org. •

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