

MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

April 1997

The Battle to Pass LD 1116 Begins

Twenty years ago, in 1977, the first anti-discrimination bill was introduced to the Maine Legislature. It was defeated. Since then the bill has been introduced, and defeated, almost every legislative session. Once (1993) it passed both the House and Senate, only to be vetoed by Governor McKernan. And once (1995) it was not introduced, due to the divisive referendum campaign the state had just been through with "No on 1."

We are now at a milestone. The anti-discrimination bill, titled LD 1116 – An Act to Prevent Discrimination, is being introduced to the Legislature for the 10th time. If it passes, we will be the 10th state in the country to have a law of this caliber. However, we do not yet have the votes required for passage.

We urgently need your help. Your time and effort right now could make a difference in the course of history. Your effort today may pave the way for a better tomorrow for thousands of GLBT individuals in Maine.

We need you to write a letter to your state representative and senator. Encourage them to support LD 1116. Explain why this bill is important and offer personal experience if you can. Explain why preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation is right, fair, and just, and a concept whose time has come.

If you can do more, please write to the Joint Standing Judiciary Committee, listed to the right. The Judiciary Committee will hear testimony from both sides of the issue on Tuesday, April 8, at the Public Hearing for LD 1116, and will make a recommendation to the full Legislature within a week or so. It is vital that the Judiciary Committee recommends an "ought to pass" to the full Legislature. Our letters of encouragement will help in that process. Please do what you can.

**The squeaky wheel gets the grease –
Write your Legislators!**

Joint Standing Judiciary Committee of the 118th Legislature

— STATE SENATORS —

Call toll free at the State House: 1-800-423-6900
Secretary of the Senate: 1-207-287-1540

Susan W. Longley, Chair (D)	589-4353
RR 1 Box 1108, Liberty, ME 04949	
<i>(A Co-Sponsor of the bill – just send a simple "Thanks!")</i>	
Lloyd P. LaFountain, III (D)	282-6131
322 Alfred St., Biddeford, ME 04005	
John W. Benoit (R)	864-5332
PO Box 890, Rangeley, ME 04970	

— REPRESENTATIVES —

Call toll free at the Statehouse: 1-800-423-2900
Clerk of the House: 1-207-287-1400

Richard H. Thompson, Chair (D)	693-3088
PO Box 711, Naples, ME 04055	
<i>(A Lead Co-Sponsor of the bill – just send a simple "Thanks!")</i>	
Elizabeth Watson (D)	582-2068
138 Maine Ave., Farmingdale, ME 04344	
David Etnier (D)	833-2378
Box 539, S. Harpswell, ME 04079	
Joseph M. Jabar, Sr. (D)	872-2357
38 Burleigh St., Waterville, ME 04901	
Richard H. Mailhot (D)	783-0841
34 Scribner Cir., Lewiston, ME 04240	
Judith Powers (D)	594-4169
50 Spring Ln., Rockport, ME 04856	
Debra D. Plowman (R)	862-6011
PO Box 468, Hampden, ME 04444	
David R. Madore (R)	626-0982
197 Northern Ave., Augusta, ME 04330	
Richard A. Nass (R)	477-2607
PO Box 174, Acton, ME 04001	
G. Paul Waterhouse (R)	647-5686
21 Green St., Bridgton, ME 04009	

MLGPA

**Fighting for Fairness
Since 1984**

Executive Committee:

Betsy Smith
President

Del Wilson
Vice-President

David Rappoport
Treasurer

Dan Stevens
Recording Secretary

Lauraine Bernier
Membership Secretary

Kate McLaughlin
Susan Sparaco

Board Members:

Harold Booth
Diane Campbell
Eben Chadwick
Tom Coffin
Celeste Gosselin
Brian Kaufman
P.J. Mears
Michael Rossetti
Jim Schneider
Mark Sullivan

Lobbyist:

Karen Geraghty

Intern:

Angela Thompson

Mailing Address:

PO Box 232
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

Office Telephone:

1-800-556-5472
761-3732 (in Portland)

A word from the president...

February and March were busy, productive, and fruitful for MLGPA. Despite passage of anti-gay legislation around the marriage issue, the sentiment of the Legislature was not tragic. Granted, the 118th Legislature voted nearly two-to-one to support a same-gender marriage ban, but many legislators sent an encouraging message. Some felt that a referendum would be divisive, painful, and costly, and they were not willing to put the gay community through that.

We now turn our attention to the proactive effort to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation. The Public Hearing for LD 1116, An Act to Prevent Discrimination, will be Tuesday, April 8, 1:30pm, at the Augusta Civic Center. We ask that you make every attempt to attend this hearing – this is our best chance ever of passing the bill, and we need everyone's help to succeed. Please arrive early, if you can.

Behind the political front, we are working hard to financially support our efforts. Passing a statewide anti-discrimination bill, only the 10th of its kind in the country, requires valuable time and resources. We look to you, our members and supporters, to help us in this process. Without your help, we cannot maintain the level of professionalism required for this type of work. Please consider renewing your membership at a higher level than last year.

Thank you for your loyal support over the years. We truly could not do our work without your help, and we greatly appreciate your contributions. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or suggestions.

Respectfully,
Betsy Smith

An Important Note to Our Members...

Until 1994, the MLGPA mailing list was strictly confidential. Under that policy, only Board members could affix labels, and our mailing list was never exchanged with like-organizations, regardless of the purpose. As we moved into the mid-90's, it became common to work in coalition with other progressive organizations, and list exchanges became a necessary part of growth.

The then-Board of Directors chose to explore the possibility of changing the confidentiality policy. They alerted the membership of the change and offered to keep anyone confidential who so chose. They also rewrote the MLGPA membership brochure to include a check off for confidentiality. A small percentage of people still remain confidential.

The Board revisited the issue of confidentiality this year. We want to remain an organization whose list is not confidential, which means we would consider a case-by-case list exchange with a like organization, if there were a beneficial reason to do so. (We would by no means "sell" the list to a mail house or anything of that type). But we want anyone who wants to remain confidential to be able to do so. Confidentiality means your name will not be given to any other organization, and if a legislative candidate asks for a list in his/her district, only a Board member will affix the label.

This action does not change the current policy in any way. We simply wanted to remind you of your option to be confidential. If you want your name to be confidential, it is important that you let us know. Please contact us at MLGPA, PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347 or call at 1-800-55MLGPA. Thank you for your attention to this matter.▼

Same-Gender Marriage Ban: The Final Count

Last week Maine's Legislature, by a nearly two-to-one margin, passed the same-gender marriage ban into law. This legislation, the result of a citizen-initiated referendum mounted by Carolyn Cosby's Concerned Maine Families, made a preemptive strike against gay marriages which may – in the future – be legal in other states, from ever being recognized in Maine. At a March 12 Public Hearing at the Augusta Civic Center on LD 1017, "An Act to Protect Traditional Marriage and Prohibit Same Sex Marriages," CMF forces argued that "gay and lesbian couples would instantly become members of a protected class under the 'marital status' category of the Maine Human Rights Act."

Opponents of the bill, including many leaders in Maine's religious communities and the MCLU, countered that the civil rights of lesbian and gay couples are denied the protections of more than 1,049 Federal laws that protect heterosexual marriages including housing and employment, taxation, death and disability benefits, to name just a few categories. Marvin Ellison, Professor of Christian Ethics at Bangor Theological Seminary, stated in his remarks to the Judiciary Committee, "Society benefits from stable, committed marriages and from strong family ties ... providing [gay and lesbian] couples the same benefits that mixed-gender couples already enjoy will strengthen American families."

MLGPA believes the Legislature's clear message to our community is that this bill – as hateful as it is – would have been far more divisive, painful and costly had it been voted down and sent out to referendum.

Maine Community Foundation Announces Available Grant Money

The GLBT communities received good news this past month when the Maine Community Foundation announced an exciting financial opportunity through the Maine Equity Fund. The Maine Equity Fund will distribute \$60,000 to organizations who are working to better the lives of GLBT individuals.

MLGPA, along with many other organizations, are drafting and developing proposals for projects designed to help the GLBT communities. Projects will be funded on the basis of how they coincide with a needs assessment conducted last year by the Maine Equity Fund. Based on the scope of the projects, this fall should bring with it some exciting changes and opportunities for the GLBT individuals in this state.▼

With the marriage debate over for the moment, let's turn our attention to the next vital issue – preventing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. There is strong support in both houses of the Legislature for LD 1116, "An Act to Prevent Discrimination," which will have a Public Hearing at the Augusta Civic Center on April 8, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Editor's Note:

On March 31 Gov. Angus King, Jr. announced that he would allow the Act to become law without his signature. He said that the proponents' intent was "... to stir fears and ancient prejudices and to sow hate and division at a time we should be searching for common ground." Gov. King also said that he wanted to avoid a costly and divisive referendum campaign and that he believes the Act's constitutionality is questionable and it will be struck down by the Judiciary.▼

Major Donor Matches Your New or Renewed MLGPA Membership!

Recognizing how vital MLGPA's work is to the GLBT communities in Maine, an anonymous major donor has offered to match new and renewed memberships on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to \$20,000! That means your gift to MLGPA is now worth twice as much!

MLGPA offers a variety of membership categories:

Friend	\$25
Advocate	\$50
Coalition Builder	\$100
Champion of the Cause	\$250
Legislative Leader	\$500

MLGPA's costs are enormous. It is costing over \$30,000 just to pass the anti-discrimination bill – and this doesn't include any of our other political or educational activities. If you're not a member, or if your membership has lapsed, please send us your check today. Your contribution really makes a difference! It enables us to continue our goal of securing civil rights for the GLBT communities as well as our other vital work. Thank you!!

Contributions and memberships should be sent to: MLGPA, PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347.▼



Events and Meetings in Our Community

KATE CLINTON COMING TO TOWN!!

MLGPA is excited to be a co-sponsor of the Kate Clinton concert in June. Kate is coming to South Portland as part of Symposium XXIII, performing on Friday, June 13, at Southern Maine Technical College. The show is being produced by Above and Beyond, an up and coming business endeavor based out of Portland. Above and Beyond brought us the near sold-out and hilarious show of Suzanne Westenhoefer on March 2. Together, the three groups (MLGPA, Symposium XXIII, and Above and Beyond) plan to bring you an unforgettable evening. It's not too early to order your tickets. Call 773-6974 for tickets and information.

SYMPOSIUM XXIII

For the 23rd year, Symposium hails again. A weekend retreat for GLBT individuals, Symposium XXIII offers workshops, events, networking, recreation, entertainment, and good food. Keynote speaker this year is Urvashi Vaid, former director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and human rights activist. Special entertainment by renowned lesbian comedian Kate Clinton. Symposium XXIII will be held June 13-15, in South Portland. For information and tickets for Symposium XXIII, please call 625-8499.

MLGPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 8 – Citizen Lobby Day for LD 1116, gather at 8am at UU Church in Augusta, proceed to State House from 8:30-12:00

April 8 – Public Hearing for LD 1116 (Anti-Discrimination Bill), 1:30pm, Augusta Civic Center

April 24 – Monthly MLGPA Board meeting, open to all, 6-9pm, MEA, Augusta

May 4 – Maine AIDS Walk. Groups are organizing local Walks around the state.

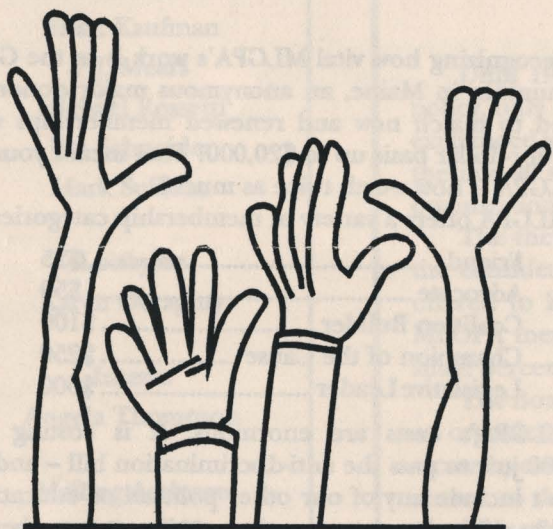
May 15 – Monthly MLGPA Board meeting, open to all, 6-9pm, MEA, Augusta

June 13, 14, 15 – Symposium XXIII, Southern Maine Technical College, South Portland

June 13 – Kate Clinton in concert, 8:00pm, at Symposium XXIII, South Portland

June 19 – Monthly MLGPA Board meeting, open to all, 6-9pm, MEA, Augusta

If you have social, educational or political events to organize in your area, please call us. We can help!



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are always needed at MLGPA. We have mailings to do, letters to write, events to plan and attend, programs to implement, committees to sit on, meetings to attend, coalitions to build, etc. etc.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact us:

*call us at: 1-800-55-MLGPA or
761-3732 in Portland*

e-mail us at: tcoffinme@juno.com

write us at: PO Box 232

Hallowell, ME 04347