

MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

P.O. Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

July 1997

Maine Faces LD 1116 Veto Campaign

On Friday, July 4, Michael Heath announced that the Christian Civic League and Christian Coalition of Maine had reached their goal of 1000 volunteers to circulate anti-gay petitions. The petitions will ask voters whether they want to veto LD 1116, An Act to Prevent Discrimination, the bill we worked 20 years to pass.

It comes as no surprise that the governor, the legislature, the business community, and many in the religious community strongly oppose discrimination. Drawing on some of these allies for a press release we issued on July 7, Senator Joel Abromson stated that "the people of Maine spoke on this issue in 1995 and the Legislature and the Governor acted to protect the rights of gay and lesbian citizens in 1997. It is clear that Maine people will not tolerate discrimination."

Reverend Eric Kelley, minister of the Williston West United Church of Christ, said, "I deal with real human issues every day and we never have enough resources to meet the needs. It is alarming to me that a portion of the Christian community is focusing its energy which is so desperately needed elsewhere on depriving a group of Maine citizens of their basic human rights."

And finally, Dana Connors, President of the Maine Chamber and Business Alliance, stated, "Discrimination

does not reflect what Maine is all about, and it most assuredly does not reflect the values of Maine's business community. Our employees, our co-workers, our customers and our suppliers are all entitled to know that the dignity of the individual and respect for minority rights are values that the business community holds dear."

In order to successfully oppose the people's veto, Maine Won't Discriminate will probably resurrect itself for the task. MLGPA has been issuing press releases and arranging press conferences around this issue thus far, but MLGPA will not be the central organizing unit of this campaign. Maine Won't Discriminate became a household name in 1995, and it is probably the best chance we have of winning this issue in a public forum. And that's because... Maine Still Won't Discriminate.

Currently we are waiting to review campaign strategy proposals. There will most likely not be a decline to sign component to the campaign. (We have never succeeded in preventing signature collection in the past.) We will spend the summer planning and preparing for the best possible approach to win this campaign, which will kick off in early September. If you have any suggestions or comments, the MLGPA phone line is always open.

1997 MLGPA Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendars now for the MLGPA Annual Meeting. The date will be Saturday, September 27, 10am-1pm, Augusta. Venue to be determined. Please join us for the yearly review, elections to the Board, and the long range plans and goals. Every member has voting power. Join us and make your voice heard. Doughnuts, bagels, coffee, and tea will be served.



MLGPA

**Fighting for Fairness
Since 1984**

Executive Committee:

Betsy Smith
President

Del Wilson
Vice President

David Rappoport
Treasurer

Dan Stevens
Recording Secretary

Kate McLaughlin
Susan Sparaco

Board Members:

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

Executive Volunteers:

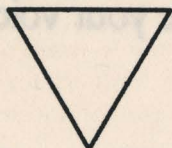
Rich Couch
Teague Morris
Julie Rothrock

Mailing Address:

PO Box 232
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

Office Telephone:

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



A word from the president...

July 4th, 1997 — While most of us were out celebrating independence and freedom, a few had other ideas... Michael Heath, Executive Director of the Christian Civic League announced his organization's plans to collect enough signatures to stop L.D. 1116, "An Act to Prevent Discrimination," from becoming law. If more than 50,131 signatures are gathered and verified by September 4, 1997, the future of L.D. 1116 will be decided by popular vote on the November ballot.

Well, we've all been here before and make no mistake about it, we're ready! There's a huge amount of support backing L.D. 1116 — including leaders in business and commerce, labor, religion, education, government and thousands of people just like YOU. Now is the time to show your pride in what we've accomplished together. Tell your friends, neighbors and co-workers what L.D. 1116 means to you. Explain to them what a wasteful, hateful thing it would be to once again put to the vote something as basic as our human rights. But most of all, let's stay optimistic and keep a positive frame of mind (a sense of humor wouldn't hurt, either!)

And speaking of optimism, I'd like to say a few words about the incredible talent and energy that IS our community. I am amazed by the courage, conviction and bravery we show over and over again when it comes to defending our rights. We are thinkers and doers, believers and speakers — smart, crafty and organized. Hey, it takes a lot of work to be as great as we are! With a threat to L.D. 1116 on the horizon, all of us want to do everything we can to win a possible referendum fight. We're all going to expect a lot of ourselves and each other. In a grassroots campaign, as much accommodating as we can do for different styles, it's natural we're not all going to agree on every decision. Still, we must stay focused on the goal: to defend L.D. 1116. We're all on the same side on this one, so when the pressure gets turned up, let's remember we're in this together — to win!

Have a great summer. Charge up the batteries, get set and let's go!

In solidarity,
Betsy Smith

Correction to Domestic Violence Article

In last month's MLGPA newsletter, we printed the names, addresses, and phone numbers of domestic violence centers which offer services for victims of same-gender violence. We inadvertently left out one center. Our deepest apologies.

Spruce Run Association — serving Penobscot County
PO Box 653
Bangor, ME. 04402
Hotline #: 1-800-863-9909
Administrative #: 945-5102

Summer Board Retreat

The MLGPA Summer Board Retreat (open to all members!) will be held on Saturday, July 26, from 9:30am to 4:00pm. Join us for strategy sessions and long range planning as we chart our course for the future. Location yet to be determined. For further information on location, please call us at the MLGPA office (1-800-556-5472 or 761-3732 in Portland).

Grant for Hate Crimes Protection

MLGPA was awarded \$5000 from the Maine Community Foundation (MCF) for a Hate Crimes Prevention program. MLGPA's grant was a portion of MCF's two-year matching grant from the National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership. The purpose of MCF's funding is to promote greater understanding of GLBT issues in Maine and in so doing address issues of diversity, inclusiveness and acceptance of differences.

The Maine Community Foundation was one of 16 community foundations nationwide selected to participate in this funding initiative. MCF made its funding decisions to Maine organizations based on the following priorities:

- ▼ guaranteeing civil rights for GLBT people and protection against violence
- ▼ strengthening community education to reduce oppression and counter anti-GLBT fear
- ▼ broadening recognition of, and rights for, GLBT families
- ▼ increasing education to improve the quality of GLBT health care
- ▼ increasing cultural, social, recreational activities for diverse GLBT communities

- ▼ building the capacity of GLBT community organization
- ▼ enhancing GLBT community organizing and coalition-building
- ▼ increasing services for GLBT youth

MLGPA was thrilled to have received \$5000 for its work in hate crimes. Beginning in the fall, MLGPA will further develop and implement a statewide hate crimes prevention program that will have as its goals: 1) to increase hate crimes awareness in the GLBT and non-GLBT communities, 2) to increase GLBT safety and reduce the risk of being victimized, 3) to increase hate crimes reporting, and 4) to recruit and train project staff and volunteers.

If you are interested in being involved in this program or would like to make suggestions, please contact us at the MLGPA office (1-800-556-5472 or 761-3732 in Portland).

Other organizations receiving funding grants from the Maine Community Foundation are: Common Circle for Human Rights, Belfast; Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Boston; Gay, Lesbian, Straight Teachers Network, Ellsworth; Holocaust Human Rights Center, Augusta; Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center, Bangor; Maine Civil Liberties Union, Portland; Matlovich Society, Portland; Northern Lambda Nord, Caribou; Outright, Portland; Outright, Lewiston-Auburn; and Transsupport, Portland.

MLGPA Calendar

July 25 — Volunteer Recognition Party, 6pm-whenever, Bath. Food provided, BYOB. For information call MLGPA office at 1-800-556-5472 or 761-3732.

July 26 — MLGPA Summer Board Retreat. 9:30-4:00. Location TBA. Everyone welcome. For information on location, call MLGPA office at 1-800-556-5472 or 761-3732.

August 11 — Volunteer Training Night, MLGPA office at 1 Pleasant Street, 4th floor, Portland, 6pm. Join us to learn more about MLGPA and how you can become more involved.

August 16-18 — Gay Times Bar Harbor, a GLBT weekend retreat of workshops, speakers, and entertainment. College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor. For information call 244-4062.

August 28 — Matlovich Society presents "The Gay Rights Bill — Now That It's Passed, What Does It Mean?" 7:30-9:00pm, Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland. For information write to Matlovich at PO Box 942, Portland, 04104.

September 19-21 — Common Ground Country Fair, sponsored by the Maine Organic Farmers' and Gardeners' Association (MOFGA). For information call 622-3118.

September 27 — MLGPA Annual Meeting, 10am-1pm, Augusta. Location TBA.

Opening Reception for Deborah Kass

A showing of works by Deborah Kass, a New York artist and visiting faculty member of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, will open July 12 and run through August 16 at the O'Farrell gallery in Brunswick. Kass has made a name for herself in the art world as the Jewish, lesbian answer to Andy Warhol. She so identifies with the artist that she has appropriated not only his style but also his imagery. Working with a technique identical to Warhol, the artist uses photography as the first in a series of steps to create a finished work of art.

Instead of Warhol's "Double Elvis," Kass appropriates the image of one of her icons, Barbra Streisand. In "Double Yentle," a double image of actress Streisand wearing a yeshiva boy's uniform transforms this pop celebrity into a cool and ironic lesbian icon.

For more information, contact the O'Farrell Gallery at 729-8228

Special Events Report

New Volunteers/Members Found at Pride Festival

MLGPA's table at the Southern Maine Pride '97 festival saw a huge amount of activity: more than 30 new volunteers signed up in just a few hours! Welcome letters are already in the mail! Our volunteer database is quickly growing and we're busy sharing lots of information with the community. We're going to need new brochures soon! It was a good day for the Volunteer/Membership Committee, to say the least.

MLGPA Takes Its Pride to Bangor

MLGPA's banner gets no rest! We've taken to the streets of Boston and Portland this year and with opposition to our hard-won rights stirring, we're rising to the challenge. MLGPA supporters marched at the Bangor Pride Festival on July 12th! Thanks to the help of many enthusiastic volunteers, MLGPA is joining arms with as many of our members as we can during Pride '97.

Community Pride and MLGPA... Its a State of Maine thing!

Volunteer Recognition Party

We really appreciate the folks who freely give so much of their time to help build a stronger MLGPA. That's why we're holding a Volunteer Recognition Party in Bath on July 25th! Board member Sue Sparaco and her partner, Maggie Allen, have graciously offered their wonderful home and hospitality. This will be a great way to show our appreciation to the core folks who have been there when we needed them as well as a perfect opportunity to welcome new volunteers who would like to get to know

everyone prior to getting down to work. We'll have much to do this fall defending L.D. 1116 and with the help of our volunteers, we'll be ready!

Volunteers make everything happen at MLGPA and we want to recognize their contributions whenever we can. Make sure to attend the Annual Meeting and the Banquet! We'll keep you posted!

Volunteer Information Night (Again!)

Our last Volunteer Recognition Night was such a great success that we've scheduled another for Monday, August 11 in our Portland office starting at 6:00 pm.

We'll talk about MLGPA's history and future plans — immediate and long range. We're always happy to mail out information to those who are interested but unable to attend.

Making a Presence at the Common Ground Fair

The Common Ground Fair, an annual celebration of Maine life sponsored by the Maine Organic Farmers' and Gardeners' Association, is fast upon us. This year, we want to make as strong a showing as possible. Common Ground has historically been a place for us to stand with like-minded groups and foster coalitions that have served us. You can look forward to a busy day interacting with many, many people and having a whole lot of fun! We'd like to have as many volunteers as possible for varying shifts of time throughout the day to keep our MLGPA Table humming with activity. Please contact either Julie or Tom (Jarothrock@juno.com or Shadowboxt@aol.com, respectively) if you can help.

Diversity Day '97

Now in its third year, Diversity Day will be held on Sunday, October 26, at the USM Gym and Campus Center. Cosponsored by corporate and grassroots Mainers, the event is not only an excellent way to learn about and experience other cultures and orientations, but a forum in which to communicate and network. A grant from Unum and People's Heritage Bank has enabled Diversity Day to get off the ground this year. For the GLBT community, it is

yet another way in which to educate the non-GLBT community about our issues and our diversity.

If anyone is interested in getting involved at the planning level (more input from GLBT people would be greatly welcomed), the next meeting is August 6, 9-11am, at People's Heritage Bank in downtown Portland. For more information, please contact the MLGPA office.