
MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

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

August 1997

Signature Drive Faces Uphill Battle

Michael Heath and the Christian Civic League are finding it more difficult to collect signatures than they anticipated. Unofficial reports say the CCL has collected only about 5000 signatures. They need to collect over 51,000 valid signatures to qualify for a public referendum.

In order to get on the November '97 ballot, signature collectors have to collect and submit over 51,000 valid signatures by August 29. If they miss that deadline, they still have until September 19 to submit their signatures in order to have a special election, which would be held sometime in the first half of 1998. The date would be determined by the Governor.

If both deadlines are missed, they have the option of organizing a regular signature petition drive, which may put them on the ballot in November 1998 or even later. At this point, we do not know what the result will be. We are

hopeful that the CCL is not able to collect their signatures, regardless of how long it takes.

Since signature collectors are finding it difficult to get the attention and visibility necessary to collect an adequate number of signatures, MLGPA and supporters have chosen to lie low around this issue. We want to bring as little visibility to their campaign as possible. Let's not do their work for them.

In the meantime, we are planning a referendum campaign which we will implement if their signature drive is successful. Details of that campaign will be forthcoming as events unfold. If you are interested in helping in this campaign, please call us at the MLGPA office at 1-800-55-MLGPA (1-800-556-5472) or 761-3732 in Portland.

ENDA to Receive Second Vote in Congress

ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, will come up for a vote again this fall in the US Congress. Just one year ago, ENDA failed passage by a 50-49 vote. ENDA is a national bill that would make it illegal to discriminate against individuals based on sexual orientation in the area of employment. ENDA, accompanied by DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act), was the first time that the US Congress debated the rights of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

Senator Susan Collins is a key player in getting ENDA out of committee. Her vote may decide whether the full Congress even votes on ENDA. Senator Collins has not yet taken a position on ENDA, as have most of the other committee members. But based on her response to a letter from a Maine citizen, she appears to be leaning AGAINST the passage of ENDA, feeling that it should be

left up to the states to decide whether they want to protect their LGBT citizens.

We encourage you to write to Senator Collins to express your opinion about this issue. Even though we live in a state whose legislature has chosen to protect us from discrimination, most states cannot make that claim. Hence, LGBT individuals continue to be discriminated against every day.

In next month's newsletter, we plan to distribute postcards which can be sent to Senator Susan Collins. Perhaps if she receives hundreds of postcards, she will understand the importance of supporting ENDA. In the meantime, you may write a personal letter to her at: Senator Susan Collins, U.S. Senate, B40 Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC, 20510. The bill's name is S 869.

MLGPA

**Fighting for Fairness
Since 1984**

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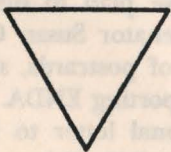
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A word from the president...

I spent much of July at several different conferences around the country. From a Federation of LGBT Political Organizations meeting in Tennessee, to a Gay and Lesbian Victory Foundation Training in Boston and a Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network Leadership Training Institute in Ohio, every where I went I was constantly congratulated on the passage of Maine's anti-discrimination bill. Each time it reminded me of the tremendous work that went into the 20-year history of that bill. And each time, it reminded me of how proud I was to be from Maine.

At the Federation meeting in Tennessee, we pulled together a New England caucus and committed to raising money for Maine to fight the people's veto effort. At the Victory Foundation Training in Boston, I was approached by a Philadelphia native who has vacationed in Maine who said, "I want to help in whatever way I can. Who do I make the check out to?"

The national support that filled my weeks away reminded me that we are truly all in this together. Though we often work independently in our states, too busy to reach out and seek assistance or advice, it's nice to know that the help is there for the asking. And having just passed our bill, we now have much to offer. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force helped the fledgling Federation of Statewide LGBT Political Organizations to establish a listserv, which has already proven to be an invaluable source of information in the few weeks since its inception.

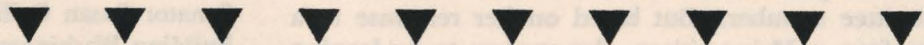
I feel inspired that our movement, the national LGBT movement toward equality, is in sync and moving forward. One day soon, every state without a statewide anti-discrimination law will introduce proactive legislation at the same time, causing a nation to take notice. Our next March on Washington may be a March on every State Capital on the same day at the same time. That kind of activity would cause great media attention for our movement and a chance for ALL individuals to participate in such a momentous event.

And perhaps soon... as Maine goes, so goes the nation.

In solidarity,
Betsy Smith

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.



LGBT Federation Holds Second Meeting

At NGLTF's 1996 Creating Change conference, a new organization was born. Titled the Federation of Statewide Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Political Organizations (the Federation for short), the organization is the first opportunity to link statewide political organizations who are fighting battles for LGBT equality at the local level. Although NGLTF has committed significant resources to getting this group off the ground, the Federation will be a separate entity from NGLTF.

NGLTF helped organize and finance the second official meeting of the Federation, held outside Knoxville, Tennessee in July. NGLTF has agreed to serve as coordinator of the Federation for three years, after which the Federation will operate independently.

The Federation approved by-laws at its meeting in July, and will meet twice a year, once at the Creating Change conference and once during the summer. The goal of the Federation is to help facilitate communication among

statewide Gay civil rights organizations, establish an information clearinghouse that will allow groups to share vital information, help new and existing groups to organize and flourish, and work toward improving relationships between statewide Gay political groups and national Gay organizations.

Since all the battles for LGBT liberation are and will be fought at the state level, the Federation is a giant step forward in support of our movement toward equality.

Victory Foundation Offers Campaign Strategy Training

The Gay and Lesbian Victory Foundation offered a three day campaign training in Boston on July 29-August 3. Two individuals from Maine were participants at the training. Betsy Smith, president of MLGPA, and Rep. Michael Quint were among 40 individuals from across the country who studied strategies for running efficient and effective campaigns, both as candidates and in statewide initiatives.

The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, the financial support behind the Victory Foundation Training, supports LGBT candidates throughout the country in local, state and national races. MLGPA encourages you to support the Victory Fund whenever possible, as it is essential for gay, not just gay-friendly, candidates to be our elected officials.

Dirigo Alliance Annual Dinner Friday, September 26

Dirigo Alliance cordially invites all MLGPA members and friends to its Annual Dinner on Friday, September 26, at 5:30pm at the Radisson Hotel in Portland. The evening will consist of a social hour, dinner, and a program. For more information and tickets write to Dirigo Alliance, PO Box 2333, Augusta, 04338, or call 621-2838, or e-mail at reubendad@aol.com.

Dirigo Alliance works to nominate and elect progressive candidates to local and state offices. Dirigo is comprised of several member organizations, including MLGPA, NOW, ME AFL-CIO, ME Council of Senior Citizens, ME League of Conservation Voters, ME People's Alliance, Peace Action Maine and others, who work together to elect candidates based on their political records or potential representation. We encourage you to attend the dinner to learn more about Dirigo Alliance and the work they have done in support of the LGBT communities.

If you have any social, educational or political events in your area and would like a hand organizing, please call us! We can help!

MLGPA Database Upgraded for the Future

Recently, in our effort to be more efficient and professional, we took on the task of upgrading and updating MLGPA's database. In the process, which took several months to complete, some membership information may have been lost.

On behalf of MLGPA, we wish to apologize to anyone to whom this may have happened. We would also like to thank everyone for their patience while we completed this process. Now that we are fully up and operational, we will be able to conduct business with the efficiency and professionalism that reflects our workings as an organization. Such things as donor tracking, volunteer status, legislative interest, membership and renewal tracking, fundraising revenue, thank you letters, and other valuable and vital information will be tracked appropriately.

If you have any questions about your membership status, please feel free to contact us at the MLGPA office at 1-800-55-MLGPA (1-800-556-5472) or 761-3732 in Portland.

Special Events Report

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer, contact either Julie or Tom by calling the MLGPA Office at 1-800-556-5472 or 761-3732 or by e-mail: jarothrock@juno.com or shadowboxt@aol.com.

Sept. 19, 20, 21 — Common Ground Fair! A great celebration of Maine life... the way it should be! We need people to staff our booth and talk about MLGPA. You'll meet a lot of super people, have a lot of fun and the day will fly by. If you're interested, please contact Julie or Tom and they'll put you in touch with Brian, who is coordinating this event for us.

Membership Drive Part One: If you're not already a member of MLGPA, now's the time to join! We'd like to see you soon at our monthly meetings (third Thursday of every month at the offices of the Maine Education Association in Augusta). Contact one of us for a ride or to follow us up, if you'd like!

Membership Drive Part Two: Take a bundle of Membership Brochures with you and keep them close at hand. During conversations about the organization and the great work that you're doing with us, feel free to distribute to anyone who seems interested in either finding out more about us or becoming a member. Remember, if folks you know would simply like to spend some time doing volunteer work with us prior to becoming a member, that's great... Simply bring them along with you or direct them to either Julie or Tom to be added to our volunteer list.

October 31st — Our First (and soon to be) Annual MLGPA Halloween Costume Ball!!! This is going to be a lot of fun to work on as well as attend. We need to get started soon and could use your help with the preparations and set-up. *Above & Beyond Productions*, who brought us Kate Clinton & Bob Smith, is producing the event and there are many details we'll be working on to make this a great time! We're looking for a whole bunch of volunteers to help with preparations, set-up, selling tickets and more!

February — The Annual MLGPA Awards Banquet: Need we say more? This is a major event, a huge community draw and always a big success. Of course, as with all "big successes," there will be lots to do as the time draws near. The planning committee is working on details now and you're welcome to hop on board anytime! Everyone has something to contribute!

MLGPA Web Page Special Assignment: We need some skilled folks to help maintain our web site. Or, if you're willing to learn by working with one of the gurus who created the site, we'd like to hear from you, too. You should be able to attend monthly meetings with some regularity and be ready and willing to keep in touch with the chairs of the various committees via email.

Remember When Halloween Used to Be a Ball?

Mark your Calendar for what promises to be a highlight of 1997: MLGPA's First Annual Costume Party! We are planning an evening for serious Halloween revelers (you know who you are!) and/or those who just want to enjoy a memorable night out on-the-town while supporting MLGPA! The date is Friday, October 31. The Ballroom By The Bay, Holiday Inn, Portland. It will be a night of "something for everyone": music including disco, oldies, country, and some crowd pleasing surprises. (You know there should be a few surprises, too. We're presenting it in association with the people who brought Bob Smith, Kate Clinton and Suzanne Westenhofer to Maine!) Watch for details!