

MLGPA News

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

September 2001

MLGPA Joins America in Mourning National Tragedy

The Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance joins the nation in mourning the victims of the terrorist attacks on the United States, September 11, 2001

While our country struggles to cope with the monumental horror of the tragedy, our thoughts and love go out to the people who lost loved ones and our heartfelt appreciation to those working to save lives.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Americans were among those killed and are among those risking their lives to save others. Like all Americans, we are coming together in the spirit of community to face the unimaginable challenges ahead.

In sadness and in struggle,
The Board of Directors and Staff of MLGPA

Come Join Our Team

Our organization is only as strong as our members and volunteers. We are currently seeking members who would like to be a part of an ever-expanding and energetic team. We have a few

openings on our Board of Directors. Board members are expected to attend and be active in our monthly meetings, held on the third Thursday of each month in Augusta. Additionally, each member joins one of our committees. We are also seeking Board Associates who contribute to a specific activity on one of the committees but are not necessarily active in the monthly board meetings. Volunteer contributions could range from assisting with a small fund-raising activity to helping launch our new website.

The committee work is exciting and challenging and an excellent way to contribute your time within your busy

schedule. Please look over the description of each committee and find the best match for your interests and skills.

- The **Communication Committee** coordinates and publishes the newsletter in addition to developing a pro-active media strategy. This year, the committee is launching a new website!
- The **Finance/Administration Committee** develops an itemized budget and cash flow statement each year. Its activities also include overseeing the personnel handbook and policies, organizing the database, reviewing bylaws, performing a financial audit and producing an annual report.
- The **Legislative Committee** oversees MLGPA's endorsements of legislative candidates, advocates and testifies on issues affecting the lgbt community and our allies, mobilizes members to lobby their local legislators and facilitates an email action network.

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- Great Pumpkin Ball
- Same-sex Census Results
- Frannie Peabody remembered
- Coalition to Protect Insurance Benefits
- and much more...

MLGPA

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

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Maine Becomes 9th State to Offer Domestic Partnership Insurance to State Employees

As of July 1, 2001 the domestic partners of all State of Maine employees will be eligible for health insurance benefits through the State's health insurance program. The new policy, negotiated between the State Employee Health Commission and the Maine State Employees Association, covers all unmarried couples, heterosexual and homosexual, and makes health insurance benefits available to domestic partners under the same terms and conditions as those already offered to married spouses.

Since the 1980s, in response to a changing workforce and changing family structures, thousands of private corporations, non-profit organizations, universities, colleges, states, cities and counties have extended family benefits to the unmarried partners of their employees. Rooted in the workplace principle of equal pay for equal work, domestic partnership policies extend the same family benefits to unmarried employees with domestic partners that are routinely extend to married employees.

With the new domestic partnership insurance policy in place, Maine is now the 9th state in the country to extend such benefits to its entire workforce, following states like California, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Vermont and Washington.

Information gathered from states that offer domestic partnership insurance to their employees has shown that between 1% and 5% of the total workforce actually register for the benefit policies. Further studies have also revealed that heterosexual unmarried couples are twice as likely to take advantage of the benefit offers as same-sex couples. The costs associated with extending health insurance programs to cover domestic partners has been shown to be minimal, usually with the

New policy gets strong backing from Legislature, Governor and public.

additional cost being picked up by the policy holders.

The new policy in Maine has not been without controversy however. Michael Heath, executive director of the Christian Civic League and State Rep. Brian Duprey (R-Hampden) attempted to prevent the policy

from taking affect in July by asking the Legislature to intervene and overturn the decision of the Health Commission. Fortunately, lawmakers soundly rejected the proposal by a vote of 85 to 56.

The new domestic partnership proposal also met with strong support from Governor Angus King who issued a statement saying,

"I support and stand with the 85 members of the House who voted to allow the new policy to stand. As in the private sector, state government needs to keep pace with the times to ensure that it is able to recruit and retain employees, and that includes insurance coverage for domestic partnerships. We're doing the right thing and, I should add, with minimal financial impact."

Also of note is a recent phone survey conducted by Portland-based Critical Insights that found most Mainers think businesses in state should provide insurance coverage to domestic partners of unmarried employees, regardless of sexual orientation. Fifty-seven percent of those responding said they support such coverage, while 24 percent opposed the idea and 18 percent were undecided. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percent. ▽

Come Join Our Team ...cont'd from pg. 1.

•The **Membership/Fundraising Committee** oversees membership renewal and growth, develops strategies to encourage and motivate members, coordinates volunteers, prepares a fundraising plan, conducts major donor visits, creates materials needed to promote MLGPA with potential donors, writes grant applications, and hosts house parties through out the state.

•The **Scholarship Committee** raises funds to support the program, contacts guidance counselors and scholarship publications, responds to application requests, selects and notifies two award recipients, and attends and, in some cases, speaks at school graduation or awards nights.

•The **Special Events Committee** puts on our very successful Great Pumpkin Ball and Awards Banquet and Awards Banquet. ▽

If you are interested in being a member of the Board of Directors, wish to take an active part in any other aspect of the organization or if you just want to chat, please call Maggie Allen at 442-9513.

Letter from the President

In September, my term as MLGPA President will come to an end. While I look forward to some free time, I know I will miss being right in the center of our struggle for equality. As difficult as the work is, there is nothing more satisfying than personally taking part in the battle. I am very grateful to you for this opportunity to serve.

Many of the hopes and dreams the Board and I have held for MLGPA have been realized, many are yet to be fulfilled. I would like to leave you with a report on the current state of the organization.

Staffing

We've finally realized the longtime dream of employing professional staff. And now that we have an executive director, it's hard to believe that we've been able to survive for these eighteen years as an all-volunteer effort. We've always had to juggle our priorities. To accomplish any one task meant we had to forgo at least one or two others. We're just

beginning to catalog all of the projects that we've tried over many years to complete. They range from completing our new membership database, to developing an interactive web site, to establishing a file of supportive voters, to updating our bylaws and organizational structure.

Unfortunately, Executive Director Rick Galena is only one person, and he's still working part-time. The Legislature alone could easily consume all of his time and attention when it's in session. Even a full time executive director will not be enough.

Legislative Advocacy

Legislative advocacy is the very core of our mission; it is what MLGPA was founded to do. We have greatly expanded our lobbying, educational and community organizing efforts in recent years. We are once again a strong presence in the State House, effectively monitoring dozens of bills each session. We have testified and lobbied on a broad range of issues critical to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, including civil rights, HIV/AIDS policy and funding, reproductive rights, sex education, safe schools and civil rights teams, adoption, health insurance for domestic partners and hospital visitation. We have beaten back every lgbt measure introduced in the past three years.

On the down side, we will very likely face yet another referendum in November 2002. And even though we've passed it in the legislature three times, we still don't have a statewide anti-discrimination LAW. We will need much greater financial support and volunteer help from you if we want to pass it again in 2003.

Community Outreach

We have continued the strong commitment to community building that Betsy Smith established. The open community meetings around the state that she organized following the citizen's veto of our civil rights law in February 1998 led to a series of historic statewide meetings in Bangor, the founding of Maine Coalition for Equal Rights, and the intensive 3-1/2 day campaign



leadership training session we sponsored in January 2000. We still have a long way to go to bring the north/south, urban/rural elements in our community together, but we've made significant progress.

We have continued our efforts to develop better relationships with other lgbt and allied organizations, such as Maine Rural Network, Outright, Maine AIDS Alliance, Rainbow Business, GLSEN and members of the Choice Coalition. We've sought to gain from them a better understanding of their issues, and to provide them with our legislative expertise and advocacy on their issues in return. Our domestic partnership efforts this year, and the pending referendum against them, have brought us into closer and very productive collaboration with Maine Won't Discriminate, Maine State Employees Association, Maine People's Alliance and Consumers for Affordable Healthcare.

We have also improved our understanding of different segments within our community. After conducting a board workshop on trans issues, we went on to pass the first civil rights bill ever to include gender expression in its protections. MLGPA is strongly committed to full inclusion in all of our future legislative efforts, and one of my last acts will be to propose a change in our bylaws to reflect a permanent commitment to Maine's bisexual and transgender communities.

...cont'd on page 5

CONTACT MAINE'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION:

1st District Rep. Tom Allen
Phone: Maine: (207) 774-5019
Washington, D.C.: (202) 225-6116
email: rep.tomallen@mail.house.gov

2nd District Rep. John Baldacci
Phone: Maine: (207) 942-6935
Washington, D.C.: (202) 225-6306
email: baldacci@me02.house.gov

U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe
Phone: Maine: (800) 432-1599
Washington, D.C.: (202) 224-5344
email: olympia@snowe.senate.gov

U.S. Senator Susan Collins
Phone: Maine: (207) 780-3575
Washington, D.C.: (202) 224-2523
email: senator@collins.senate.gov

Make your own Charitable Choice

Redirect your tax rebate to the Maine Diversity Alliance in the form of a tax-deductible contribution and help support our important legislative, educational and outreach programs for Maine's LGBT communities.

I oppose the irresponsible tax cut recently passed by Congress and signed by President Bush.

As a fair-minded citizen committed to the social and economic justice of Maine's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, I am protesting the tax cut by giving away my tax rebate to the Maine Diversity Alliance.

I'M INVESTING IN EQUALITY!

YES! I want to invest my tax-deductible rebate in Equality!

Name: _____

Address: _____ Town: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

MAKE YOUR CHARITABLE CHOICE

Choice #1—Sign your Federal Income Tax Rebate Check directly to MDA

I want to make the most of my rebate! Enclosed is the full amount of my rebate check, \$ _____.

To do so, endorse the back of the check and write above your signature: "Pay to the Order of the Maine Diversity Alliance."

Choice #2—Write a Personal Check

I can't afford to give my entire rebate, but I want to make an investment in equality!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____ payable to "The Maine Diversity Alliance"

Choice #3—Charge your Credit Card

Please record your credit card information in the section below, and be sure to include the expiration date

Card Holder's Name as it appears on card: _____

Credit Card Number: _____

AMOUNT: _____ Expiration Date: ____ / ____ VISA MasterCard

Your tax-deductible contribution should be mailed to:

George W. Bush Charity Challenge
Maine Diversity Alliance
P.O. Box 1951
Portland, ME 04104

Invest in EQUALITY

GEORGE W. BUSH CHARITY CHALLENGE

MAKE A CHARITABLE CHOICE: GIVE YOUR TAX REBATE TO THE FIGHT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

Dear Friends,

I am expected to receive a tax rebate this year thanks to George W. Bush. Many of you will be receiving the same rebate in the next few weeks. Like many people in Maine, I live paycheck to paycheck, but **I don't want this rebate** and would rather George W. Bush had spent it in a way that would make all Americans safer, healthier and happier.

That's why I will be sending George W. Bush a message when I get my tax rebate—by redirecting it to the Maine Diversity Alliance, our state's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community organization. I want my hard earned tax dollars to be invested in the social and economic justice of the LGBT community, not squandered on irresponsible tax cuts. By giving my rebate to MDA, I'm helping strengthen the important legislative, educational and outreach work they do everyday on behalf of Maine's LGBT citizens.

I would like to challenge you to do the same. Take your rebate and donate it to the Maine Diversity Alliance today. Imagine what might happen in Maine if thousands of gays and lesbians took this step to stand up and be counted! Or what would happen if all the couples who registered as gay and lesbian households on the 2000 Census gave their rebates to LGBT organizations!

Imagine also the irony of **turning your tax rebate into a tax-deductible contribution** to an organization that makes the health, safety and dignity of Maine's LGBT people its primary mission. I can't think of a better way to invest in our community's future!

Even though I've already made a contribution to the Alliance this year, I consider my tax rebate to be a one-time gift, so I'm making this contribution as a special additional gift so they can fight the Christian Civic League and other extremists who wish to do us harm.

Please join me in this charitable challenge. Fill out the form on the other side of this letter and return it with your tax-deductible contribution to the Maine Diversity Alliance today! **Put your tax rebate to work for you!**

Toward justice and equality,

Rick Galena
Executive Director

p.s. **Sign your rebate check over to the Maine Diversity Alliance today!** Then email George W. Bush at *president@whitehouse.gov* and tell him that you have donated your rebate to the Maine Diversity Alliance, which is working for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered equality!

FRANNIE PEABODY

by Robin Lambert

The lgbt community lost a true friend in June when Frannie Peabody died at the age of 98.

I first met Frannie in early 1984 in the basement of First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church. A group of us were meeting to plan Maine's first AIDS hotline. In walks this elderly lady, whom we all thought must have come to the meeting by mistake. Boy were we wrong!!!

Frannie recounted the story of her grandson, who had recently died of AIDS. At 81, she had left her home in Portland and traveled west to care for him because most people were too fearful to be around him.

At that time, Maine had no AIDS cases. Frannie said it was essential to become educated and have support services available because it was only a matter of time before AIDS would arrive in Maine. In fact, just three months later, Maine had its first AIDS case.

AIDS had arrived but so too had a real life guardian angel, Frannie Peabody. Frannie took the lead in the battle against AIDS and the ignorance that abounded at that



time. And she spoke out for equal rights for all of us. In those early years, Frannie headed the effort to create the AIDS Project. She spoke to anyone who would listen and helped raise money. Frannie was determined that anyone with AIDS in Maine would have somewhere they could go for help and support unlike her grandson who had no support until Frannie came to his side.

Over the next 17 years, Frannie remained vigilant, making sure the public did not think the AIDS epidemic was over. Then in 1995, Frannie once again took the lead by founding Peabody House which has been home to over 50 people in the advanced stages of AIDS.

But more than anything else, Frannie became a tireless advocate for equal rights for the lgbt community. Just ten days before her death, there she was waving

from her antique convertible, pink boa around her neck, as the Grand Marshall of Portland's Gay Pride Parade.

I consider it an honor to have known Frannie and to have her as a friend. When I was diagnosed with AIDS in 1992, Frannie assured my daughter and mother that she would personally watch out for me. She touched my life in so many ways. She was my real life guardian angel.

Truly we have lost a very dear friend, but what memories and what an incredible legacy she left behind.

And for me, our Gay Pride Parade will never be the same without Frannie, pink boa flowing in the breeze, at the lead. I will carry her in my heart for the rest of my life.

Annual Board Retreat

by R. Scott Hawkins

The MLGPA Board of Directors held our annual retreat this past June. There was lots to talk about, coming off a roller coaster year which included the narrow loss of Question 6 last fall, hiring of our first Executive Director, winning all four of our legislative initiatives and, this fall, anticipating the retirement of David Garrity, MLGPA's hard working President for the past two years. The one-day retreat

allowed MLGPA Board members to reflect on the year, and to prepare for yet another challenging year ahead. Two members of the National Coalition Building Institute wonderfully facilitated the retreat.

We developed a new board meeting structure that will allow us to devote more time and energy to larger issues, and gave greater and clearer authority to committees. We also devised a strong six month plan to prepare for next year's busy schedule which will include a legislative session, local and state elections and the possibility of yet

another (ed note: Ugh!!) referendum campaign. We also laid the ground work for improved orientation of new board members and increased opportunities for volunteers even as we expand to full time the position of Executive Director.

The meeting also showed that, even though members of the board come from different political backgrounds, experiences and beliefs, that the diversity makes the organization stronger. We all have a common vision of safety, equality, and affinity for you, our members, and for the lgbt community. ▽

Letter from the President...continued from pg. 3

This year many of our board members participated in an enlightening and unifying all-day training in youth/adult collaboration, led by Portland Outright youth. This has already led to greater youth participation in the political process. Not only did LGBTQ youth testify alongside us at legislative hearings, they also joined us in discussing with legislators possible measures to introduce in the future. The training also helped us to understand the safer schools issue from the perspective of the youth who actually experience the bias harassment and violence. That has informed and motivated us to take a much more active role in the Safe Schools Coalition. You will be hearing more about a number of safe schools initiatives in the coming months.

Works in Progress

Many of our most urgent needs are technology related. The nature of political advocacy has changed radically in the last five years. Today, much of it happens on line, and MLGPA needs an interactive web site and an electronic newsletter if we want to continue to be effective and to take advantage of the e-revolution. Requests for proposals to design a full service web site are going out this month. And as you can see, a redesign of our newsletter is already underway.

We are continuing to develop our new membership database. It's time consuming and labor intensive work to merge many separate lists and records into a single computer file. We hope that by organizing our information, we will, for instance, improve our ability to reach out to members who are the constituents of individual legislators whom we wish to educate or influence on our issues. We also hope to identify those of you with specific skills and abilities who are willing to join us as committee members and volunteers.

Finally, we are still endeavoring to establish a permanent file of Maine voters who support LGBT issues. We are now in the process of compiling lists of voters who have been identified

as supporters in past ballot measure campaigns, and we hope to have them entered in a master file soon. And in preliminary talks with both national and in-state organizations, we have discovered a good deal of interest in collaborating with MLGPA on this project in the future. (If you have good keyboarding skills and can spare us a few hours, please contact Rick by phone or email right away.)

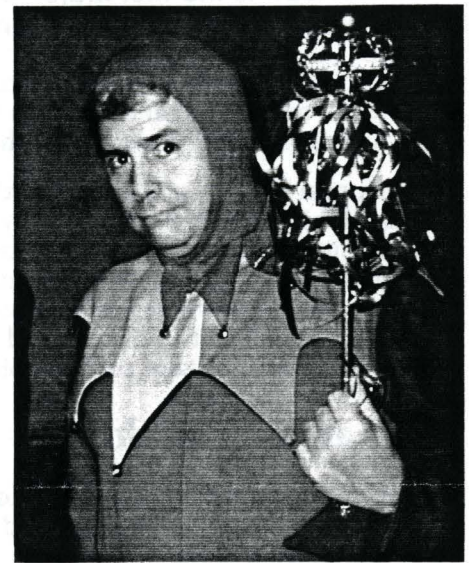
Membership and Finances

With a new referendum facing us every two years or so, we've been in a boom and bust cycle for some time. We build membership in the off years and lose it during the campaigns. I think one of our problems is that people identify almost exclusively with the civil rights bill. They also confuse MLGPA the permanent organization with the temporary campaign coalitions formed to fight the various ballot measures. As we continue to advocate in the legislature on the many diverse issues that impact our community, we hope to correct those misconceptions and see our membership grow exponentially.

Both last year's referendum and this year's legislative session took too much attention away from our fundraising effort. And it will be our top priority in the next six months to build a strong foundation of financial support. We have to educate our community about the importance of sustained giving. Our opponents donate to their cause every Sunday, some of us barely manage one gift a year to our state's only political advocacy group. We need to start personally identifying with and finding pride in our own institutions and organizations. It will require a greater financial investment from all of us, and we'll be asking you to make it soon.

Member Survey

As we consider our plans for the next Legislature in early 2003, we need your help in setting MLGPA's priorities. What issues should we emphasize, and what activities should receive our greatest attention? We also ask you to assist us to compile



new data on how often and how many of us are the victims of hate crimes or experience discrimination. We'll need that information the next time we seek passage of a civil rights bill, which will probably be soon. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey and send it in to us soon.

Thanks

I'd like to express my personal appreciation to all of the Board members with whom I've been proud to serve. That sounds like just a standard line, but I sincerely mean it. It took soul searching, great courage and strength to make decisions on some of the critical issues that faced us over the past two years. Each was carefully considered by every one of the Board members, and we arrived at our decisions by consensus. In all of my thirty plus years in and out of gay activism, those are moments I will always treasure most.

I'm not leaving politics or gay activism, I'm just moving on to different challenges. For too long this organization has been carried by one over-achieving individual or another. It's time for it to become an institution. I'm doing my part to make that happen. I hope you all will do yours.

With love,

David Garrity

Stop Fueling Discrimination

ExxonMobil is the first major U.S. company to actually revoke a non-discrimination policy.

by David Garrity

It did so immediately after Exxon acquired Mobil in December 1999. Before the merger, Mobil had both a written non-discrimination policy and domestic partner coverage for their gay employees.

The Human Rights Campaign has called for a nationwide boycott of ExxonMobil because of the company's continued refusal to reinstate a written non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation. ExxonMobil has also refused to open its domestic partner benefits program to all gay and lesbian employees. At its last meeting the MLGPA Board has endorsed this boycott and we encourage you to join with us in sending a strong message to ExxonMobil.

What you can do:

- Stop patronizing Exxon or Mobil gas stations and their 'On the Run' and 'Tiger Mart' convenience stores.
- Cut up your ExxonMobil gasoline credit cards and Mobil "Speedpasses" and send half to ExxonMobil and half to us at MLGPA (ExxonMobil Boycott, PO Box 1951, Portland ME 04104).
- Write or e-mail ExxonMobil, with a copy to us, expressing your displeasure with the company's treatment of gay and lesbian employees, customers and shareholders and your commitment to the HRC boycott.
- Send us one month's worth of receipts for gasoline you purchased from companies like Chevron, BP Amoco, Sunoco, Shell and Texaco that DO ban discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation.
- Encourage your friends and family to join the boycott, too.

DID YOU KNOW?

A total of 76 of the Fortune 100 companies have written non-discrimination policies covering sexual orientation; more than 50 percent of the Fortune 500—258 as of today—already have such policies. More than 3,700 U.S. employers offer domestic partner benefits, including 127 of the Fortune 500.

Census Takes First Count of Same-sex Households in Maine

Maine ranks 1st of northern New England states

As the U.S. Census Bureau releases statistics on its first attempt ever to count gay and lesbian households in American, Maine has claimed the top spot among the northern New England states.

2000 Census figures released in July show Maine to be ahead of Vermont and New Hampshire with 3,394 gay and lesbian couples. New Hampshire ranked second with 2,703 couples and Vermont third with 1,933 couples. The bureau tabulated the number of gay and lesbian couples by counting the households with unmarried partners of the same sex. How these figures compare with other states and regions across the country isn't known as statistics have not yet been released for every state.

Rick Galena, Executive Director of the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliances says the new statistics are useful but should not be seen as representing the total gay and lesbian population of the state.

"These numbers are not the number of gay men and lesbian women living in Maine," cautions Galena.

"This is the number of people who are living in a couple relationship and who also checked the correct box on their census form." Each cut makes for a much smaller sample.

"Keep in mind that a lot of people are reluctant to divulge their sexual orientation on a document that's going to the federal government. That's one reason we're suggesting this is a major undercount of gay and lesbian partners in Maine."

Still, Galena says, the new numbers are important. They set a benchmark for future censuses. They illustrate that gay and lesbian couples are dispersed across the state and they

give policymakers an idea of the size of the constituency.

"It's tremendously important on a policy level," says Galena. "It's valuable, for example, to have some idea of how many people will apply for insurance benefits under domestic partnership programs. And it can help identify patterns of discrimination in employment and housing."

The new data also symbolizes official recognition of gay and lesbian families, says Maggie Allen, Vice-President of MLGPA.

"I think it's very positive," says Allen. "It's a way for people to validate themselves and their relationships. These numbers represent a step toward making our families more visible—it says we exist in the eyes of the government."

"And dispels the myth that gay people live only in urban areas. It really supports the reality that we are your neighbors in every community in every corner of Maine." ▽

'Coalition to Protect Health Insurance' Formed

In response to the Christian Civic League's publicly announced plans to launch another statewide referendum next November, this one a ban on domestic partnership insurance, leaders of Maine's business, labor, religious and health care community have formed an alliance to block the proposed initiative.

The newly formed 'Coalition to Protect Health Insurance' includes members from the Maine State Employees Association, Maine AFL-CIO, Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Consumers for Affordable Health Care, Maine Education Association and recently, the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance. Nearly one hundred groups and associations are currently considering joining.

"This referendum is about health insurance and the right of every person to have access to it, period." stated Carl Leinonen, Executive Director of the Maine State Employees Association, one of the organizations central in forming the Coalition.

There are currently 160,000 people in Maine without health insurance,

Bill to Prohibit Job Discrimination Is Introduced in Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C.—

Legislation was introduced in Congress on Tuesday, July 31 to ban workplace discrimination against homosexuals, reviving a campaign to include sexual orientation in federal civil rights protection.

"Civil rights is the unfinished business of America," Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the bill's chief sponsor in the Senate, told a news conference. *"It's long past time to prohibit such discrimination based on sexual orientation."*

nearly 20,000 of them children. The latest Census figures released in Maine also show a dramatic increase in the number of domestic partnership households, particularly same-sex households. In 2000, over 3,390 same-sex couples registered as domestic partners in Maine—a 317% increase over the last ten years. Given the dramatic increase in the number domestic partnerships, the potential number of individuals affected by the proposed health insurance ban is significant.

The proposed question reads, "Do you want to ban the use of public funds and void any state and local laws that provide insurance and other benefits to couples that are not married?"

If passed, the referendum would: repeal a new law that requires health insurers and HMOs to offer every Maine employer the chance to buy health insurance policies that cover domestic partners, regardless of their number of employees, revoke all domestic partner insurance benefits that Maine employers now offer and ban employers from granting any in the future, prohibit all state, county

and local governments from recognizing "domestic partnerships" or "civil unions" now and forever into the future take away health insurance benefits from the domestic partners of all state employees and University of Maine employees who currently have them through their newly negotiated contract with the State.

The Christian Civic League has until January 28, 2002 to gather the 42,101 signatures needed to force the question onto the November 2002 ballot.

Rick Galena, Executive Director of the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance, responded to the petition by saying, *"this is the most mean-spirited, hateful, anti-family initiatives we've ever seen from the Right. While the opposition claims that this is a question of morality I have to ask, where is the morality in denying any person or group of people access to health care?"*

For more information on joining the Coalition to Protect Health Insurance, please contact: Carl Leinonen, at 622-3151 or carl.leinonen@mseaseiu.org



POLL: 57% of Mainers support partner benefits

A recent telephone survey by Portland-based Critical Insights found that most Mainers think businesses in the state should provide insurance coverage to domestic partners of unmarried employees, regardless of sexual orientation.

Fifty-seven percent of those responding said they support such coverage, while 24 percent opposed the idea and 18 percent were undecided. The poll, which asked several public policy questions, had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Three of Maine's four members in Congress support the Employment Non-discrimination Act.

Supporters said that they expected the Senate to vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) this year but that it faced an uncertain future in the House of Representatives. In 1996, similar legislation fell one vote short of Senate approval, but no such bill has ever come close to passage in the House.

The bill would prohibit public and private employers from using sexual orientation as the basis of decisions to hire, fire or promote workers. It

would allow workers to pursue limited remedies similar to those in existing federal employment laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act, but would not permit affirmative action remedies for violations.

Twelve states and a handful of communities have made it illegal to discriminate against gays and lesbians in the workplace, but the bill's supporters say discrimination exists nationally.

...cont'd on pg. 8

SAVE THE DATE!

—Fifth Annual—

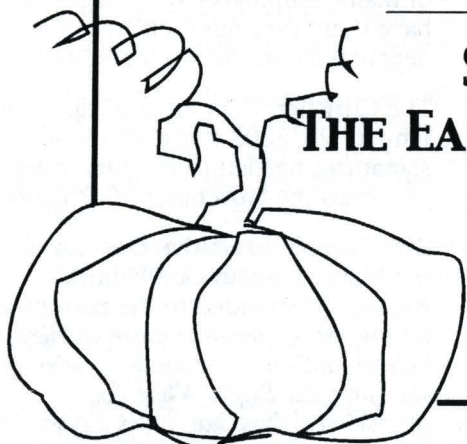
GREAT PUMPKIN BALL

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27TH

THE EASTLAND HOTEL - BALLROOM

PORTLAND, MAINE

8:00 - MIDNIGHT



To benefit Maine Diversity Alliance/MLGPA!

For more information, or to volunteer: contact David at 767-5806 or email: davidswander@mindspring.com

Bill to Prohibit Job Discrimination

... cont'd from pg. 7

More than two decades after similar legislation was first introduced in Congress, there has never been so much support, backers say. Forty senators have signed on as co-sponsors of the bill, and its companion measure in the House has 180 co-sponsors.

The Gallup Poll found in June that 85 percent of Americans surveyed favored equal opportunities in employment rights for gay men and women. The legislation is also supported by more than two dozen major corporations, including Hewlett-Packard Co., AT&T and Eastman Kodak, and many civil rights organizations.

"There is a strong level of support for ENDA," said Sen. Jim Jeffords, a Vermont independent who has long favored such a measure.

"Like all Americans, gays and lesbians deserve to be judged on their ability to work, not on some irrational, iron, non-work-related prejudice."

Three of Maine's four representatives in Congress support ENDA. Democrats Tom Allen and John Baldacci back it in the House. Republican Olympia Snowe favors it in the Senate.

But Maine's other republican Senator, Susan Collins, has stated she does not support the measure, even though the bill exempts religious organizations and small businesses. Collin's spokesperson said the senator thinks "it's an issue that is better handled at the state level." ▽

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