Maine’s monthly newspaper for lesbians & gay men

NGLTF training to assist local groups

by Rebecca Foster
Editor

WASHINGTON, DC - In an effort to fight radical right anti-gay initiatives in several states, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has organized training in areas like fundraising, media relations, coalition-building. The effort, which includes a training in Maine (see page 5 for details), will also provide up-to-date information on the radical right's activities on a national, regional and local level.

The initiative will focus on Idaho and Oregon which face anti-gay ballot questions on next month's ballot. In Oregon, the Oregon Citizens' Alliance has managed to get Proposition 13, the Child Protection and Minority Status Act, on the ballot. The measure is viewed as a "cleaned-up" version of Measure 9, an anti-gay measure that was defeated in 1992.

continued on page 5

Andrews strong on gay issues

by Terri Jones
Editor

PORTLAND - Maine's gay and lesbian community can count on continued support if Democratic Congressman Tom Andrews defeats fellow Congresswoman Olympia Snowe in the upcoming election. In a telephone interview with 10% Andrews expressed optimism about his chances in next month's election and discussed a wide range of topics including the 1995 referendum question to limit Maine's Human Rights Act to his sponsorship of H.R. 431 which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in housing, credit, public accommodations, employment and federal programs.

Andrews, who has earned a 100% rating from the Human Rights Campaign Fund, reiterated his support on several issues of concern to the gay and lesbian community. In the past, in his days in the Maine House and Senate, he sponsored gay rights legislation for Maine. He has continued this support by sponsoring legislation like H.R. 431 and ENDA, the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" as well as voting in favor of a domestic partnership measure for the District of Columbia.

In his capacity as member of the House Armed Services Committee, Andrews says he "tried to bring clarity to the debate" on gays in the military as he supported a non-discrimination policy for the armed forces. He likened the Joint Chiefs of Staff's opposition to a non-discrimination policy to the segregation of African-American soldiers during the 1940s and says he wasn't afraid to draw that connection during the hearings.

Andrews also favors continued and higher spending on programs for AIDS/HIV research, education and support.

continued on page 4

Christian Coalition holds national conference in DC

by Terri Jones
Editor

WASHINGTON, DC - The Christian Coalition opened held its national conference at the Washington Hilton September 16-17 vowing to fight and defeat President Clinton in 1996 with an unprecedented turnout of religious conservative voters. The conference attracted approximately 1000 attendees, featured training on political organizing and was titled "The Road to Victory."

The conference was addressed by several speakers with connections to the 1996 Republican presidential race including former Vice President Dan Quayle, Senator Robert Dole's wife Elizabeth Dole, Texas Senator Phil Gramm, former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander and former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.

Christian Coalition founder and president, Pat Robertson told the conference, "We are seeing the Christian Coalition rise to where God intends it to be in this nation - as one of the most powerful forces that's ever been in the history of America...The polls are turning. The nation is saying we're right."

Other speakers, including Phyllis Schlafly, vowed to change the Republican Party platform to reflect absolute opposition to abortions.

Workshops throughout the conference stressed grassroots efforts and fundraising to continue to provide legal assistance to those who "pursue religious freedom" through radical right legal groups the American Center for Law and Justice.

Other workshops included media relations, strategy for victory in '96 and advantages and strategies of reaching out to minorities through their community churches. Speakers from the Family Research Council, a nother radical right anti-gay organization also conducted workshops.

The Christian Coalition claims a membership of 1 million people.
Maine Won't Discriminate

At the September 18 statewide meeting of Equal Protection Maine that group agreed to formerly change its name to "Maine Won't Discriminate." Office space for the group will open next week at Williston West United Church of Christ, 52 Thomas St., Portland.

Next meetings for Maine Won't Discriminate (in Portland) are:
October 10, October 24 and a fundraising meeting will be held on October 4 at St. Luke's Cathedral, Portland. 

Fundraising Events:
A fundraising dinner will take place at 7:30pm on October 15 at Jonathan's, 1 Orne Lane, Ogunquit. All proceeds will go to Maine Won't Discriminate. The dinner will also feature speakers, an auction (including stays and dinners at Ogunquit establishments) and entertainment. The cost is $100 per ticket. Tickets are available at The Club, the Front Porch, the Village Market and Fancy That.

Fight the Right Training
Saturday, October 8, 9-5pm
Unitarian Universalist Church, Brunswick, Maine
learn about radical right activities nationally, regionally and in Maine
worksops and skills-building presentations on
-fundraising -lobbying -media relations

sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
and the Maine Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance

$5 materials charge (sliding scale)

For more information contact Alan Stearns at 761-2413 or the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force at (617)-492-6393

Referendum Question Text
The legislative provision that will be voted on should the referendum question appear on the November 1995 ballot:
To the 116th Legislature of the State of Maine:

In accordance with Section 18 of Article IV, Part Third of the Constitution of the State of Maine, the undersigned electors of the State of Maine, qualified to vote for Governor, residing in said State, whose names have been certified, hereby respectfully propose to the Legislature for its consideration the following entitled bill: An Act to Limit Protected Classes Under the Maine Human Rights Act.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:
3 M.R.S.A. Section 4352-1 is enacted to read:
Section 4352-3.
An Act to Limit Protected Classes Under Maine Law

Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter or any other provision of law, protected classes or suspect classifications under state or local law human rights laws, rules, regulations, ordinances, charter provisions or policies are limited to race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, familial status, and marital status. Any provision of State or local law, rule regulation, ordinance, charter provision or policy inconsistent with this section is void and unenforceable.

This section being necessary for the welfare of the State and the inhabitants of Maine, shall be liberally construed to accomplish its purpose and is not to be interpreted or applied as a limitation or restriction on authority as enumerated in the Maine Constitution.
The means are the measure

Last month's editorial suggested that it was time to start educating Maine citizens about the effects and ramifications of the referendum effort. It seems that at least one person was listening. In Friday, September 23's Portland Press Herald, Carolyn Cosby unleashed a lengthy diatribe against the "militant, wealthy homosexual lobby." The gist of the article was that gay rights equals special rights and anyway, the gay and lesbian community is too wealthy to deserve the civil rights protections afforded to other minority groups.

To read her polemic, you would think that we were already so powerful that it's hard to understand why gays and lesbians waste their time lobbying the Maine Legislature or fighting the referendum effort. It seems that at least one person was listening. In Friday, September 23's Portland Press Herald, Carolyn Cosby unleashed a lengthy diatribe against the "militant, wealthy homosexual lobby." The gist of the article was that gay rights equals special rights and anyway, the gay and lesbian community is too wealthy to deserve the civil rights protections afforded to other minority groups.

Of course, like everything else Carolyn Cosby says, her "facts" don't fit the reality faced by Maine's, or the U.S.'s, gay and lesbian community. The National Commission on Employment Policy, charged with reporting to Congress during the ENDA hearings, told Congress that lesbians and gays make less than heterosexuals and discrimination against gays, like other forms of employment discrimination, hurt our economy as a whole.

The FBI, the Department of Justice and Maine's own Attorney General's Office say that Maine is at least fourth highest in per capita hate crimes. Violence against gays exists in Maine at an alarming level.Representatives from Maine's business community, labor, management, law enforcement, churches and civic leaders have come forward to oppose her efforts. All gubernatorial candidates oppose the effort. Even Olympia Snowe opposes the effort. So what's her strategy? It looks like a strategy perfected by the Nazi Party in their effort to dehumanize Jews. Hitler often said to his confidants that if you tell a big lie often enough people start to believe you. He also said that they (the Jews) were too wealthy and he pitted them against the supposedly "poorer" masses. Carolyn Cosby's article suggests that gay rights measures are akin to taking from the poor to give to the rich.

Unanswered, her rhetoric could take on a life of its own - despite evidence before Congress, testimony from gay men and lesbians, and opposition to the referendum from business, civic and elected officials. We must not let her column stand unanswered. We must use the opinion page and letters to the editor to present the truth, we must use "National Coming Out Day" as an opportunity to tell more people about our hopes, our fears and our personal lives. Most of all, we can't let Carolyn Cosby's voice be the only one people read or hear. It doesn't take a large amount of time or money to answer her claims or present ideas through the editorial page.

For those who wondered what tactic Cosby would use - it seems obvious. The same old one... the "us - against - them" line, the "we're morally - superior" mindset, the "we - believe - in - democracy - when - it - serves - our - purpose" hedge and when that fails, Hitler's "big lie" strategy. For those less familiar with Carolyn Cosby, a quick look at the means to her end will give true measure to the integrity behind her referendum effort.

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Contributors
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10%
Maine's monthly newspaper for lesbians & gay men
PO Box 11265 • Portland, ME 04104

Published by 10% Enterprises, a non-profit organization seeking tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) status. Contributions will soon be tax-deductible.

10% is published monthly and is available at many locations throughout the state of Maine.

Opinions expressed outside of the editorials above this masthead are those of the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of 10% Enterprises.

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Andrews continued from page 1

Andrews sits on the board of Portland's Peabody House and is the co-chair of the Maine White Youth Service Awards. Andrews also stated that he supported the distribution of condoms in schools and the inclusion of information about alternative lifestyles in school sex education courses but maintains that the proper level for the discussion of these issues is on the local level. To that end he supported an amendment to the recent educational funding bill that gave local district control over curriculum issues, an effort he says helped to diminish the impact of another amendment that would have prohibited federal funding of any programs that "promoted or tended to diminish the impact of another movement that 'promoted or tended to diminish the impact of another movement.'"

Andrews says he is prepared to assist Maine's lesbian and gay community in its effort to defeat Concerned Maine Families' referendum initiative. He characterized the effort as one that did "a great disservice to everyone in Maine" because of its "hate-ful divisive nature."

He pledged to continue to take every opportunity available to him to speak out against the effort saying it "must be confronted" and that any position in opposition to the referendum must appeal to "Maine people's sense of fairness."

Andrews also noted the serious challenge the Democratic Party faces in the election. While pundits have theorized that the Republican Party could win a majority in the U.S. Senate, Andrews put a more human face on it by noting that a shift in power could mean that Senator Orrin Hatch would now serve on the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senator Jesse Helms could become chair of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Andrews recently received the endorsement of the Maine Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance at its annual meeting September 17.

Jenkins leads Matlovich discussion of Maine diversity commission

PORTLAND - Lewiston Mayor John Jenkins discussed the work of the Commission to Promote the Understanding of Diversity in Maine at a September 22 Matlovich Society program. The Commission has completed a preliminary report that recommends, among other things, the addition of "sexual orientation" to the Maine Human Rights Act and funding for the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's office which is charged with investigating bias-based hate incidents and hate crimes in Maine.

The Commission, created by an executive order of Governor John McKernan, is made of 14 individuals and is currently focusing on bias incidents and hate crimes, education and economic development as it develops proposals and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

Even by reports that are widely regarded as low estimates, Maine has a high rate of hate crimes per capita, a rate of 17.0 per 100,000 of population. 52 reported incidents out of population of 188,068, or fourth highest in the country. Several national groups maintain that these numbers are grossly low. Jenkins noted that Maine's Civil Rights Division received 226 civil rights complaints last year. Of the 226 complaints, 59% were directed towards African-Americans, 25% towards gays and lesbians and 21% towards Jews. These statistics underscore the need for a coalition effort to fight hate crimes and the Commission members, according to Jenkins, recognize the benefits of building coalitions of minority groups to fight the incidents of hate in the state of Maine.

The Commission has made several recommendations to the Governor for a fresh start in May to move forward when the legislative session begins in January. Besides adding sexual orientation to the Human Rights Act and creating funding for the Civil Rights Division, the Commission has proposed a cabinet level position to promote diversity in Maine. Increased funding is restored to the Board for the Maine Human Rights Act, a statewide intervention team that could respond to communities, school and businesses for assistance in promoting diversity or responding incidents of hate crimes or bias incidents and a peer mediation program that would educate in schools to resolve situations.

Jenkins' presentation generated several comments and discussion about the upcoming referendum initiative by Concerned Maine Families. Jenkins noted that the "no 1 recommendation in their report was to add sexual orientation to the Maine Human Rights Act." Several listeners commented that the Commission was uniquely positioned to comment publicly against the referendum. Jenkins expects that the Commission will be exploring ways to respond to the referendum.

Jenkins also commended Assistant Attorney General Stephen Wessler for his efforts to fight hate crimes in Maine. The Civil Rights Division requested additional funding for its work. Wessler's determination has made the difference, according to Jenkins. Wessler has been an outspoken opponent of the referendum effort.

Officers for the year are Jody Geraghty, Secretary and Celeste Gosselin, Vice President. Members, according to Jenkins, was seized on his 17 annual meeting in Augusta to endorse strategies for 1994-95 including the election of a new Board of Directors.

As it has for the last several years, MLGPA will again be the principle group lobbying the Maine Legislature for an amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act that would add "sexual orientation" to its list of protected classes. As Chair, Jenkins will also work closely with "Maine Won't Discriminate" (formerly Equal Protection Maine) on its effort to defeat the November 1995 ballot question the state would prohibit gay rights in Maine.

"There are many people in this state who will vote against Carolyn Cosdy's referendum even though they don't vote for a gay rights bill. Maine Won't Discriminate will appeal to a broader base than MLGPA and we can't afford to lose even those who come halfway on board," said MLGPA President Karen Geraghty at the meeting. Jenkins also pointed out that MLGPA and Maine Won't Discriminate will work very closely together, even though their primary tasks are somewhat separate: "The press coverage of gay rights in 1995 is going to be enormous, and the press might not want to address the differences between Maine Won't Discriminate and MLGPA. Our press campaigns, grassroots campaigns and coalition-building will see a lot of overlap and coordination," said Geraghty.

In addition to strategy, attendees elected a new Board of Directors and officers for 1994-95. Karen Geraghty was re-elected as President with BJ Broder Tresinks, Recording Secretary, Luraine Bernier, Membership Secretary and Celeste Gosselin, Vice President.

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Officers for the year are Jody Briner, Presque Isle, David Cadigan, Hancock, Bliss Gifford, Rockland, and Cynthia Strout, Darwin Pray, Sanford, Hunt, Portland, Kate Perkins, Kennebunk, Rita Clifford, Windham, Sturgis, Haskins, Sorrento, Paula Stockham, Cumberland, Jan Welch, Auburn, Barb Wood, Portland, Del Wilson, Portland and Tracy Goodridge, Augusta.

Jim Martin and Pat Peard were also honored at the meeting.

In other business, MLGPA voted to endorse Tom Andrews for U.S. Senate, and Joseph Balducci and Dennis Dougherty for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Cosby lashes out in Press Herald column

PORTLAND - In an op-ed piece in the Portland Press Herald op-ed piece, Concerned Maine Families' spokesperson Carolyn Cosdy attacked Maine's gay and lesbian community and its efforts to secure civil rights legislation. Repeating the same theme of "special rights" and citing a discredited marketing study that portrayed the gay community as more affluent and better educated than non-gay Mainers, Cosdy asserted that the gay community did not need to be protected.

The column, titled "Disadvantaged? Not at all," claims that the powerful, wealthy, gay lobby is bankrolling one of the most expensive political campaigns the nation has ever seen -- a campaign to defeat Maine's gay and lesbian community's referendum to extend rights to gay and lesbian Maineans. According to a recent tracking poll, Maine Loves Us!, a non-profit research and communications organization, gay and lesbian Maineans plan to spend $3 million in their efforts to pass the referendum. The group, according to a recent tracking poll, plans to spend $3 million to defeat the gay rights referendum.

The relative affluence of the lesbian and gay community has been disputed by several observers including a report released by the National Commission on Employment Policy, an advisory body to the Congress and the President, that found gay and bisexual men earning between $16,000 and $38,000, and bisexual women earning $20,000 to $40,000, and bisexual women earning 5 to 14% less than heterosexual women.

Significant play was also given to the "special rights" characterization. Coalitions that maintain gay rights are "special rights" because they require no proof of being a homosexual to claim the rights and would give "any one will to claim to be homosexual a distinct job advantage" because employers would be unwilling to risk a lawsuit to challenge someone's claim of being a homosexual.

Writing about who deserves civil rights, she maintains that "folly groups able to measure up to long-established civil rights standards of reasonableness should receive minority status."

She concludes by saying, "[t]o grant special protection-class-status to the homosexual community is to legalize a radically unfair plan that would dismantle civil rights practices as we know it and rob from the poor and give to the rich."
National News

NGLTF continued from page 1

Act of 1980 which grants such status to individuals who can show that they are part of a persecuted social group. The case moved immigration officials to reconsider its position on persecution due to sexual orientation and led to a ruling by Attorney General Janet Reno that people persecuted for sexual orientation are eligible for asylum.

Gay candidates win primaries in three states

WASHINGTON, DC - The Victory Fund is reporting that two gay men and one lesbian won their respective primaries on September 13. Openly gay Rhode Island State Senator Will Fitzpatrick beat two challengers in that state's primary. At this point, Fitzpatrick faces only write-in opposition in the Nov. 8 general election. He received 55% of the vote in his three-way primary.

Democratic candidate and lesbian Karen Bunstein beat out two challengers in the New York State Attorney General's race.

In Arizona, a Phoenix businesswoman Ken Cheuvront won the Democratic primary for the state House of Representatives with 44% of the vote. The Victory Fund reports that a total of 14 gay or lesbian candidates are running for office in the Nov. 8 election.

Couples in Seattle celebrate first day of domestic partnership registration

SEATTLE - Approximately 90 couples in Seattle celebrated the first day of domestic partnership registration. The ordinance approved by Seattle's City Council unanimously adopted the measure.

First PWA granted asylum dies

SAN FRANCISCO - The first individual granted asylum because he was facing persecution for being gay has died. 36-year-old Ariel Da Silva, a native of Los Angeles, died in Los Angeles from complications due to AIDS.

 Known by the pseudonym Jose Da Silva, he was granted asylum in March after telling U.S. immigration authorities that he would be in danger if he returned to Mexico. He told authorities that he had been subjected to severe persecution, detention, beatings and rape by the Mexican police because he was gay.

Da Silva was the first gay person granted asylum under the Refugee Act of 1980, which grants such status to individuals who can show that they are part of a persecuted social group. The case moved immigration officials to reconsider its position on persecution due to sexual orientation and led to a ruling by Attorney General Janet Reno that people persecuted for sexual orientation are eligible for asylum.

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- **October/November**
- **Sunday**
  - EPM Bangor Mgt.
  - AIDS Walk
- **Monday**
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  - Mothers and Kids Group
  - Let's Do Brunch
- **Tuesday**
  - 4
  - Womyn and AIDS
  - Partners of Parents
  - Artificial Insemination
- **Wednesday**
  - 5
  - Election Guide
  - National Coming Out Day
- **Thursday**
  - 6
  - Men and Race
  - 13
- **Friday**
  - 12
  - 19
  - 20
- **Saturday**
  - 11
  - 25
  - 26
  - 27

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**Celebrating Blackstones’ 7th Anniversary**

Blackstones' owner Ralph Cusack and his staff invited patrons to help celebrate the bar's 7th anniversary on September 3. Throngs of hungry and appreciative individuals marked the occasion.
An Election Guide, MLGPA officers Karen Geraghty and BJ Broder, Oct. 11, 7-9pm Student Ctr., USM, FMI 774-4919.

"Artificial Insemination: A Personal Story Laced with the Facts," Oct. 18th, Student Ctr., USM, 7-9pm FMI, 774-4919.

"Candidates, Bills, Referendums: The Politics of Diversity," a Building Inclusive Community program with MLGPA President Karen Geraghty at the Lewiston Multi-Purpose Ctr., 145 Birch St., Friday, October 21, at 7:30pm.

"1st of 3 Workshops: Constructing Our Visibility," 1st of 5 forums on creating community support for being "out" in Maine. Sat., Oct. 22, 10-5pm. AVAC, 4 Lafayette St., Lewiston. For registration call 772-7325 or 871-9940. Sponsored by the Pride Committee '95.

Equal Protection Maine meets in Portland every other Monday at 7:30pm at St. Lukes' Cathedral, State St, Portland. For more information, call 1-800-MLGPA.

Friday Night Church meets every Friday at 7pm, State St. Church, 159 State St., Portland. All-inclusive and affirming service offering a guide to Christian spiritual journey. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call 774-6956.

Lesbian Support Group meets every first and third Wed. at the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center. Woman-only, lesbian-only space. 6:30-8pm., 354 Harlow St., Bangor. For more information, call 947-5957.

"Let's Do Brunch!" Potluck social gathering, 11am-2pm, third Sunday of the month, at York County locations. Call 985-2784 for more information.


Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance meets on October 15 at 12noon at the Winthrop St. Unitarian Church in Augusta.

Maine Won't Discriminate Fundraiser at Jonathan's, 1 Orne Lane, Ogunquit Sat Oct. 15, 7:30pm. Dinner, entertainment, speakers, auction. 50/50. Proceeds benefit Maine Won't Discriminate.


Witches, Warlocks and Pagans, discussion, Oct. 6, 7-9pm, flowersandWitches, 334 Harlow St., Portland.

"Womyn and the AIDS Epidemic," Oct. 4th, 7-9pm, Student Ctr., USM, FMI, 774-4919.


Are you listed? Send your non-profit calendar listings to:

10% Enterprises
P.O. Box 11265
Portland, ME 04104

Include location, contact no., date and time. Submissions are due by the 20th of the month.
In the 1930s, an artist and his models scandalized a nation with their controversial paintings.....

Maine Lesbian and Gay Law Association

Ruling overturns anti-gay referendum

by Will Sandstead, Esq.
Contributor

A recent U.S. District Court decision could have far-reaching implications for the developing case law on anti-gay referenda. In Equality Foundation v. City of Cincinnati, Judge S. Arthur Spiegel threw out an anti-gay referendum that was passed by Cincinnati voters.

The referendum, called "Issue 3," prohibited the city from enacting, adopting, or administering "any ordinance, regulation, rule or policy which provides that homosexuals, lesbians or bisexual orientation, status, conduct or relationship constitutes, entitles, or otherwise provides a person with the basis to have any claim of minority or protected status, quota, preference or other preferential treatment." The referendum was a reaction to two gay rights ordinances passed by the Cincinnati City Council. Gay activists and the city brought the legal challenge after Cincinnati voters approved the referendum last November.

The decision in Equality is groundbreaking for several reasons. First, it permanently enjoined "Issue 3" from taking effect thereby rendering the law null and void.

Second, the judge made several factual conclusions that numerous other federal judges have refused to make. Specifically, the judge found that "homosexuals comprise between 5 and 130{\textperthousand} of the population" that "sexual orientation is a characteristic which exists separately and independently from sexual conduct or behavior," and that it is "a deeply rooted, complex combination of factors including a predisposition towards affiliation, affection or bonding with members of the opposite and/or the same gender." Further, the Court concluded that sexual orientation is "not an oral and mechanical classification" which exists separately and independently from sexual conduct or behavior, and that gays and lesbians have "suffered a history of pervasive, irrational and invidious discrimination in government and private employment, in political organization and in all facets of society in general."

Judge Spiegel found that sexual orientation is a "quasi-suspect classification." If a court finds such a classification (for example, allowing African-Americans to obtain marriage licenses but not Asian-Americans), then the government must justify the law with an extremely good reason. Otherwise, the law can be found to be in violation of the 14th Amendment and therefore unconstitutional (as in the example stated). Generally, a quasi-suspect classification is deemed because it is almost impossible for the government to show a sufficiently good reason for the classification.

Thus, when Judge Spiegel ruled that sexual orientation was a "quasi-suspect classification," he placed a monumental burden upon the referendum's supporters which they failed to satisfy. Essentially, the judge made it nearly impossible for Issue 3 to survive constitutional scrutiny.

The judge also held that Issue 3 violated the 14th Amendment because it infringed on the fundamental right of equal participation in the political process. In a suspect classification context, a referendum on a group's right to participate in the political process, it must be supported by a compelling state interest. Absent such a showing, the law can be ruled unconstitutional.

Finally, the judge found that there was absolutely no rational basis to support Issue 3. He noted that laws treating people unequally without a rational basis for the different treatment violate the 14th Amendment. Therefore, even if sexual orientation was not a quasi-suspect classification and Issue 3 did not violate the fundamental right to equal participation in the political process, Issue 3 was still unconstitutional.

These arguments were rejected by the court and it also held that Issue 3 violated the 1st Amendment rights to free speech and association and to petition the government for redress of grievances.

In his written decision, the judge denied that his ruling was giving anyone "special rights." He wrote, "In voiding the Issue 3 Amendment, the Court is in no way giving any group any rights above and beyond those enjoyed by all citizens. To the contrary, we are simply, but crucially, preventing one group of citizens from being deprived of the very rights we all share. And despite the fact that a majority of voters may support a given law, rights protected by the Constitution can never be subordinated to the will of the majority. While at times this may seem unfair, especially when deeply emotional issues are involved, indeed it is the fairest, and justest, and highest, and one of most deeply rooted. of all of this Nation's rich traditions."

The importance of this case to Maine is significant. As the gay and lesbian community faces a different legal battle, but similar referendum challenge, Equality may provide an important precedent if the referendum is passed and then challenged in court.


Will Sandstead is a board member of the Maine Lesbian and Gay Law Association (MeLGaL) and is an associate at Farnsworth & Associates in Hallowell.
Helping our children find their way and their own voice in this world is a tall order for any parent. Kids of lesbians, like most children, are pretty much of the garden variety. They are diverse in their accomplishments, talents, and skills. They come in various shapes and sizes and have needs and desires. Like other children, they want to be valued and accepted, encouraged and loved. They wish to fit in. They want to be happy, play a great deal and snuggle, particularly when they are little tots.

Our kids are special in that they have moms who are lesbian. How can we help our daughters and sons navigate through life without incurring a few squalls along the way? Well, the truth is that we can't. It's simply a part of growing up. What we can do, however, is instill in them a sense of pride in who they are and in who we are.

This is a process which begins at birth and will continue for a lifetime. It is made up of actions and words. From the earliest moments of life, our children need to trust that we will be there for them, and be strong role models. This need will persist to a greater or lesser degree throughout their lives.

From the time that they are newborns, we set the stage for healthy self-esteem. I offer a few navigational tools to use along the way:

"During your pregnancy, seek out a lawyer to assist you in developing your will(s) and power of attorney. If you live in a state such as Maine which does not yet allow for adoption by the non-biological co-mother, this is a particularly important thing to do. Be clear about who you wish to be your child's guardian in the event that the legal parent(s) die. Some people just hate to think about wills and other legal agreements. Remember, though, that homosexual parents are not usually protected by laws which govern legally married heterosexuals. You'll feel much better knowing that you've done all that you can to secure your family. GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders in Boston, 617-426-1350) and all significant people with whom you live in a state such as Maine. She is currently conducting research on the topic of co-mothering and is writing a book on lesbian parenting with her partner, Cheryl Cicichowski. Maggie and Cheryl live in Portland, Maine, with their eight-year-old daughter, Emily.

(We often cross out the word father and write above it, mother.)

We do this for clarity's sake and, more importantly, as a statement that the three of us (our daughter and her two moms) are family. It's affirming for us and our child. We've always felt that if we were clear about our lives, then our child would less likely be put in awkward or hurtful situations. So far it's working. And even more importantly, she is proud of herself and of us. Secrets are devastating and often, underlying them, is a sense of shame. It's simply not fair to your child to remain closeted. It's not fair to yourself, either. Allow your child to see that you are not afraid to be true to yourself.

"Join mothers' groups and gay/lesbian parents groups for support, information and fun activities for your family. (Check out the listings in lesbian/gay papers.)"

"Read everything you can get your hands on about parenting and use your common sense about the wide range of opinions out there (including mine)."

"Check out lesbian and gay bookstores for age appropriate books and videos about growing up with lesbian moms. Heather Has Two Mommies is quite nice. (Bookland and Lambda Rising are good sources and they will order anything in print.)"

"Father's Day can be a hurdle for some kids. Talk openly as a family about how you can assist your child if day care or school activities will take place. (Our daughter would often make projects for her godfather if other kids were doing the same for their dads.)"

"As they get older, know when to back off and take your cues from your child as to how and when they tell their friends about having two moms. Changes are they won't have too much of a problem with this if they have grown up in an open environment. Our kids will develop their own style about many things and we need to gradually let go."

"Lastly, lighten up about being lesbian and enjoy being moms. It is the best of times and it goes too quickly!"

Maggie Fournier is an associate professor of nursing at the University of Southern Maine. She is currently conducting research on the topic of co-mothering and is writing a book on lesbian parenting with her partner, Cheryl Cicichowski. Maggie and Cheryl live in Portland, Maine, with their eight-year-old daughter, Emily.
**Fitness**

A stretch a day keeps aging away

by Martha Atherholt II

Contributor

Are you one of those people that thinks stretching is for wimps? Well, it's time for an attitude adjustment!

Aerobic exercise and strength training are not the only part of a healthy fitness program. For years, researchers have been proving the anti-aging benefits of regular exercise and now they are beginning to look at flexibility.

No matter how strong your heart and muscles are, time will eventually bring on tightness in the muscles and connective tissue. This leads to poor posture, backaches and stiffness in the hips and legs. A good stretching routine will not only improve flexibility, but enhance muscle tone, body awareness and appearance. Stretching can also give you better circulation, more energy, better posture and the ability to move more gracefully.

Recently a new approach to stretching, called "Active Isolated Stretching", has surfaced. This method is based on how the "stretch reflex" works in our muscles. Instead of using the traditional method of holding stretches for a long period of time (which is uncomfortable for less flexible people), Active Isolated Stretching uses motion.

The stretch reflex makes muscles want to contract after being stretched for only two seconds. If you continue stretching them beyond this point, you are essentially working against yourself, trying to stretch muscles that are contracting. Active Isolated Stretching is designed to work with the stretch reflex, by holding stretches for only 1-2 seconds, relaxing and repeating.

The following is a thirty-minute routine designed to focus on areas of the body which are prone to stiffness with aging. Prior to any stretching, make sure that you do some sort of warm-up activity. Walking, light jogging or cycling for 5-10 minutes is an adequate warm-up. As you begin your program, start with one set of each exercise for 8-12 repetitions, three times per week. Over a three to four week period, gradually build your program up to 2 sets of 8-12 repetitions. Hold each stretch for 2 seconds and return to the resting point. Remember to exhale as you stretch and inhale as you relax the muscles.

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*Although some in her party have counseled Susan Collins to modify her pro-abortion and pro-gay rights stands in order to appeal to more conservative voters, Collins says there will NOT be any changes.

Those views are fundamental beliefs of mine and I think they are shared by the majority of Maine people, she says. The government ought to stay out of personal decisions. I view the gay rights issue as one of discrimination. I belong to the party of Lincoln, and that ought to mean something."

The Maine Times, September 16, 1994

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