

Common Circle for Human Rights

c/o M. Lichtman, P.O. Box 793 Belfast, Maine 04915 • 338-5889 • Vol. 4, #6 • Sept./Oct. 1999

Common Circle: Our past, present and future

We, the Common Circle for Human Rights, are a group of individuals whose mission is to educate ourselves and the larger community on issues of equal rights and social justice. We hold social, political and cultural gatherings in order to:

- 1) facilitate respectful discussion and exchange of ideas;
- 2) create a more informed citizenry; and
- 3) increase the bonds of friendship and understanding among diverse people.

We are an open and evolving group of individuals. New members are always welcome. We have been in existence since the spring of 1996 and are an outgrowth of The Maine Won't Discriminate campaign in Waldo County. In November 1995 voters throughout Maine, and Waldo County, rejected an effort to prevent the inclusion of sexual orientation as a category for protection under the Maine Human Rights Act or in local ordinances. As a result of our work locally, many people wanted to continue our efforts to do education and outreach.

With that in mind we obtained a Maine Equity Fund grant in April 1997 and hosted two excellent programs in the months ahead. These were the Hate Crimes Awareness Program which included a showing of the video "Not in Our Town" and the Love Makes a Family National Photo exhibit and local panel discussion.

In February 1998 and before, many of our members were involved in organizing Waldo County in the second Maine Won't Discriminate to prevent the loss of civil rights based on sexual orientation, in the low voter turnout People's Veto vote.

We have hosted numerous monthly discussions on a variety of issues including same gender marriage, racism, being gay

during the Holidays, the Clean Clothes Campaign, Afro-American History, domestic violence and what inspires our political and social activism. We helped organize a local vigil in response to anti-Semitic and homophobic acts in Aroostook County. We continue to do political work, outreach and coalition building in order to strengthen our community.

We received another Maine Equity Grant in 1999 for technical support and plan to use these funds to create a web site, help with the Speakout Training and provide members with other training opportunities.

We anticipate being involved in two upcoming public referendum efforts. The most immediate will be to help assist the Campaign to Protect Women's Health's efforts to prevent the loss of a woman's right to choose in the so-called Partial-Birth Abortion Ban in November 1999 and in a likely referendum on Civil Rights in November 2000.

We have held several strictly social and fun events as well. We are currently involved in political work relating to equal rights, organizing a Speakout Training, and there is discussion going on about whether to create a PAC in order to be politically independent in upcoming campaigns.

We need and value new membership, energy and ideas to help our group grow and truly represent the depth and breadth of progressive social and political values that are present in the Waldo County area. We need people who are willing to assist in planning events, do outreach, help with fund raising and, help with producing and distributing our newsletter.

For more information, please contact Mitzi Lichtman at the address above or e-mail mitzijoy@mint.net.

Join the Circle by Larry Dansinger

What's more important, a night out at a restaurant or movies or ending hate and violence in Waldo County? Sometimes you might need that night out (or clothing item, or whatever the expense of the moment might be), but we all benefit from a community that feels safe and is safe for all its citizens.

One way to bring about that feeling of safety and respect is by giving your money and/or your time to the Common Circle for Human Rights. A check for \$10, \$20, or whatever you can afford can pay for this newsletter, help us sponsor programs, and support our work for civil rights legislation. Just fill out the form below and return it to the address above. If you can give time to CCHR, we can find a fun and interesting way for you to help out. Here are a few ways you can support CCHR:

- (1) Help collate and mail future issues of this newsletter;

- (2) Plan future educational events and/or discussion groups;
- (3) Make calls or distribute literature on behalf of the next civil rights vote;

- (4) Write articles for future newsletters;
- (5) Join CCHR's steering committee;
- (6) Work with a civil rights team in a local school;
- (7) Become a speaker on behalf of civil rights (by attending speakout training);

- (8) Attend vigils or other actions responding to a particular incident (anti-gay violence, synagogue desecration, etc.);

- (9) Contact local legislators about civil rights legislation;
- (10) Help coordinate a voter-identification project or rapid response team in your town;

- (11) Work within your religious or spiritual community.
Or dream up something else you'd like to do to help CCHR.
We hope you'll respond and support your local civil rights group.

Here's my support for the Common Circle for Human Rights:

_____ \$10 _____ \$20 _____ \$35 _____ \$60 _____ \$Other _____

_____ Please contact me about helping the Common Circle in other ways.

Name _____

Phone _____

E-mail (if any) _____

Address _____

Organization/affiliation (if any) _____

Return this form to: CCHR, PO Box 793, Belfast, ME 04915, 338-5889, mitzijoy@mint.net

Update from the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights

Next statewide meeting will take place Sept. 19 in Bangor

The Maine Coalition for Equal Rights (MCER) is a group of individuals and organizations who are committed to winning equal rights for Maine's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) citizens through broad-based education, grassroots organizing, and if need be, defending those rights at the ballot box. MCER brings together the talents and resources of equal rights supportive groups and individuals throughout the State for this effort.

Since February 1998, individuals and groups have been meeting to determine what next, where do we go and how do we get there? Over the past months, MCER has worked to include and represent all members (statewide) of the LGBTQ community and allies. The series of meetings, held mostly in Bangor, began merely as an opportunity for members of the LGBTQ community to discuss future possibilities. What has grown out of those meetings is collective support for a broad-based coalition designed not only to attain equal rights, but also to reach out and educate—especially the most rural areas of the State—on matters of concern to the LGBTQ community.

Campaign Philosophy: Our campaign for Equal Rights is locally based, respectful, affirming, and inclusive. It's objective is to achieve civil rights for LGBTQ citizens throughout Maine. We work in partnership with other groups to urge voters to support the inclusion of LGBTQ Mainers in the Maine Human Rights Act. Based upon meaningful and cooperative interaction, a central group manages the statewide campaign and provides support for local educational and organizing efforts.

The next meeting of MCER will take place Saturday, Sept. 19, from 1-4 p.m., at the UU Church, 120 Park Street, Bangor. All are welcome to attend this statewide steering committee event. For more information, see the listing in the events calendar.

To get involved with MCER Statewide contact one of the following Committee Members or attend the Coordinating Committee by contacting Mitzi Lichtman.

Education: Janice Campbell - 625-3689 or jaye39@cybertours.com

Grassroots Organizing: Susan Farnsworth 626-3312 farns@gwi.net

Membership & Coalitions/Structure: Ron Hersom - 990-5699 or rhersom@aol.com

Religious Education: Mitzi Lichtman - 338-5889 mitzijoy@mint.net

To get involved locally, come to a Common Circle for Human Rights Meeting or to Mid-Coast (Knox & Lincoln) for Human Rights (contact Mike Mayo 354-8781, 175 Main St., Thomaston mmayo@ime.net

Send any donations or offers to help to: MCER, 126 Western Avenue, Box 250, Augusta, ME 04330.

To help work on the bill in the next legislative session contact MLGPA (Maine Lesbian & Gay Political Alliance). Contact Person is David Garrity 1-800-55MLGPA, mlgpa@javanet.com (Board Meeting 3rd Thurs. @ 6PM; Legislative each Wednesday @ 6 PM).

Stop the Hate vigil planning meeting set

Stop the Hate vigils, sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Interfaith Alliance, will be taking place all over the country on October 7. Common Circle is interested in working with local individuals and churches to establish such a vigil here in Waldo County.

At this time, there is an initial planning meeting tentatively scheduled for Monday, September 13, at Mitzi's house (218 Rocky Road, Northport). Anyone who wants to help out with a local Stop the Hate vigil should contact Mitzi at 338-5889 or e-mail mitzijoy@mint.net for further information and directions. Even if you can't make the Sept.13 meeting, please call Mitzi if you are interested in helping to organize this event.

For more information about the Fellowship of Reconciliation, write to the Fellowship at P.O. Box 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960, visit their web page at www.nonviolence.org/for, or call 914-358-4601. Learn about the Interfaith Alliance at www.TIALLIANCE.ORG.

Calendar of Events

September 13

Stop the Hate Vigil planning meeting, at Mitzi's house in Northport. For more information about time and directions, call 338-5889 or e-mail mitzijoy@mint.net.

September 19

Maine Coalition for Equal Rights statewide steering committee meeting, 1-4 p.m., UU Church, 120 Park Street, Bangor. Open to all. FMI, contact Ron Hersom (990-5699) or Janice Campbell (625-3689).

September 24-26

Common Ground Country Fair, Unity, Maine. Information about civil rights groups (in Social and Political Action area) and lots of other good causes, good food, demonstrations, talks, and lots more. For more information, call 568-4142.

September 25

Speakout Training, all day, St. Margaret's Parish House, 95 Court St., Belfast. See separate article.

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Grassroots organizers' workshop coming to Lincolnville

"Making the Connections," the third GrassRoots Organizers Workshops (GROW) Conference, will be held October 22, 23, and 24 at Tanglewood Learning Center in Lincolnville. It is through "Making the Connections," learning the skill of drawing the line from our daily lives, through the political process, to the policies, and to the source that we will discover strategies for change.

Workshops that will take place over the weekend include:

- "Lessons from the Third World" will be an interactive panel of people who have spent extensive time in Central America and have a grasp on how our connections there can transform our lives.

- "Communication: Agent of Change" with Rae Sikora of the Center for Compassionate Living, will train us in how to educate instead of argue, how to respond to differing view-

points, and how to stimulate critical thinking.

- "Building Mobilization Networks" with Rodney Hiltze, who is coordinating an action-based network among unions and community groups in Kennebec and Somerset Counties, will help us to put together a mobilization network of our own, "GROWNET."

- "Direct Action: Why and How," a hands-on training with seasoned and respected activists, including street theater, sit-ins and civil disobedience.

- "Conscious Living," a forum for visioning and actualizing conscious choices that can build working alternatives to the way we do things.

For more information, write or call: GROW, c/o Nancy Galland, RR1 Box 1013, Stockton Springs, ME 04981; Tel. 567-4075; e-mail: gallander@acadia.net.

Maine Speakout Project training September 25 in Belfast

The Common Circle for Human Rights, in conjunction with the Maine Speakout Project, is offering a Speaker Training in Belfast. It will take place Saturday, Sept. 25, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at St. Margaret's Parish House, 95 Court Street, Belfast. The cost for this workshop is \$10, and some scholarships will be available. Breakfast snacks will be provided, but participants must bring a bag lunch.

This training will prepare participants to speak briefly and non-confrontationally about issues related to sexual orienta-

tion, race, religion, physical ability, ethnic, class, or other minority groups. Participating in Speakout training does not require participants to speak, but it does give members of minority groups and their allies the tools to do so.

For more information or to register, contact Mitzi at 338-5889 or mitzijoy@mint.net; or Marcy at 589-4177 or change@midcoast.com. Registration deadline is Sept. 10.

This training is funded in part by a Maine Equity Grant from the Maine Community Foundation.

To PAC or not to PAC: That is the question for CCHR

You may have heard about some recent discussions taking place in the Common Circle's steering committee about whether or not we should organize a Political Action Committee (PAC). The reason we're talking about this is because, as we face a likely referendum in November 2000 on civil rights, we as a group need to evaluate what our role will be. In 1998 when we worked on that referendum, we did so under an agreement with the Midcoast Won't Discriminate group acting as our local PAC. Midcoast has since reorganized itself into a Knox and Lincoln County group and would prefer if we in Waldo County created our own mechanism for raising and distributing funds.

The PAC is a means for raising and distributing money specifically targeted to influence an election or vote. Statewide organizers have recognized the strength of local political organizing as an effective means of doing the educational and political work which needs to be done. If we in Common Circle wanted to become a PAC we would have to make some organizational changes and have someone in place willing to act as a Treasurer of the PAC. There are reporting guidelines that must be followed along with contribution guidelines.

Another idea is to create a new organization specifically set up to work on the likely referendum in 2000. If we chose to create a PAC in this manner then we could start raising and receiving funds now and use some of these to get our County better organized and to important voter I.D. work in the months ahead. Many believe that it will be beneficial to have more local control over what types of media and messages are used to support our cause and how best to reach

voters and get them out to vote.

Some of us in Common Circle really do not want to change our organizational structure and focus or lose our identity as an educational organization. However we also know that our historical roots and much of our energy over the last few years have been spent in doing political work and ground-building work to create a more open and understanding community in Waldo County. The reality of another likely campaign in 2000 presents us with an organizational challenge.

What do you think we should do? We will be discussing this at our next Steering Committee Meeting Sept. 9th. Let us know your thoughts, interest and availability to work on a campaign.

CCHR Member Spotlight:

Lynne Kaplowitz

Lynne reports that she has just celebrated her one-year anniversary at the Family Planning Association of Maine. She is working in the Training and Education Department for the statewide non-profit headquarters. The job involves coordinating and organizing conferences and trainings for health educators, teachers, students, guidance counselors, school nurses, and Family Planning clinicians. Lynne also edits and coordinates the publication of resource guides and newsletters for teachers. She is thrilled to be working in a field that provides the tools for young women to make intelligent and informed decisions about their lives.

Volunteers for choice needed *by Deborah Sheilds*

With less than two months to go before the vote on the abortion ban referendum, the No on 1 Coalition is stepping up its efforts to get volunteers involved. In addition to making a financial donation to the Campaign, one of the most important ways you can help protect reproductive choice in Maine is by volunteering to do phone banking this fall.

Phone banks are being established in Portland, Augusta, Bangor, and Lewiston. You can volunteer for the same night over the course of several weeks or a couple of nights here and there. We need you whenever you are available and are happy to accommodate a busy schedule!

The Maine Women's Lobby is coordinating the Augusta area phone bank. If you are able to volunteer in Augusta

please call the Lobby office at 622-0851 for details. If Augusta is not the most convenient location for you call Heather Emerson, the Campaign's phone bank coordinator, at 842-6461 or email the Campaign at MEChoice99@aol.com to sign up for Portland, Lewiston or Bangor.

For more information about the upcoming referendum including a brief statement about why this proposed ban is much more dangerous to women's right to reproductive choice than it may seem, please see the enclosed flyer.

The Lobby is known for the activism of its members, a reputation that has been proven again and again by your deep commitment to this issue. Your active involvement this fall is crucial. Please sign up now to help out however you can!

Civil rights teams in Maine public schools *by Karen Marysdaughter*

In 1996 the Attorney General of the state of Maine initiated a Civil Rights Team Project in the public schools in Maine to address the issue of bias crimes. The first year 18 middle and high schools were involved, followed by 56 schools the second year, and 96 schools this past year. This fall 127 schools, including a pilot project with 6 elementary schools, will have civil rights teams.

Teams are made up of students, faculty advisors, and community advisors. The Attorney General's office offers trainings, including information on the legal protocols for reporting civil rights violations. They also offer educational resources such as videos and speakers.

In the Belfast area, teams are in existence at Mt. View

Junior and Senior High and at Searsport Middle School and High School. I had an experience at Mt. View in Thorndike last April when the civil rights team invited London Mitchell to be a speaker at their annual Health Fair. (The CCHR sponsored a talk by London in Belfast a year ago on the subject of "Social Justice and Truth in History" at the Abbott Room.) London spoke to three different groups of students about the contributions of people of color to U.S. history.

People in communities whose schools do not yet have civil rights teams may contact Deborah Ferreira at the Maine Attorney General's office (626-8800) for information on how to get one started.

Calendar *continued from previous page*

October 2

Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine's ACT IV (Active Community Training), noon-5 PM, Memorial Union, University of Maine, Orono with speaker Frances Moore Lappe on democratizing the media. Contact the Peace and Justice Center, 942-9343 or peacectr@mint.net.

October 7

Stop the Hate--Interfaith Vigils Against Hate Violence taking place around the country on the anniversary of the murder of Matthew Shepard. Can someone organize one in Waldo County? Contact CCHR for details and information.

October 11

National Coming Out Day. Contact your local l/g/b/t group for more details.

October 16-17

"Grassroots Organizing and Coalition

Building," a talk by Suzanne Pharr, 9 AM-1 PM, Bangor Public Library (16th) and Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland (17th). Call Maine Community Foundation Equity Fund, 761-2440 for more information and to participate (no cost).

October 16

Church Street Festival, Belfast. We want to set up a table to do awareness work, education and fund-raising. If you're interested in helping out, call Marcy at 589-4177 or e-mail change@midcoast.com.

October 22-24

GrassRoots Organizers' Workshop weekend to learn skills for working with local grassroots groups, Tanglewood 4-H Camp, Ducktrap Rd., Lincolnville, cost about \$55 but less based on ability to pay. Nancy Galland, GROW, RR 1 Box 1013, Stockton Springs, ME 04981, 567-4075, gallander@acadia.net.

Nationwide civil rights news

Flying the friendly skies—

United offers full domestic partner benefits to g/l employees

WASHINGTON: In a bold move with global ramifications for gay and lesbian workplace equality, United Airlines—the world's largest airline—became the first U.S. airline to offer full domestic partner benefits on July 31, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

"This enormous victory will have a global impact in helping to create fair and equitable workplaces for gay and lesbian people," says HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. "We congratulate United for joining the rapidly growing legion of companies who realize that treating all employees with dignity and respect is good for business. United has definitely earned their wings."

United's domestic partner benefits package will offer a full range of coverage to gay and lesbian couples. These benefits include medical and dental benefits, life insurance, pension survivor rights, bereavement and medical leave and flight discounts. Heterosexual domestic partners will only receive non-economic benefits such as bereavement or medical leave and flight discounts.

The decision will affect 97,000 United employees worldwide. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, the airline said their domestic partnership program will not go into effect until May. United came under heat from gay and lesbian advo-

cates this year for joining in a lawsuit to stop San Francisco from making them comply with a local ordinance that said they must offer domestic partner benefits in order to do business in the city. United argued that they did not have to comply with the ordinance because they were a national company that only had to follow federal government mandates.

U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilkin recently ruled that the airlines had to provide "soft benefits" such as bereavement or medical leave. However, they did not have to offer employees economic benefits, such as pensions or health insurance. The airlines, represented by the Air Transport Association, are appealing the ruling. Nevertheless, airline industry experts expect other airlines to follow United's lead.

According to the Chronicle, a spokesman for the Air Transport Association said that although none of the group's members except United is offering the benefits, they probably will, even as they press for appeal.

The Human Rights Campaign is the nation's largest national lesbian and gay political organization with members throughout the country. HRC effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that lesbian and gay Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

New Jersey Supreme Court lifts Boy Scout ban on gays

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) —The Boy Scouts of America's ban on homosexuals is illegal under New Jersey's anti-discrimination law, the state Supreme Court ruled on Aug. 4.

The Boy Scouts vowed to appeal the court's ruling, which upheld a state appellate court decision, to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court, in a unanimous decision, sided with James Dale, a Matawan assistant scoutmaster who was kicked out of the Boy Scouts nine years ago when leaders found out he is gay.

The court said the Boy Scouts organization constitutes a "place of public accommodation" because it has a broad-based membership and forms partnerships with public entities and public service organizations. Thus, the court said the Boy Scouts fall under New Jersey's anti-discrimination law and cannot deny any person "accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges" because of sexual orientation.

The court also rejected the Boy Scouts' contention that striking down their ban on homosexuals violates the group's First Amendment rights.

"To recognize the Boy Scouts' First Amendment claim would be tantamount to tolerating the expulsion of an individual solely because of his status as a homosexual—an act of discrimination unprotected by the First Amendment freedom of speech," the decision reads.

Dale, now 29, earned 30 merit badges and various other awards and was an Eagle Scout during his 12 years in the organization. He was expelled in 1990.

A lower court judge ruled in the Scouts' favor in 1995, calling homosexuality "a serious moral wrong" and agreeing with the Boy Scouts that the group is a private organization and has a constitutional right to decide who can belong.

In overturning that decision last year, an appeals court said Dale's "exemplary journey through the Boy Scouts of America ranks as testament enough that these stereotypical notions about homosexuals must be rejected."

George Davidson, an attorney for the Boy Scouts, said this is the first time the group had lost such a case in a state's highest court. He had argued the group has a right to pick its own leaders without interference from "an all-powerful state."

"To us, the silver lining is it gives Boy Scouts the first opportunity to go the U.S. Supreme Court and get a definitive ruling to put an end to these lawsuits," he said.

The court decision rejected "the notion that Dale's presence in the organization is symbolic of Boy Scouts' endorsement of homosexuality. ... Dale has never used his leadership position or membership to promote homosexuality, or any message inconsistent with Boy Scouts' policies."

Dale scheduled an afternoon news conference at the New York offices of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, which represented him in court.

"It's a great day for our client, but also for both lesbian and gay people who want to join the Boy Scouts," said Beatrice Dohrn, legal director for the group. "It's also a great day for other people in the Boy Scouts who got a message today of inclusion rather than one of discrimination."

The Equal Rights Bill: an MLGPA report from the State House

Our new anti-discrimination bill, L.D. 2239: An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination, sponsored by Sen. Joel Abromson (R-Portland) has been introduced. The Judiciary Committee has ordered the bill carried over to the second session which begins January 2000. A great deal of research and thought has gone into the new bill. The final bill includes ideas from the other five civil rights bills that were initially submitted as well as MLGPA's recommendations. Sen. Abromson has lined up an unprecedented and extraordinary list of sponsors, including members of Republican and Democratic leadership from both houses. It is cosponsored by Representatives Mike Saxl, D-Portland and Michael Quint, D-Portland; Robert Stanwood, R-Southwest Harbor; Dan Williams, D-Orono; and in the Senate by President Mark Lawrence, D-York; Senators Jane Amero, R-Cumberland; Betty Lou Mitchell, R-Penobscot; and Bruce MacKinnon, R-York; and in the House by the Speaker G. Steven Rowe, D-Portland; Representatives Robert Cameron, R-Rumford; William Norbert, D-Portland; and Kathleen Stevens, D-Orono. Sen. Abromson and all of the bill's co-sponsors deserve our appreciation.

While there are no changes in its basic provisions, the bill does propose new language to make it abundantly clear that the Maine Human Rights Act doesn't grant any "special rights" or "legislative approval." We believe that by putting those questions to rest, we remove the objections of many people who have not supported this measure in the past. Here are its key points:

- Discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations and credit based on sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual) will be prohibited.
- The bill will add sexual orientation to each section (employment, housing, credit and public accommodations) of the Human Rights Act, not just to the policy section as in prior bills.
- The legislation and ballot question both clearly state that the Maine Human Rights Act does not convey legislative approval of, or special rights to, any person or group of persons.
- Religious organizations and institutions that do not receive public funds will be exempt from this bill.
- If passed by the Legislature, this bill will go on the ballot to be ratified by Maine voters in the next general election, November 2000.

The ballot question is stated within the bill and seeks a "yes" vote. It reads: "Do you favor ratifying the action of the 119th Legislature whereby it passed an Act extending to all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation the same civil rights protections now guaranteed to citizens on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin and physical or mental disability in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations and credit and where the Act expressly states that nothing in the Act confers legislative approval of, or special rights to, any person or group of persons?"

To our community and supporters the most controversial provision is probably sending it out to referendum. None of us is looking forward to another campaign. But, in the opinion of the bill's sponsors, it is necessary for a number of reasons. It would normally be far too soon after a defeat at the polls for the legislature to even consider passage again. The governor expressed the same concern, stating publicly that despite his strong and continuing support for our civil rights he could not sign such legislation unless it was going back to the people. Besides, let's face it, if we don't send it back to the voters, the Christian Civic League and Christian Coalition will. And they'll need 10,000 fewer signatures this time.

There are some important advantages to bringing a referendum forward ourselves. We can have a say on how it's worded and when the vote will be held. This bill will be on the ballot during the presidential election in 2000 and its language punches a big hole in the so-called special rights claim. We believe that too few people voted in 1998 for the results to accurately represent the will of the majority. Remember that the special election was in the dead of winter, voters in a number municipalities received poor notice and were confused by changes in voting places. We see a new referendum as a recount rather than a new ballot initiative.

Camden human rights ordinance is in the works

By Gretchen Piston Ogden

CAMDEN (Aug 3): Camden's Board of Selectmen voted Monday to continue discussion of a request from the town's Human Rights Study Committee to put a human rights ordinance on the November ballot. The vote was 4 to 1, with Selectman John French voting against the idea.

If voters approve it, the ordinance would ensure that no one is discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation. The Camden draft ordinance is based on an ordinance passed in South Portland last November.

The ordinance would ban discrimination against people in Camden—based on their sexual preference—in housing, employment, credit, public accommodations and other areas. In this case, sexual preference refers to gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Mike Ray, chairman of the Human Rights Study Committee, said he hoped Town Attorney Terry Calderwood

could go over the proposed ordinance and bring any suggestions he has to the next meeting for the Board of Selectmen to discuss.

"We're not in a position to be able to defend an ordinance like this, are we?" Selectman John French asked. "It could cost us \$20,000 or \$30,000 just for a \$1,000 violation. Is there a really a need for us to do this? There are federal statutes already that protect these rights." Ray said there aren't currently any laws on the books at either the federal or state level.

"So we wouldn't be duplicating federal law. You won't find any formal complaints here in Camden, but that doesn't mean (discrimination) doesn't exist," Ray said.

A similar referendum item was repealed at the state level last year, but Camden voters overwhelmingly voted against that appeal. That led to formation of the study committee, and ultimately to the Aug. 3 recommendation.