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# MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

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

November 1997

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## People's Veto Drags Maine into Yet Another Divisive Referendum Campaign

The Christian Civic League and Christian Coalition may have collected enough signatures to bring LD 1116 up for a potential veto, but they're in for a tough fight. Progressive political forces in the state are coalescing once again to put an end to this blatant discrimination.

Maine Won't Discriminate is preparing for yet another expensive, divisive statewide referendum challenging gay peoples rights to be protected from discrimination. Former coalition members, with MLGPA at the forefront, have been meeting to discuss strategy. The campaign this time, in comparison with the 1995 "NO on 1 campaign", will be leaner and meaner with a huge emphasis on "turnout" (getting supporters to the polls!).

Governor Angus King will determine the date of the vote, which was not set as of the printing of this newsletter. It will be very important for every member of MLGPA, and everyone who supports our community, to help with this effort. The opposition is well organized and well funded - as is evidenced by the fact that they gathered almost 25,000 signatures in less than two weeks.

Don't be fooled -- a win in 1995 does not assure us a win today. Previously, we outspent the opposition (Concerned Maine Families) ten to one and only won by a margin of 6% (53% - 47%). Also, some heavy-hitting radical right groups, such as the Christian Coalition did not support Carolyn Cosby and her followers, but are squarely behind the Christian Civic League and the Christian Coalition of Maine.

"Maine Won't Discriminate", whose official name this time around is "Maine STILL Won't Discriminate", will succeed once again if the entire state rallies behind it and sends the message to Maine citizens that we will not tolerate discrimination.

Please help us!

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

The MLGPA Legislative Committee has been coordinating volunteers for the signature challenge. In collaboration with the reactivated MWD organization we have identified over 400 volunteers to work around the clock to challenge the signatures. Seasoned members have been joined by energized new volunteers, like Sam Sherman' who has taken on the massive task of organizing the volunteers.

Once the signature challenge is complete, the Committee will focus its energy on identifying candidates for the next round of legislative races. Then we'll review and recommend action on potential legislation before the Second Session of the 118<sup>th</sup> Legislature. Should the signature challenge not be successful, in addition we will work collaboratively with MWD and our coalition partners to assure defeat of the referendum.

If you are interested in joining the Legislative Committee contact either Dan Stevens at 622-6631 or Celeste Gosselin at 657-6092. Meetings are Wednesday, 6pm at the Maine Education Association office in Augusta.

# MLGPA

## Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

### Executive Committee:

Betsy Smith  
*President*

Dan Stevens  
*Vice President*

Rich Couch  
*Treasurer*

Tom Coffin  
*Recording Secretary*

### Board Members:

Harold Booth

Judy Edgerly

David Garrity

Jen Goldman

Celeste Gosselin

Rick Gowen

Sara Hanna

Brian Kaufman

P.J. Mears

Teague Morris

David Rappoport

Erik Richard

Julie Rothrock

Susan Sparaco

Mark Sullivan

Del Wilson

### Executive Volunteers:

Maggie Allen

### Mailing Address:

PO Box 232  
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

### Office Telephone:

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

## A word from the president...

When I awoke on the morning of September 19, 1997, I had the most amazing experience of *deja vu*. Unfortunately, it was not pleasant. After having enjoyed an incredible summer of finally feeling that LGB people matter in the state of Maine, I once again felt relegated to the back of the bus. We had such a short time to revel in our victory. And we never even saw the bill become law.

But I chose to look at it as if it was part of a master plan. That to genuinely earn our right to be protected from the discrimination in this state, we had yet another battle to fight, and yet another battle to win. Our continued struggle is clearly meant to be part of our history. And we will happily record our history when it is finally over.

We WILL win this war, but there's a much bigger chance that we will lose this battle. A month ago, I was feeling confident that there was not a chance we could lose. But then some statistics came my way -- such as the recent poll suggesting that the majority of those polled would vote to repeal the bill, and the informal poll taken at Cony High School where 80% of the students polled voted to repeal the bill.

And then it occurred to me that people were voting on this issue with only the information that the Christian Civic League has spouted out all summer. They have covered the air waves and the printed press with their spin on this issue -- which we know is the argument for special rights. It's no wonder the people are voting to repeal the bill -- after all, I wouldn't want another group to have more rights than I do, just equal rights.

So it is up to us to educate people as to what this bill actually says and does. TV ads will do a certain amount of educating, but they're expensive and they offer only sound bites. We need real conversations with people who are uninformed on this topic. And we need ALL of our supporters to vote on election day.

The bill, as we all know, says nothing about special rights. The bill is actually the Maine Human Rights Act, which currently bans discrimination based on race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry or national origin, age, family status, and marital status. The bill would simply add sexual orientation to this list of groups.

Please help us in this ever so important part of history. We can win this campaign, but we will need every single soul to do it. Call us at the MLGPA office (761-3732) or attend a legislative committee meeting each Wednesday evening, 6-8pm, at the Maine Education Association in Augusta.

Finally, please consider supporting MLGPA at a higher level than last year. Your contribution, whether for membership renewal or for a campaign pledge, will go directly to fighting this campaign.

In solidarity,  
Betsy Smith

## Signature Challenge to Kick Off Referendum Campaign

MLGPA is about to pull off one of the largest gatherings of volunteers in the history of Maine gay politics. To support the Maine Still Won't Discriminate signature challenge, MLGPA is providing almost 600 volunteers for a period of 7 days, 24 hours a day, in order to comb through each and every name the Christian Civic League gathered.

Lest someone question whether we're interfering with the democratic process-- on the contrary. The democratic process took place two years ago, when the citizens voted NO to denying protection from discrimination to LGB people. The Legislature and the Governor then voted to support that position in the spring. Furthermore, the democratic process spelled out in the intent of the United States Constitution says that the majority should not vote on the rights of the minority. (And if they do, the citizens should at least have the right to current and correct information).

The Christian Civic League fed the citizens of Maine false information during their signature drive this summer. Unfortunately, during a short referendum campaign like this, there is not enough time to educate all citizens as to the correct information. Therefore we are attempting to prevent Maine citizens from having to endure yet another expensive, divisive campaign, when that money could be better spent on education and health care, or even on victims of hate crimes, such as the young high school boy in Augusta.

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TO VOLUNTEER FOR A SHIFT PLEASE CALL THE ML/GPA OFFICE 761-3732

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## A Word From the Treasurer...

Hillary Rodham Clinton made reference to an old African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child." Well, it takes memberships to support an organization!

I want to share with all of you the number of memberships that it takes to run MLGPA. Our rent at the Peace & Justice Center in Portland takes 72 (\$25.00) memberships annually, having a toll-free telephone line requires 192 memberships each year, and access to the internet requires 8 memberships annually. Each of these expenses helps you, our valued member, gain access to MLGPA. It takes 272 memberships for MLGPA just to exist in the capacity described. That doesn't even begin to cover the cost of passing legislation, fighting referendums, and working toward equality for all gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered individuals in the State of Maine.

Now that you know how vital your membership is to MLGPA, I hope that you will consider renewing your 1998 MLGPA membership early. If you are reading this message and are not a member (you know who you are) please consider joining MLGPA so you too can join in the fight for equality right here in Maine. Of course, if you can, we would welcome memberships at categories higher than \$25.00. Consider renewing at the Supporter Level or the Legislative Leader Level. Remember there is nothing wrong with donating money early and often to support MLGPA!

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## NOTICE TO MEMBERS ABOUT CHANGE IN BY-LAWS

MLGPA has been in discussion for a year on the topic of extending our Board term from one year to two years. With each board member serving two years, in staggered terms, we would only need to replace half the Board each year. The benefit will be more continuity among Board members and the responsibilities they take on. Given that we are a volunteer organization it is essential that we have continuity from year to year.

MLGPA by-laws require that we inform our members of any proposed change in by-laws 14 days prior to the new change going into effect. If you wish to have input on this topic, please contact us at the MLGPA office at 761-3732.

## Volunteer Corner

First of all, thank you to the volunteers who helped staff MLGPA's booth at the Common Ground Fair! We had a great turnout, sold lots of merchandise, continued spreading the word about MLGPA and educating people about LGBT issues in the state of Maine.

For those of you interested in volunteering for MLGPA, we can use the help! The possible upcoming referendum will occupy the bulk of MLGPA's time over the next several months. If you can help with legislative activities, please contact Dan Stevens or Celeste Gosselin via the MLGPA office in Portland, 761-3732.

Additional help is welcome at the Halloween Ball in Portland on October 31. Please call the office and leave word of your interest.

I am excited about continuing my role as Volunteer Coordinator for the 1997-98 term. Feel free to give me a call at the office or e-mail me at [jarothrock@juno.com](mailto:jarothrock@juno.com), and we can talk about ways for you to get involved with MLGPA.

-Julie Rothrock

## Dirigo Alliance Annual Dinner Friday, November 14

November 14, at 5:30pm at the Eastland Hotel in Portland. The evening will consist of a social hour, dinner, and a program. For more information and tickets write to Dirigo Alliance, PO Box 2333, Augusta, 04338, or call 874-9668.

Dirigo Alliance extends an invitation to its annual Dinner to all MLGPA members and friends. The Dirigo Alliance Dinner will be held on Friday,

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

## HALLOWEEN BALL -- NOT TO BE MISSED!! FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 7:30 - midnight

MLGPA, in conjunction with Above and Beyond, presents its first ever Halloween Ball, October 31, 7:30pm -midnight, at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland.

Tickets are going fast, so call to reserve at 207-773-6974.

This is a night for fun, frolic, and friends, and not to be missed is the Costume Contest. Prizes to be awarded at 10pm sharp, and to be judged are:

Funniest  
Tackiest  
Sexiest  
Scariest

Most Elegant  
Most Politically Correct  
Most Original  
Most Politically Incorrect

### Best of the Ball

Join our celebrated judges; Lynn Deeves (Entertainer Extraordinaire), Deputy Chief Mark Dion (Portland Police), Bob Dyk (WMTW-TV Channel 8), Marvin Ellison (Bangor Theological Seminary), Ms. Karla (Miss Gay Maine), Jim Neal (Flaming Entrepreneur), Pat Peard (Maine Won't Discriminate), Melodie Peet (Commissioner of Mental Health), Mark Persky (WBLM Radio Morning Man), and Chris Robinson (InNewsweekly) for the time of your life.