

# MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

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

December 1997

## More Than 400 Volunteers Rally for Signature Challenge

The signature challenge to the Christian Civic League's anti-gay petitions drew hundreds of volunteers from across the state. During the week of October 20, Maine Won't Discriminate, supported by MLGPA, staged a massive signature challenge. Over 400 volunteers worked 24 hours a day checking for invalid signatures. The petitions are an attempt to veto the anti-discrimination bill passed this spring by the legislature and signed by the governor.

Although the Secretary of State declared 58,000 signatures to be valid, Maine Won't Discriminate believes that a number of those signatures are not valid. On October 27, Maine Won't Discriminate filed a case in Kennebec County Superior Court to refute many of the signatures deemed valid. MWD contends that there were numerous irregularities in the way that

many of the names were collected. In all, they are asking the judge to review 15,000 names which were identified as having been collected illegally. If the judge rules in our favor for all 15,000 names, the petitions will contain less than the minimum number of signatures required to put this issue out to referendum.

Judge Cole heard the case on Tuesday, November 18, and expects to announce his decision on Friday afternoon, November 21, in the Cumberland County Superior Court. Depending on his decision, some of the points in the case may require additional evidentiary hearings. If he rules against us, we will be heading for a vote in the early months of 1998. Governor King will set a date for the election after the decision is made.

## Maine STILL Won't Discriminate

Two years after the successful defeat of Question 1, Maine Won't Discriminate is once again up and running and preparing us for another victory at the polls. If the judge of the signature challenge case rules against invalidating at least 7,000 signatures, we will be in the midst of a statewide referendum campaign.

The question this time reads "Do you want to reject the law passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation with respect to jobs, housing, public accommodations and credit?" The goal of the campaign will be to identify as many of our supporters as needed to win (50% + 1 of the voters) and ensure that they get to the polls to vote NO on election day (date as yet to be determined).

This process will require the help and support of everyone. Our challenge is greater this time, since our

opponents (Christian Civic League and Christian Coalition of Maine) are well funded and well organized, not to mention politically clever—they are calling their campaign "Vote YES for Equal Rights." We must get the message out, "Say NO to Discrimination!"

Maine STILL Won't Discriminate, the name for this campaign, will be looking for individuals in local communities to organize, identify supporters, update local voter lists, raise money, and do an assortment of other tasks. If you are interested in volunteering for the campaign, you can contact the campaign staff:

- ▼ by e-mail: [vote-no@maine.com](mailto:vote-no@maine.com)
- ▼ by mail: Maine Won't Discriminate  
PO Box 11061  
Portland, ME 04104
- ▼ by telephone: 842-6600 (Voice-mail)



# MLGPA

**Fighting for Fairness  
Since 1984**

**Executive Committee:**

Betsy Smith  
*President*

Dan Stevens  
*Vice President*

Tom Little  
*Treasurer*

Tom Coffin  
*Recording Secretary*

Judy Edgerly

Julie Rothrock

Susan Sparaco

Del Wilson

**Board Members:**

Harold Booth

David Garrity

Jen Goldman

Celeste Gosselin

Rick Gowen

Sara Hanna

Brian Kaufman

P.J. Mears

Teague Morris

David Rappoport

Erik Richard

Mark Sullivan

**Executive Volunteers:**

Maggie Allen

Kate McLaughlin

Sam Sherman

**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 232  
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

**Office Telephone:**

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

## *A word from the president...*

I am consistently amazed at the support and unity of the LGBT communities here in Maine. Though we are scattered across a vast amount of land and live in all types of settings from urban (well, Portland!) to rural (you name the town!), we gathered by the hundreds in Hallowell to check for invalid signatures on the Christian Civic League's petitions. It was not a glamorous job nor was it especially convenient, but over 400 people pulled together to do what had to be done.

Many thanks go out to the people who helped coordinate the volunteers and organize the challenge—in particular a special thank you goes to one individual who single-handedly coordinated over 400 volunteers to work around-the-clock shifts for the entire week. Thank you to Samantha (Sam) Sherman, from Wilton, who not only coordinated the volunteers, but who camped out in Hallowell all week so that she could meet and greet all the volunteers.

MLGPA is very lucky to have Sam as a committee member and contributing volunteer. She serves on the communications committee and will soon be providing services for our hate crimes prevention program. Thank you, Sam!

Thanks also to the organizer of the signature challenge — Betsy Sweet. Betsy spent weeks coordinating with the Secretary of State's office and then organized all of the logistics and training for the challenge. Several individuals described the challenge as a well-oiled machine. Thank you, Betsy.

If the signature challenge fails, we will need to rally once again and give our time and energy to the referendum campaign. It is absolutely essential that we defeat the people's veto of this bill—it may be another twenty years before we pass an anti-discrimination bill again.

As we forge our way through this campaign battle, MLGPA remains committed to defending the bill that we fought so hard to pass this spring. Although the campaign will be spearheaded by Maine Won't Discriminate, MLGPA will play an integral role in ensuring that the people's veto is defeated.

In solidarity,  
Betsy Smith

## **MLGPA Welcomes New Members**

During the last four months, eighty new members have joined MLGPA. Welcome, and thank you for your support and commitment to civil rights and the LGBT communities. You are all invited to attend the monthly Board meetings on the third Thursday of each month, at the Maine Education Association in Augusta, 6–9pm.

There are also opportunities to participate on committees. The current MLGPA committees are: legislative, membership, volunteer, communications, special events, finance, and fundraising. Meeting days and times are determined by each committee.

If you need directions to a Board meeting, or would like to join a committee, please call the MLGPA office (761-3732).



## New Members Elected to MLGPA Board of Directors

The newest members of the MLGPA Board of Directors were elected at the annual meeting in September. There are twenty MLGPA Board members and several non-Board committee members who span the state of Maine. Though we strive for geographical representation, we still need to improve our representation in northern Maine. Anyone from northern Maine who is interested in serving on the Board should contact Betsy Smith at 1-800-55-MLGPA.

The new members of the Board for 1997-98 are:

Judy Edgerly, Hallowell  
Special Events Committee

David Garrity, Portland  
Communications Committee

Jen Goldman, Portland  
Special Events Committee Co-chair

Rick Gowen, Standish  
Membership/Fundraising Committee

Sara Hanna, Portland  
Membership Committee Chair

Tom Little, Brunswick  
Treasurer

Teague Morris, Dresden  
Communications Committee

Erik Richard, Portland  
Legislative Committee

Julie Rothrock, Portland  
Volunteer Coordinator

New committee members who are not Board members are:

Maggie Allen, Bath  
Special Events Committee Co-chair

Scott Cowger, Hallowell  
Legislative Committee

Sam Sherman, Wilton  
Communications Committee

Congratulations and many thanks to all of you for your commitment to the LGBT community!

## MLGPA Matching Donation Nears Deadline

If you or anyone you know is not a member of the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, now is the time to join. In an attempt to build broad community support for civil rights and social services, an anonymous donor is matching, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, all new memberships until the end of 1997.

Join now (or give a gift membership) and your money is worth twice as much—twice as much support for fighting the upcoming referendum—twice as much support for programs that prevent discrimination and hate crimes—twice as much support for having a presence in the legislature to defend and advocate for civil rights—twice as much support for offering statewide educational resources and opportunities.

Please don't wait—call the office today (800-556-5472 or 761-3732 in Greater Portland) and request a membership brochure for yourself or someone who you know would be interested. The deadline for matching funds is only a few short weeks away!

## Some Upcoming Activities...

December 3, 10 & 17 — MLGPA Legislative Committee meeting, 6-8pm, MEA in Augusta. Join us to work on the referendum and a candidate endorsement program.

December 7 — Lea Delaria (Lesbian Comic), with guests Martin Swinger and members of the Maine Gay Men's Chorus, Holiday Inn By the Bay. For tickets call *Above and Beyond* at 773-6974.

December 18 — MLGPA Board meeting, 6-9 pm, Maine Education Association in Augusta. Everyone is welcome. Great opportunity to join a committee.

**Do your part to take  
BIG MONEY out of politics!**

*Check the box for Clean Elections on  
your 1997 Maine tax form.*



## Volunteer Corner

by Julie Rothrock, Volunteer Coordinator

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have given their time and energy to MLGPA in the past, and those who are currently involved in volunteer activities. It was very rewarding and heartwarming to see the signature challenge in action—all of us working together in an effort to stop this referendum before it begins. Thanks to you all!!

I also want to thank those volunteers who helped out with the Halloween Ball. The evening was a blast and we're already looking forward to next year!

One of the best things about working with volunteers is getting to meet new people. If you are interested in volunteering with MLGPA, please let me know! Leave a message on our answering machine (1-800-55-MLGPA or 761-3732) or e-mail me at [jarothrock@juno.com](mailto:jarothrock@juno.com). In your message, tell me whether you would like to volunteer for legislative activities, special events, newsletter mailings, or all of the above. If we have to go through this referendum campaign, we will need all the help we can get. I look forward to hearing from you!!

## Halloween Ball A Smashing Success

The first annual MLGPA Halloween Ball, held at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, was a fabulous evening of fun and frolic. Over 500 people came out to play dressed in everything from nothing to the Christian Civic League's petitions—all competing in the costume contest. Prizes were awarded for the Funniest, the Tackiest, the Sexiest, the Scariest, the Most Politically Correct, the Most Politically Incorrect, the Most Original, and Best of the Ball.

We enjoyed a performance by "Two Left Feet," a competitive two-stepping dance troupe and a marvelous parade of all contest participants led by the Shoestring Theatre. The evening was filled with music and dancing and laughter.

Thank you very much to those people who made this event possible: David Rappoport, Julie Rothrock, Maggie Allen, Penny Rich, Jen Goldman, Judy Edgerly, and Richard and David at *Above and Beyond*. Thanks to their incredible imaginations and hard work, we had a terrific evening.

## MARK YOUR 1998 CALENDAR NOW!

For the  
MLGPA Annual Awards  
Banquet  
on  
Saturday, February 7  
at the  
Augusta Civic Center.

## Nominations for Awards Banquet

Each year MLGPA hosts an Awards Banquet to recognize and honor individuals who have contributed significantly to the LGBT communities. We strive to recognize those individuals whose contributions are not always visible but are invaluable. We need your help to achieve this.

If you know of someone who has contributed in some important aspect, please nominate that person for an award. The specific awards are spelled out on the nomination application, which is available through the MLGPA office. In the past we have honored people for legislative work, community service contributions, HIV/AIDS contributions, civil rights work, demonstration of outstanding family values, media recognition, and other varied areas.

Please contact the office (1-800-55-MLGPA or 761-3732 in Greater Portland) to request award nomination forms. Leave your name, phone number and address, and we'll get an application(s) to you as soon as possible. And don't forget to join us for an incredible evening — Saturday, February 7, 1998!