

MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

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

January 1998

Maine Won't Discriminate Positions Pro-Gay Forces for Victory

Maine Won't Discriminate is operating at full steam in order to deliver us another victory on February 10, 1998. Well organized and soon to be fully staffed, the campaign has settled into office space in Portland (565 Congress Street) from where they will run the campaign. Campaign manager Karen Geraghty says she is excited about the team they have put together and they look forward to teaming up with former and new MWD volunteers as this short campaign gets under way.

February 10 is less than 50 days away — not a long time to organize and execute a political campaign. The challenges facing us this time are not insurmountable, but are serious enough for us to need everyone's support. The Christian Civic League and Christian Coalition of Maine are organized and well funded, and they have had the advantage of dominating the airwaves since last summer. In order for us

to turn the tide and put our message out to the people, sufficient funding is needed.

Hence, MWD's most urgent need is financial support. With holidays upon us, it is difficult to contribute to a political campaign — but it is essential for us to give whatever we can. Our rights are at stake. And Maine is under the watchful eye of many civil rights advocacy groups across the country. A devastating loss in Washington State this fall has given some radical right groups the idea that they are succeeding in turning back the clock.

Don't let that happen in Maine. Step forward and make yourself available for this campaign. It is important that you speak with **EVERYONE** you know and encourage them to **VOTE NO** on February 10. Also, call Maine Won't Discriminate to volunteer on a campaign project. Together, we can do it.

MAINE WON'T DISCRIMINATE

565 Congress Street – 2nd Floor

PO Box 11061

Portland, ME 04104

207-842-6600 (voice mail)

E-MAIL: vote-no@maine.com

WEBSITE: <http://vote-no.maine.com>

Three Essential Things You Can Do for the Campaign:

- ▼ Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, urging people to **VOTE NO** on February 10, 1998.
- ▼ Send a contribution, payable to Maine Won't Discriminate, to PO Box 11061, Portland, ME 04104. Please ask your friends and family to do the same. Their financial support is vital.
- ▼ Prepare to spend as much time as you can between January 2 and February 10, helping the campaign with field work, including mass mailings, Get-Out-The-Vote activities, and phone banking.

Phone Banks: Phone banks will be part of the lifeblood of this campaign. They will be used to identify voters and to raise funds. Phone bank locations need to be

secured in every county in the state. Sites should offer five phone lines and be available for evening and weekend calling. Please make lists of potential locations (and volunteers to work the phones) and contact the locations directly to inquiry about use. For matter of efficiency and effectiveness in regard to phone banks, please **ONLY** contact the MWD office by e-mail or phone once a site has been secured.

Volunteer Office Work: If you or anyone you know is available to work weekdays in the Maine Won't Discriminate campaign office, please call 842-6600 and leave a message as to what days you can work. Volunteer assistance in the office is very important, since there are extremely limited funds to hire office staff.

MLGPA

Executive Committee:

Betsy Smith
President

Dan Stevens
Vice President

Thomas A. Little, C.P.A.
Treasurer

Tom Coffin
Recording Secretary

Judy Edgerly

Julie Rothrock

Susan Sparaco

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Celeste Gosselin

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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

E-mail Address:

mlgpa@javanet.com

Office Telephone:

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

A word from the president...

Though we never thought we'd be here, here we are. Election day for the attempted veto of our bill is February 10 and we find ourselves having déjà vu from two years ago, when Maine Won't Discriminate eventually led us to victory. Victory would be oh so sweet this time. It would be almost more sweet than last time, since last time we maintained the status quo after our victory. This time a victory would mean a statewide anti-discrimination law to include gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. If we defeat the attempted veto on February 10, our law will go into effect 60 days after the vote.

Please join the forces of this campaign—everyone is needed (see articles on MWD for how to contact the campaign). Together we can rally our supporters and get them to the polls. But we need grass roots mobilizing to achieve this goal. All of us have a responsibility to talk to everyone we know, to explain the scenario, and to encourage them to VOTE NO on February 10.

If you're not familiar with the scenario, here it is: in May 1997, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed an anti-discrimination bill which bans discrimination in housing, employment, credit, and public accommodations based on sexual orientation. (The actual legal measure is an amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act will includes sexual orientation along with the other categories of race, gender, disability, religion, and family status). Just after the bill was passed, the Christian Civic League began collecting signatures for a petition to have the bill vetoed. By September they had collected enough signatures to bring the issue to a public vote. The vote in February is a vote to reject the anti-discrimination bill. We want a NO vote—we do not want the anti-discrimination bill to be rejected.

The Christian Civic League's Political Action Committee has called itself "YES for Equal Rights," an extremely misleading motto. People will be confused, thinking that a YES vote means they support equal rights based on sexual orientation. But just the opposite is true. Please spread the word: NO to discrimination, NO to rejecting the bill, NO to bias and hate, NO to unequal treatment.... Just say NO!

In solidarity,
Betsy Smith

Two. Two. Two gifts at once.

Here's a really special giving idea for this time of year. How would you like to do some mentoring and give an MLGPA membership to a gay youth? And you'll be helping us receive two times the money, because our Fairy Godmother (generous donor) will match your gift! (You'd better hurry, because after December 31, we all turn into pumpkins and mice.)

Seriously, this is a great way to help two invaluable organizations. When you send us \$25, you'll be giving a membership to a young gay person from one of the growing number of OutRight chapters around the state. At the same time MLGPA will receive twice the money! Send your gift membership to: MLGPA, POB 232, Hallowell, ME 04347 or call us at 761-3732.

MLGPA Seeks Candidates for 1999 Legislative Session

The campaign to elect new and incumbent state legislators in November 1998 is now under way. Term limits will force some legislators out while others will choose to leave for personal reasons. The MLGPA Legislative Committee has begun the process of identifying and replacing those legislators leaving public office after this legislative session.

One of MLGPA's goals will be to identify and recruit progressive individuals to run for open seats and for seats that are currently held by non-progressive legislators. Having passed the anti-discrimination bill (the Amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act) last spring, we now know which legislators support equal rights for gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals—and which ones do not. MLGPA will support, by organizational endorsement, those legislators who voted for the bill. And for those who did not support us, we will work to replace them with progressive candidates.

Electing progressive legislators next year will be as essential then as it has been all along. If the anti-discrimination bill is vetoed on February 10, we will need independent, strong minded legislators to stand up and pass it again. Some legislators are voicing concern that if the bill is vetoed, then the will of the people has been spoken and legislators will not vote to pass it again. It would be a major setback to the gay rights movement—not just here in Maine but across the country as well—if the Legislature did not pass a similar bill for perhaps another 20 years.

If we defeat the attempted veto on February 10, we still have legislative issues that are vital to the LGBT communities. One is the ban on same-gender marriage, which eventually must be discussed, debated, and perhaps even voted on again.

For those reasons, it is clear that we must do whatever is necessary to elect legislators who will pass anti-discrimination legislation, regardless of political fallout from constituents. Therefore, we are looking for individuals to run for office. In the next newsletter we will print a list of districts where we need people to run. Please consider running for office yourself or recruit others you know who might be interested. MLGPA and Dirigo Alliance have plenty of information on running a campaign. Contact the MLGPA office if you are interested (207-761-3732).

We Don't Want You to Twist Anyone's Arm

But you must have some way to convince your holdout friends to become new members! And if you act right now, your new \$25 membership will turn into \$50 for MLGPA! A very committed donor is doubling whatever money we receive for new memberships. Time is running out; our matching fund will end on December 31. So mail in your new membership today. MLGPA, PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347 or call us up at 761-3732.

MLGPA Changes Membership Renewal Process

In the past, MLGPA's yearly renewal was conducted on a monthly basis, depending on the month in which an individual became a member. We have upgraded our system and have moved to an annual renewal time of January. Each of you received a membership renewal letter in late October or early November, asking you to renew your commitment to MLGPA for another year. Please use the stub at the bottom of the back page to renew your membership for 1998.

Upgrading the process to one annual renewal date will be more efficient and less costly, leaving us more time and money to work on issues important to you. You will most likely continue to receive fundraising appeals

throughout the year. Please respond to these whenever you are financially able. Memberships and additional contributions enable MLGPA to lobby for legislation, provide services and programs, and educate the public about LGBT issues.

We appreciate your continued support of the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance. As individuals who are working to achieve equality through legislation and education, we are indebted to those of you who support us financially. It is team work and we pledge to continue our share of the work provided there is financial support for what needs to be done. Again, we extend our appreciation to our valued members and supporters.

From the Special Events Committee

Mark your calendar for the **13th Annual MLGPA Awards Banquet** on Saturday, February 7 from 6:00pm-Midnight at the Augusta Civic Center. Scheduled just prior to the February 10 referendum vote to defeat the repeal of the Amendment to The Maine Human Rights Act, this is an important opportunity for our community to recognize and honor individuals and organizations who have contributed to the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in Maine. There will be a dance at 9:00pm immediately following the dinner and awards banquet. Entertainment will be provided by D.J. Lisa Vaccaro with a variety of musical styles and an emphasis on big band sounds.

We are now accepting nominations for the awards. Nomination forms can be requested by calling Del Wilson at 773-1229 and are due by December 29, 1997.

Invitations to the Awards Banquet will be mailed soon. Tickets for the full event are \$30 each and can be reserved by sending your payment (check, MasterCard or Visa) and the names of your guests to Banquet Reservations, PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347-0232. Dance tickets can be purchased at the door at 9:00pm for \$5.00. For ticket questions, call Judy Edgerly at 626-9309.

An additional way to support this important event is to purchase an advertisement in the MLGPA Dinner Booklet. Distributed to approximately 500 people, it is an outstanding way for you to promote your services. Please call Lisa Smith at 828-8626 for more information.

For additional information or to volunteer, call co-chairs Maggie Allen at 442-9513 or Jennifer Goldman at 871-5691.

A Mid-Winter Happening

You are all invited to come to a mid-winter happening presenting a full range of entertainment and opportunity to play and socialize!!!! There will also be political updates, opportunities to offer help during the last few weeks of the campaign and a place to make those all important last minute financial contributions!

WHEN: Saturday Jan. 17th, 1998, 8:00 to 11:00 P.M.

WHERE: Belfast Dance Studio — 109 High Street, Belfast, just up from the Belfast Co-op on the same side of the street.

WHAT: Music, games, nerf volleyball (anyone got a set?), beach blankets, sauna available, refreshments and you and your friends

BRING: Games, CD's and tapes, beach blankets, sunglasses, Hawaiian shirts - you get the flavor! Donations of food and refreshments are appreciated!

Everyone is Welcome!! A sliding scale will be available along with family rates!

More on this later. Hope you can all make it and spread the word!!

Mitzi 338-5889 All Great Minds Think Alike! What are you thinking about?

Betsy Smith Receives National Award

At a fabulous evening reception in New York City on November 20, 1997, Congressman Barney Frank presented the *Out* magazine Community Service Award to Betsy Smith, MLGPA President. Every year the magazine honors 100 gay men, lesbians and friends who've made news for their significant contributions to our community. However, Betsy was one of only seven people from across the country to receive an award in New York. Betsy's fellow

honorees included: Ron Woods, worker/activist and leader in the efforts to get a non-discrimination policy at Chrysler; Allan Gilmour, out Ford Motor Co. exec; attorney Beatrice Dohrn, legal director for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund; and Miguel Ayala, Chicago's first gay student representative to the school board. Gianni Versace was recognized with a special posthumous lifetime achievement award and Ellen DeGeneres was honored as the No.1 GLBT Hero(ine) of 1997.

Betsy had another way to describe her award's importance, "There were all these beautiful little crystal bud vases and one great big Waterford crystal bowl on the awards table. When they picked up the bowl and called my name, I couldn't believe it. I just stood there for a moment, thinking they must mean someone else."

Those of us who know Betsy a little can testify to her modesty. She was quick to say that the award really belongs to all of us in the Maine human rights community. Congratulations, Betsy!

Double Your Money, Double Our Funds

Only a few days left to double your money in the Great MLGPA New Member Drive. Just like 1997, it ends December 31st. When you convince your friend to send in \$25 for one year's membership, MLGPA will receive an additional \$25 in matching funds from an incredibly generous donor. Mail your new membership to: MLGPA, POB 232, Hallowell, ME 04347 or call us at 761-3732.