

MLGPA News

Politics, Education, Outreach

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

March 1999

MLGPA Legislative Report from Susan Farnsworth, Lobbyist

CIVIL RIGHTS BILLS

The incredibly good news is that six (!) civil rights bills were introduced this session, less than a year after the Feb. 10 vote to repeal the one we finally got passed. It is also wonderful to see that sponsors come from both parties, both houses and a wide geographic distribution. The sponsors have somewhat varying ideas on format and content of the actual bill and are currently still in the process of seeing if agreement can be reached amongst them on just one version of the bill; as a result, none of them has been printed yet.

We can be very grateful that so many legislators put this bill in.

- LR 41 Rep. Mike Saxl
(D-Portland)—An Act to Prohibit Discrimination
- LR 204 Sen. Joel Abromson
(R-Portland)—An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination
- LR 1156 Rep. Bob Stanwood (R-SW Harbor)—An Act to Prevent Discrimination
- LR 2285 Rep. Michael Quint
(D-Portland)—An Act to Prevent Discrimination
- LR 2920 Sen. Susan Longley
(D-Liberty)—An Act to Prevent Discrimination
- LR 592 Rep. Daniel Williams
(D-Orono)—An Act to Prohibit Discrimination Based upon Sexual Orientation

On a LESS positive note, also to be heard on 2/17 by Judiciary Committee:

LD 703 Rep. Adam Mack
(R-Standish)—An Act to Create the Maine Civil Rights of 1999.

This bill: 1) prohibits the State and its subdivisions and instrumentalities from discriminating or granting "preferential treatment" in the operation of public employment, education or contracting to any person on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin; 2) makes exceptions to "no preferential treatment" rule for (a) bona fide occupational qualifications based on sex or (b) any action required to avoid loss of

federal funds to the State and (c) a court order or consent decree already in effect; & 3) makes a violation of this "no preferential treatment" rule a violation of the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA), and gives the injured person the same remedies as a person injured by a violation of the MHRA. This would appear to prohibit affirmative action... and certainly has even broader implications.

NOTE: The Judiciary Committee has unanimously voted "Ought not to pass" on the bill to add motorcyclists to the Maine Human Rights Act.

FYI, the Judiciary Committee also

Continued on Page 3

**Come One Come All!!
MLGPA Annual
Awards Banquet
Celebrating 15 Years
March 6, 1999
Augusta Civic Center**

6pm – Social Hour

7pm – Buffet Dinner

8pm – Celebration and Awards

9-midnight – Music and Dancing

Tickets are \$30 per person.

Reservations must be made in advance.

For more information call 626-9309.

MLGPA

Politics, Education,
Outreach

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F.E. Pentlarge to Be Honored at Banquet

Frances "Effie" Pentlarge, long-time LGBT supporter and former MLGPA Board member, will receive a special honor at this year's banquet. Sadly, Effie was killed in an automobile accident last summer and MLGPA has produced a video about her life and work through the voices of those who knew her best. Effie spent years advocating for the LGBT community here in Maine. She is remembered as a fierce legislative advocate, first educating legislators then holding them accountable to their votes—and she

always followed up with a written note. An original founder of the first Maine chapter of PFLAG, Effie served as a role model to parents and families just learning they had a gay child.

Come spend a few minutes remembering the past, and those who have enabled us to get to where we are today. In a letter written to a legislator in 1985, Effie wrote that one day the civil rights bill for LGBT people will pass. Wouldn't she be proud to know that the fight continues, and that this time, we will win!

MLGPA Kicks Off Fundraising Campaign

In order to accomplish our goals for the current legislative session, MLGPA recently kicked off a fundraising campaign. We are already meeting two of our goals—to hire a professional lobbyist to help pass civil rights protections and to monitor all bills affecting the LGBT communities and to hire an experienced community organizer to mobilize supporters across the state as we prepare for the next effort to attain Equal Rights. Our third goal is to offer quality campaign leadership training to as many individuals as possible across the state.

Our legislative agenda is ambitious, urgent, and expensive. But if we don't succeed this time in attaining and main-

taining civil rights, it will be years before we can try again. Many MLGPA members have already pledged their generous support, but it won't be enough. We need the help of everyone. You will be asked to contribute to our capital campaign in the coming months. Please be as generous as possible. Thank you for your ongoing support of MLGPA.

Save the Date!
March 27, 1999

**Kick-Off Rally for
the Maine Coalition
for Equal Rights**

Cony High School
120 Cony Street, Augusta
11 am

Bring Lots of People!!

Followed by the Maine
Coalition for Equal Rights
monthly meeting, 1-4 pm.

Correction

Our apologies to two valued MLGPA members whose names we spelled incorrectly in last month's newsletter. Carol Brush and Betsey Coe. Please accept our apologies and thank you for your continued support.

MLGPA Legislative Report

Continued from Page 1

will be hearing an "ERA" bill this session:

LR 1376 Rep. Pingree RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Ensure Equal Rights

Finally, an apparently minor name change will be heard also on 2/17 by the Judiciary Committee:

LD 822 Rep. Christine Savage (R-Union)—An Act to Rename the Harassment Based on Characteristic Law

Proposes new name: "Interference with Constitutional and Civil Rights", but otherwise appears not to change this important law.

HIV BILLS

There are several very important HIV-related bills. Six of these bills were sponsored by one person, a doctor named Rep. Thomas Shields (R-Auburn), and appear to have significant negative consequences. They will therefore be opposed by MLGPA as well as the various HIV/AIDS advocacy groups and individuals.

A. HIV REPORTING.

LD 57 Rep. Shields,—An Act to Change Reporting Requirements of Certain HIV Test Results.

This bill is printed. It would require reporting to DHS of name of person testing positive for HIV — known as the "NAMES" bill.

Going to the Criminal Justice Committee are:

B. CRIMINAL PENALTIES RE HIV TRANSMISSION:

LD 211 Rep. Shields,—An Act to Criminalize the Negligent or Purposeful Transmission of HIV.

This bill has been printed and has been heard already, but is still in

committee, apparently awaiting the hearing on Sen. Daggett's bill regarding intentional transmission of STD's.

I submitted written testimony to state MLGPA's opposition to LD 211. This bill was also opposed by all HIV/AIDS related service organizations because it is very poorly drafted and because providers believe it would inhibit, not enhance, AIDS prevention efforts and further discourage people from disclosure to partners and from getting needed testing.

LR 2779 Sen. Daggett,—An Act to Create a Penalty for the Intentional Transmission of a Sexually Transmitted Disease

C. HIV TESTING BILLS—NOT YET PRINTED AND/OR SCHEDULED:

LR 474 Rep. Shields,—An Act to Require HIV Testing Prior to Obtaining a Marriage License

LR 475 Rep. Shields,—An Act to Require Testing for HIV and Blood-borne Pathogens of All Prisoners in the Maine Correctional System

LR 1076 Rep. Shields,—An Act to Require Mandatory HIV Testing of Prisoners

LR 478 Rep. Shields,—An Act to Repeal Special Counseling for HIV Testing

LR 1991 Sen. Goldthwait,—An Act to Provide for Testing of Blood Samples of Health Care Workers

LR 2581 Sen. Goldthwait,—An Act to Promote Effective Management of Occupational Exposure to HIV

D. MAINE HIV ADVISORY COMMITTEE BILLS.

Two bills, including one from Rep. Shield, propose major changes to the composition of the Maine HIV Advisory Committee. Rep. Shield's

bill, LD 58, An Act Regarding the Composition of the Maine HIV Advisory Committee, reduces Maine HIV Committee from 36 people w/ 3 year terms, to just 9 people with 2 years terms, and no more membership slots representing constituencies among the members. Under Rep. Shield's proposal, the members would be appointed by the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House based on knowledge and experience, rather than constituency.

A much better HIV Committee membership-related bill just recently printed is LD 1029, An Act to Amend the Laws Pertaining to the Maine HIV Advisory Committee sponsored by Rep. Michael Quint (D-Portland). It is cosponsored by Senators Betty Lou Mitchell (R-Penobscot), Joel Abromson (R-Portland) and Judy Paradis (D-Aroostook) and Representatives Art Mayo (R-Bath), Judy Powers (D-Rockport), Cassie Stevens (D-Orono), Eliza Townsend (D-Townsend); Elizabeth Watson (D-Farmingdale).

Rep. Quint's bill provides a new membership structure for the Maine Advisory Committee. It decreases the membership from 36 to 21 (still with 3 year terms) and provides for membership selection through a new membership committee elected from among the members of the HIV committee. The membership committee would seek nominations from the entities or person authorized by the terms of the bill to nominate. Members would include: two legislators (one Senator, one Representative), four representatives of entities serving persons with HIV, nominated by such agencies and organizations; three representatives of persons with HIV or at risk for HIV, nominated by HIV/AIDS prevention and other public health organizations; four health care practitioners involved with HIV/AIDS treatment, nominated by health care professional organiza-

Continued on Page 4

MLGPA Legislative Report

Continued from Page 3

tions; four providers of other services to persons at increased risk for HIV infection (to be chosen from providers of services to homeless persons, to high-risk youth, services to injection drug users, mental health or developmental disabilities services, and services to persons with hemophilia) and four persons representing interests related to HIV policy (to be chosen from representatives of statewide organizations concerned with family planning, public health, clergy, civil rights, and a representative of families with school-aged children and a representative of the Maine Human Rights Commission).

This bill would take effect October 1, 1999.

BILLS ON PEOPLE'S VETO AND REFERENDUM PROCESS

As you all know, two weeks ago was the first anniversary of our February 10 loss by the special referendum ["people's veto"] vote which repealed the anti-discrimination law passed in 1997. On Feb. 10 this year, the legislature's State and Local Government Committee heard LD 228, a "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Require a Referendum for a People's Veto to Be Held at a Primary or General Election", sponsored by Rep. Daniel Williams (D-Orono). An almost identical bill, LD 122, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Amend the Timing of Elections Following the Submission of a Petition for People's Veto" has been put in by Senator Susan Longley and is set to be heard on Tuesday, 2/23 by the Legal and Veterans Affairs Committee(!).

On 2/10/99, I handed in written testimony expressing MLGPA's support of LD 228 (for the same reasons we will support LD 122). MLGPA supports these bills because we believe, as a matter of fairness, that any

people's veto referendum question should be on the ballot when the maximum number of people will already be voting. Of course, it happens that doing so will be much more cost efficient for municipalities. In any case, it appears at this point that either one of these bills, or a combination of the two, stands a good chance of passage this session.

There are a number of other bills coming up that propose to increase the number of signatures needed for a people's veto, in a variety of ways, and which otherwise seek to make it somewhat more difficult to collect signatures for a people's veto or popular referendum. These bills are attracting support from a broad assortment of groups, but it is not clear yet whether they stand much chance of passage or what the real impact of them would be. Several are due to be heard on Tuesday, Feb. 23 by the Legal & Veteran's Affairs Committee:

- LD 641 Sen. Carey (D-Belgrade), —fixed number, 50,000 signatures, required for Initiative Referenda;
- LD 642 Sen. Carey, — Required number of signatures for Petition Signatures be 10% of Registered Voters; and
- LD 314 Sen. Kieffer (R-Caribou), —Restricting Circulators of Initiated petitions from Being within 250 feet of Voting Places.

OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST AND CONCERN TO MLGPA AND OUR ALLIES

There are over 20 ANTI-CHOICE bills of concern to MLGPA and our pro-choice allies. Very few have been printed as of yet and even fewer scheduled for hearing to date. So stay posted. There are also a number of other bills on various topics that could prove problematic and we'll be keeping an eye on those. More next month.

Please let me know if you want to know how to reach your legislator about a bill and I'd also love to know if you have done so! I am very honored to serve as your lobbyist. I am looking forward to working with you this session.

If you want to know more and if you have time to help out... please join us for Legislative meetings. Currently, we are meeting each Wednesday night at 6 pm at City Center in Augusta. Within another month, we expect also to have meetings in Bangor and Portland. Call 1-800-55-MLGPA to get information on times and places or call MLGPA's lobbyist, Susan Farnsworth at 626-3312 or e-mail: sfarnsworth@maine.com. There's lots to do. We need you help.

NOTE: The LD number is the number given a printed bill and it is the number to use when writing or calling your legislator about that bill. If bills are listed with only an LR number, it means they haven't been printed yet.

To contact or leave a message for your legislator:

Senate toll free during session:
1-800-423-6900; TDD: 287-1583
Senate FAX: 287-1900

House toll free during session:
1-800-423-2900; TDD: 287-4469
House FAX: 287-1456

To check on the status of an individual bill: 287-1692

Maine Legislature's Web Site:
www.state.me.us/legis

Advanced notice of public hearings:
www.state.me.us/legis/senate/documents/main

To reach Susan at her office:
626-3312; FAX 621-0960
or at state house/legis (lobbyists' message service): 623-1220

Equality Begins At Home (And Across the Country!)

March 21–27, 1999

Equality Begins At Home (EBAH) is a nationwide organizing initiative to strengthen and unite lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities and to promote equality at the state level. As we get closer to March 21, EBAH plans begin to take shape. The national coordinating group of EBAH (through the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force) has begun its media program and our local one will begin soon.

During the week of March 21–27 we will hold two projects and two big events. One of the projects is the production and showing of a public service announcement, highlighting the importance of equal rights for everyone. The other is the beginning of a statewide progressive voter identification project to take place over the next two years, in preparation for the referendum vote in November 2000.

Our first event will be a major exposition of LGBT organizations at

the State House in Augusta on Wednesday, March 24, 10am–2pm. The goal of the expo is for legislators and the press to see just how large and strong Maine's LGBT community is. Each group will highlight their organization and have the opportunity to talk to legislators about relevant issues.

The second event will be a huge kick-off rally for the next effort to attain equal rights. The rally will be held on Saturday, March 27, 11am, at Cony High School in Augusta. Mark your calendars and SAVE THE DATE. Although the civil rights bill has not yet been debated and voted on by legislators, we predict that we will be in a referendum campaign for equal rights within the next two years. Let us start now and be prepared. The new coalition—Maine Coalition for Equal Rights—is up and running and ready to start its program. Come join us!

Civil Rights Documentary

Bob Poirier and Betsy Carson, directors of the small film making company Allied Artists, are hard at work on their newest production. Bob and Betsy are making a documentary film about the LGBT civil rights movement in Maine. Although still in its infant stage, they have been documenting important events in Maine for a couple of years and by film's end will have spoken with hundreds of people familiar with the movement. The film is projected to bring to light the struggles, defeats, progress, and victories that we have experienced along the way to equality.

Their timing may be better than anyone ever expected. If they com-

plete the film in a year and a half, they may win a journalist award for capturing a 20+ year struggle on film at the exact time we win our equality. The Maine Diversity Alliance (MLGPA's non-profit arm) is proud to be the film's fiscal sponsor.

Maine Rural Network Growing

Maine Rural Network is in the process of forming social justice groups to: 1) make rural communities safer for everyone, 2) establish links between the LGBT community and other communities seeking social justice, and 3) educate Mainers about opposing discrimination through the use of democratic principles.

The next three meetings are scheduled for Oxford, Androscoggin and Kennebec Counties.

▼ Oxford County, February 27, 2:30 pm, 51 Morrill Rd., Norway (snow date Feb. 28, same time and location).

▼ Androscoggin County, March 13, 2:00 pm in Room 130 of the Olin Arts Center at Bates College, Lewiston (snow date March 14, same time and location).

▼ Kennebec County, March 28, 10:30 am, Waterville Unitarian-Universalist Church, 84 Silver St., Waterville.

For more information, location, or to form a group in your town, call Naomi at 642-2015. Come join a group in your county and bring your friends. It is in our hands to create safety and justice for all the people of Maine, from those living in the most populated areas to those living in the most remote regions.

Spring for Life Art Auction

To Benefit The AIDS Project

Holiday Inn By The Bay ▼ Sunday, March 21

Silent Auction begins at 12 noon; Live Auction begins at 3 pm.

\$15 admission ▼ For more information call 774-6877.

Calendar of Events

February 23 — Equality Begins At Home planning meeting. 6-8pm, MLGPA office, 1 Pleasant Street, 2nd floor, Portland. For more information call 761-3732.

February 24 — MLGPA Legislative Committee meeting. 6-8pm, Augusta City Center, 16 Cony Street, Conference Room C.

February 26 — Performance by Brian Freeman on the life and times of Bayard Rustin. 6:00pm reception: USM Campus Center Amphitheater. 7:30pm performance: Luther Bonney Auditorium. For special services call 780-5094 or TTY 780-5646.

February 27 — Monthly meeting of the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights (formerly known as the "Bangor meeting"). 1-4pm, UU Church, 120 Park Street, Bangor.

February 27 — Maine Rural Network Oxford County organizing meeting, 2:30 pm, 51 Morrill Rd., Norway (snow date Feb. 28). For more information call Naomi at 642-2015.

March 3 — MLGPA Legislative Committee meeting. 6-8pm, Augusta City Center, 16 Cony Street, Conference Room C.

March 6 — MLGPA 15th Anniversary Awards Banquet. 6 pm to midnight. Augusta Civic Center. Tickets \$30. For more information call 626-9309.

March 10 — MLGPA Legislative Committee meeting. 6-8pm, Augusta City Center, 16 Cony Street, Conference Room C.

March 13 — Maine Rural Network Androscoggin County organizing

meeting, 2:30pm, Olin Arts Center Rm 130, Bates College. (snow date Mar. 14) For more information call Naomi at 642-2015.

March 13 — Equity Institute of Maine's workshop on "Sexism and Heterosexism in Everyday Life." Friends Meetings House, Portland. For more information, call Kim at 829-3360 or Peter at 828-8639.

March 18 — MLGPA monthly meeting. UMA Campus Center in Augusta. 6-9pm.

March 21 — "Spring for Life" Art Auction, Holiday Inn By The Bay, Portland. For more information call 774-6877.

March 24 — "Equality Begins At Home" LGBT EXPOSITION LUNCHEON in Moose Room at State House in Augusta. 10am-2pm. For more information call 761-3732.

March 24 — MLGPA Legislative Committee meeting. 6-8pm, Augusta City Center, 16 Cony Street, Conference Room C.

March 27 — "Equality Begins At Home" Kick Off Rally!! 11am. Cony High School in Augusta.

March 27 — Maine Coalition for Equal Rights monthly meeting. 1-4pm, following rally. Cony High School in Augusta.

March 28 — Maine Rural Network Kennebec County organizing meeting, 10:30 am, Waterville Unitarian-Universalist Church, 84 Silver St., Waterville. For more information call Naomi at 642-2015.

Outright Prom Scheduled

"The Last Gay Prom of the Millennium"—Outright's Prom— will be Saturday, May 15, 1999 from 8-11 pm at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland. Tickets will be \$12.00 per person. The Prom is for people who are 26 and under and for those who support youth age/safety boundaries. For more information call 773-1229.

Also, Outright will be holding its first ever phon-a-thon fund-raiser Sunday, March 28th through Thursday, April 1 (6-9 each night). If you get called by Outright, please consider supporting their outstanding for youth.

Scenes from "Civil Sex"

Bayard Rustin was an organizer of the 1963 March on Washington and an associate to Martin Luther King. He was also a gay man. Brian Freeman performs material from his acclaimed play "Civil Sex," on the life and times of Bayard Rustin. Free and open to the public. Brought to you by the University of Southern Maine Provost's Office, USM Library, and the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Archives Programming Committee.

Friday, February 26, 6:00-7:15 pm, Reception (USM Campus Center Amphitheater). 7:30 pm Performance (Luther Bonney Auditorium). For special services call 780-5094 or TTY 780-5646.

Maine Coalition for Equal Rights

February 27, 1999

1-4pm, UU Church, 120 Park St. Bangor

The monthly civil rights meetings held in Bangor since September have evolved into the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights. Please join us for discussions, committee work, and campaign planning for the next referendum. Let your voice be heard!