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MLGPA News (December 1998)

Betsy Smith

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MLGPA News

Politics, Education, Outreach

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

December 1998

The Community Comes Together

In the most recent of the state-wide meetings held in Bangor this fall, seventy people came to a near unanimous agreement about how we should move forward to attain LGBT civil rights. The group voted 61 to 3 in favor of working to pass another anti-discrimination bill in the Legislature. Another proposal receiving strong support was to make education and organizing a component of any future campaign.

The latest gathering was a surprisingly diverse group of people. There were people from York County, Aroostook County, and many counties in between. There were five state representatives: Rep. Scott Cowger, Hallowell; Rep. Judy Powers, Rockport; Rep. Michael Quint, Portland; Rep.-Elect Robert Stanwood, Bar Harbor; and Rep. Elizabeth Watson, Farmingdale. Also in attendance were State Senator Susan Longley from Liberty, Chair of the Judiciary Committee and State Treasurer Dale McCormick. Portland City Councilor and MWD campaign manager Karen Geraghty, many former MWD chapter people, members of Maine Rural Network, the Maine Civil Rights March and Rally, Maine Speakout and, of course, many members of MLGPA, all attended.

For the first hour, we had an open brainstorming session on how the next campaign ought to be run. There was strong support for putting more of our energy into rural areas and designing our campaign efforts to better fit each of our regions. A number of ways were suggested to involve the community in more of our decision making. And we agreed that

there ought to be a way to resolve conflicts that may develop.

Throughout the three Bangor meetings this fall, options discussed ranged from doing nothing at all to starting our own referendum campaign right away. A number of ways to pass another civil rights bill through the Legislature were also considered. In the discussion about the bill campaign, there was common agreement that MLGPA should lead the way as it always has. Harold Booth made sure everyone knew they were welcome to join MLGPA and to come to our Legislative Committee meetings.

We also talked about ways in which we might modify the language of the bill. We may wish to consider adding language such as: "this does not grant any special rights," "this does not establish affirmative action" or "this does not represent an approval of homosexuality." People suggested we review the amendments to New Hampshire's civil rights law—although they may be too limiting—and meet with the Catholic Church to see if we could find an acceptable compromise.

November 2000 was targeted as the best date for another referendum

vote, if necessary. Most people seemed resigned to having a referendum attached to the anti-discrimination bill, but there were two thoughts on how to get there. Believing that no one's civil rights should be subject to a popular vote, some people felt we should not accept a referendum voluntarily. Others felt that a referendum is so certain that for us to be in control of the process, we ought to include it in the bill from the beginning.

We hope to discuss how to deal with adding a referendum and any possible changes to bill language at the next statewide civil rights meeting, which is planned for Saturday, December 5th from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at the Hammond St. Church in Bangor. We will also discuss how to set up an education and organizing effort and how to put together the next coalition and campaign. We hope to see everyone, especially YOU, at this meeting. The work is about to begin!

Next Statewide Civil Rights Meeting: Saturday, December 5, 1-4pm, in Bangor at the Hammond St. Church. Please call MLGPA for further details (1-800-55-MLGPA).

MLGPA Membership Renewals... An Opportunity to Support the Community!

Your 1999 membership renewal is on its way. Renew today so you won't miss even one issue of the MLGPA newsletter. Now that the community has decided to go forward with a new legislative civil rights bill—possibly followed by a statewide referendum—you won't want to miss

updated information about what's happening and how you can get involved.

Your membership dollars allow MLGPA to be a strong political voice in the Legislature and the community. Please continue to support this work of outreach and advocacy. **RENEW TODAY!**

MLGPA

Politics, Education,
Outreach

Executive Committee:

Betsy Smith
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Rich Couch

Honorary Board Members:

Judy Edgerly

Richard Steinman

Del Wilson

Mailing Address:

PO Box 232
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

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mlgpa@javanet.com

Office Telephone:

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



Congratulations South Portland!!

On November 3, South Portland joined the small but growing number of Maine communities who have passed civil rights ordinances to protect their gay, lesbian, and bisexual citizens. In a 54%-46% victory, South Portland weathered the radical right, an unfortunate Vote No mailing in their Vote Yes campaign, and the despicable distribution of the "Gay Agenda."

South Portland Citizens FOR Justice (the vote was either for or against the ordinance, just in case you wondered why

their campaign signs said vote FOR human rights!) waged an excellent campaign that mobilized many volunteers for phone banking and lit drops, raised a significant amount of money, and solicited the support of dozens upon dozens of South Portland's businesses, elected officials, and religious leaders.

Congratulations South Portland!! A job well done! Has anyone yet proposed that the name of our next statewide referendum campaign be "Maine Citizens for Justice?" Hmmm.

Ogunquit Civil Rights Ordinance Defeated

On the unfortunate side of the local ordinance movement, Ogunquit narrowly lost a campaign to pass a civil rights measure. Critics of the Ogunquit campaign say that the proponents too closely linked the ordinance with the recall vote of conservative town councilor John

Miller. The ordinance was defeated by the same number of votes that kept Miller in office. Many believe that if Ogunquit tries again and keeps the focus on the positive need of an ordinance, then they will win.

MLGPA Seeks Volunteer Treasurer

MLGPA is looking for an individual in the greater Portland/southern Maine area to serve as volunteer treasurer. The treasurer is an officer of the Board of Directors and chairs the Finance Committee. Responsibilities include deposits, record keeping on Quick Books, check writing, reconciling monthly bank statements, monthly reports to the Board, and working with

the accountant on occasions. MLGPA retains an accountant for tax purposes. We are looking for someone with fiscal experience and with knowledge of cash and accrual basis accounting.

This is a wonderful opportunity to participate in a leadership position with MLGPA. If you are interested, please contact Betsy Smith at 865-3618 or smittybj@aol.com.

November 1998

Dear MLGPA Members and Supporters,

As a member of the Maine Choice Coalition, MLGPA is conducting a membership survey on the issue of so-called "partial-birth" abortions. This survey is not a scientific study, but is a tool to get an accurate reflection of our membership's attitude and understanding of this issue. Please take the time to fill out the survey; it is very important that we know where you stand. Since it is possible you'll receive this survey from another group to which you belong, we ask that you only respond once. Thank you.

1. Do you know that signatures are being collected for a bill that would ban so-called "partial-birth" abortions in Maine? Yes No

2. Did you know that if this people's initiated bill does not pass the Legislature, it will go out to referendum in the fall of 1999? Yes No

3. Are you aware that current Maine law bans abortions after viability unless necessary to save the life or health of the woman? Yes No

4. Did you know this proposed ban would prohibit a doctor from performing procedures defined in the bill even if a woman's health or future fertility is grievously threatened? Yes No

5. Are you aware that, according to the Bureau of Health, there have been two abortions after viability in Maine in the past 14 years? Yes No

6. Did you know this proposed ban carries a criminal penalty for doctors who perform this procedure to save the health of the woman? Yes No

7. Did you know that doctors and courts have said that this ban could prohibit abortions in all stages of pregnancy, even in the first trimester? Yes No

8. Did you know that this ban has been found unconstitutional in 17 states? Yes No

9. Do you favor this proposed ban? Why? Yes I favor this proposed ban because .

No I do not favor this ban because

(IF YES, SKIP TO QUESTION 12)

10. Are you interested in helping us fight this proposed ban in Maine? Yes No

11. May I turn your name over to the Campaign to Protect Women's Health? The Campaign is made up of a selected group of the Maine Choice Coalition members such as the Family Planning Association, the MCLU, the Maine Women's Lobby and Planned Parenthood of Northern New England. Yes No

12. Would you like more information on this proposed ban? Yes No

13. Send additional information to: Name _____
Address/City/Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____

Please return by **December 4, 1998**, to: MCLU—Reproductive Choice Project
233 Oxford Street, Suite 32K
Portland, Maine 04101

If you have any questions call: Nancy A. Foss, RCP Coordinator – 771-8853

The Partial-Truth Initiative -- An Editorial from the Maine Choice Coalition

With the February 10th repeal of the prohibition on discrimination based upon sexual orientation, a newly energized radical right has picked their next target: Abortion. A coalition of anti-choice groups, including the Christian Civic League, and the Christian Coalition of Maine, are in the process of gathering signatures for a citizen initiated bill that would ban so-called "partial-birth abortions." The Catholic Church is working with this coalition to gather signatures. The Catholic Church has in fact broken from their long standing tradition and allowed the abortion ban petition inside the church, encouraging parishioners to sign it. If rejected by the legislature, the bill to ban abortions will go to referendum in the November 1999 general election. This bill is a near replica of the so-called "Partial-Birth Abortion" Ban bill rejected by the Maine Legislature in April, 1997.

The issues around so-called "partial-birth abortion" have been confusing to many people. Confusion was the intent of the proponents of this bill. Most people are not aware that there is no medical procedure known as "partial-birth abortion" and that the phrase "partial-birth abortion" was made up by anti-choice advocates to advance their political agenda. Anti-choice advocates have claimed that their intent is only to restrict a specific abortion procedure (correctly recognized as a Dilation and Extraction in the medical community), performed during the last trimester of a healthy pregnancy on a viable fetus. This is how this bill previously came to be known as a restriction on "late term abortions." In reality, however, medical experts have said the definition used in the legislation could include procedures done as early as the first trimester.

These bills are intentionally vague to disguise their true intent, which is to whittle away at a woman's right to choose abortion at any point in her pregnancy. The broad and vague language of so-called "partial-birth abortion" bans has been cited in courts around the nation as one of the reasons that these bans are unconstitutional. The Due Process Clause prohibits laws so vague that persons of ordinary intelligence must guess at their meaning. Most proposed bans on "partial-birth abortions" fail to provide physicians adequate notice as to which abortion methods they prohibit. Such bans would also subject physicians to arbitrary enforcement under unclear standards. The slippery slope of these bans was illustrated recently in Wisconsin. A judge refused to temporarily enjoin that states' so-called "partial-birth abortion" ban and physicians, legitimately fearing prosecution, refused to perform any abortions, even the procedure most commonly performed in the first trimester.

Why would any group of people squander valuable time and resources in an effort to pass legislation that will in all likelihood be ruled unconstitutional? This coalition continues their campaign because they see this as an opportunity to sway public opinion about abortion. To some extent they have been successful. As the pro-choice majority remains largely complacent and disengaged, anti-choice groups have used their graphic pictures and partial-truth language to dominate public discourse, pressuring those who have historically been supporters of reproductive rights and persuading them to vote against reproductive rights on this issue.

For the record, Maine already has a law that states, "After viability an abortion may be performed only when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother." And although women in Maine have access to elective abortions during the first trimester (twelve weeks), finding a provider in Maine to perform an elective abortion past that point is difficult if not impossible. For anti-choice advocates to suggest that women from Maine are routinely terminating healthy pregnancies during the second and third trimester is inaccurate and irresponsible.

The pro-choice majority needs to speak up. Continued complacency will cost us the right to make deeply personal decisions free from governmental interference. The Maine Choice Coalition and the Campaign to Protect Women's Health, (the campaign committee that has been organized to fight this ban), are gearing up, but we will need help to educate our allies about why this abortion ban is so dangerous. For more information about a few simple things you can do to fight this initiative, contact Nancy A. Foss at the Maine Civil Liberties Union, (207) 774-5444.

**MAINE LESBIAN GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE
BOARD MEETING**

October 15, 1998

MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION BUILDING, AUGUSTA

PRESENT: P.J. MEARS, BETSY SMITH, CELESTE GOSSELIN, RICK GOWAN, DAN STEVENS, DAVID GARRITY, JUDY EDGERLY, HAROLD BOOTH, SUSAN SPARCO, ERIC RICHARD, MARK SULLIVAN, MAGGIE ALLEN

Minutes were accepted. Garrity/Allen

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Dan and Celeste reported that the endorsement letters for candidates were being mailed to their constituent MLGPA members.

Dan presented seven additional proposed endorsements:

Governor Angus King

Congressman Tom Allen

Congressman John Baldacci

Ann Allen – House District

Michael Zimmer – House District #2

Robert Stanwood – House District #130

Shawn Cooper – Senate District #34

Gowan moved and Garrity seconded that the proposed candidates be endorsed.
Motion carried with one abstention

Volunteers are need for the following:

Marge Kilkelly: literature drop – October 24th

South Portland Ordinance: literature drop - October 24th and 25th

Dolores Lymburner: literature drop – October 31st

Tom Allen: telephone bank

SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

Maggie passed around the volunteer schedule for the Halloween Dance. She reported that the posters were ready and need to be distributed. She asked for ten volunteer to help set up for the Halloween Dance.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

It was reported that the timeline for membership mailing had been created: membership renewals to go out November 16th as well as a prospective mailing to the community meetings attendees. Follow-up for renewal mailing will begin in February.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

David reported that we have asked the Maine Legislative leadership and the Governor to contact Wyoming State legislators that have blocked hate crimes legislation to encourage them to pass this legislation in light of the Matthew Shepard murder. A general discussion followed regarding how to best remember Matthew Shepard here. Suggestions included taking out ads in the Maine Sunday Telegram and the Bangor Daily News about hate crimes here in Maine.

David reported that there will be a rally for the South Portland Ordinance on Saturday, October 17th at the Mill Creek Park in South Portland starting at 1:00 p.m.

FINANCE/FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Betsy announced that there will be a meeting on October 16th with a potential accountant. The Gill Foundation will be offering a training on November 6th and 7th on fundraising. People are encouraged to attend.

MAINE DIVERSITY ALLIANCE

The Alliance will not be meeting again until the beginning of 1999.

PEACE AND JUSTICE CENTER

Eric reported that the vision meeting has been put on hold due to scheduling conflicts. There is a possibility that they may be acquiring a new space.

CIVIL RIGHTS MEETING UPDATE

Next meeting for the coalition is Sunday, November 15 at the UU Church in Bangor from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. This is an important meeting as the future focus of the community will be decided. Everyone is strongly encouraged to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Stevens

Success On The Campaign Trail!

When the ballots were finally tallied in the early morning hours of November 4, MLGPA endorsed candidates were standing strong. In the House, where the Democrats outnumber the Republicans by a small margin, 72% of MLGPA endorsed candidates were elected. In the Senate, where the 1997 civil rights bill passed 28-5, 92% of MLGPA endorsed candidates were elected. Overall, 76% of the candidates whom MLGPA identified as being supporters of LGB civil rights were elected to the 119th Legislature.

Our thanks and appreciation go out to MLGPA members and friends who worked on campaigns, gave money to candidates, and who voted for progressive leaders. And a huge thank you goes out to the individuals who ran those campaigns. To name a few: member Rich Couch in Senate District 22 (Auburn) ran a winning campaign for Neria Douglas (she unseated conservative Robert Winglass!), member Teague Morris in Senate District 16 (Wiscasset) helped reelect Senator Marge Kilkelly, and member Rick Gowen in House District 43 (Standish) made a valiant effort to help Dolly Lymburner unseat ultra conservative Adam Mack (unfortunately, Mack was reelected).

Member Richard Steinman put an enormous amount of time and effort into many campaigns—Nancy Sullivan's winning House campaign in District 17 (Biddeford), Scott Cowger's winning reelection campaign in House District 92 (Hallowell), and two outstanding, yet unsuccessful, efforts by Lynn Bromley in Senate District 30 (South Portland/Cape Elizabeth) and Beth Edmonds in Senate District 23 (Yarmouth/Freeport). Susan Farnsworth organized the research and writing of 900 letters of support for specific candidates—their accomplishments, beliefs, and commitments to the people in their districts.

Recognition also needs to be

given to Maine Won't Discriminate, who raised a handsome amount of money for candidates, and to Dirigo Alliance, whose experience and values we trust to guide us through our electoral work.

Longtime Supporters Reelected to the Senate:

Sen. Mary Cathcart, Orono
 Sen. Buddy Murray, Bangor
 Sen. Susan Longley, Liberty
 Sen. Chellie Pingree, North Haven
 Sen. Peter Mills, Skowhegan
 Sen. Beverly Daggett, Augusta
 Sen. Marge Kilkelly, Wiscasset
 Sen. Sharon Treat, Gardiner
 Sen. Joel Abromson, Portland
 Sen. Anne Rand, Portland
 Sen. Bill O'Gara, Westbrook
 Sen. Mark Lawrence, Kittery Point

Supporters Newly Elected to the Senate:

Rep. Carol Kontos, Windham
 Neria Douglass, Auburn

Longtime Supporters Reelected to the House:

Rep. Chris Muse, South Portland
 Rep. Michael Saxl, Portland
 Rep. Michael Quint, Portland
 Rep. Steve Rowe, Portland
 Rep. Eliza Townsend, Portland
 Rep. Richard Thompson, Naples
 Rep. Thomas Bull, Freeport
 Rep. Thomas Davidson, Brunswick
 Rep. David Shiah, Bowdoinham
 Rep. Judy Powers, Rockport
 Rep. Elaine Fuller, Manchester
 Rep. Elizabeth Watson, Farmingdale
 Rep. Bonnie Green, Monmouth
 Rep. Dick Mailhot, Lewiston
 Rep. Pat Colwell, Gardiner
 Rep. Scott Cowger, Hallowell
 Rep. Christina Baker, Bangor
 Rep. Jane Saxl, Bangor
 Rep. Ed Povich, Ellsworth

Supporters Newly Elected to the House:

William Savage, Buxton
 Nancy Sullivan, Biddeford
 Ben Dudley, Portland

William Norbert, Portland
 John Richardson, Brunswick
 Charles Mitchell, Vassalboro
 Daniel Williams, Orono
 Robert Stanwood, Southwest Harbor

Some Unfortunate Losses:

Rep. Norman Paul, Sanford
 Rep. Sharon Libby Jones, Greenville
 (ran for Senate)
 Rep. Patricia Lemaire, Lewiston
 Chris Krauss, E. Wilton
 Dolly Lymburner, Standish
 Denis Morse, Raymond
 Elden McKeen, Windham
 Steven Cartwright, Waldoboro
 Arnold Woolf, Auburn
 David Tamulevich, Durham
 Alice Cheeseman, Unity
 Carl Pease, Hampden
 Ken Hayes, Veazie

Calling All LGBT Activists!

If you're serious about activism, the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has two job openings in New York City. The positions are for Research and Policy Director (senior level position) and for an Administrative Assistant of the Policy Institute. The deadline for all applications is December 1, 1998. For more information and to apply, contact:

Urvashi Vaid, Director
Policy Institute, NGLTF
355 Lexington Ave, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10017

Equality Begins At Home

The week of March 21-27, 1999 will be historic in its impact and importance to the struggle for LGBT equality. In every state, a series of coordinated actions will take place promoting justice and equality for LGBT people.

Never before has there been a coordinated effort to focus attention on the state capitals. Equality Begins at Home is the beginning of a national campaign to strengthen and empower local lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. Since political momentum has shifted to the state level, states now have more authority and impact on the daily lives of LGBT people than ever before. Adoption, foster care, civil rights, hate crimes, schools, health care, and marriage are all issues facing state legis-

latures today. Equality Begins at Home will bring the national spotlight home.

Planning for the action in Maine is just now beginning. We encourage everyone to be a part of this process. We need your ideas and your participation. If you are interested, please contact us at MLGPA by telephone at 1-800-55-MLGPA or by e-mail at <MLGPA@javanet.com>

MEETINGS

December 2—MLGPA Legislative Committee meeting, 6-8pm, Maine Education Association building (Community Drive), Augusta

December 13—Maine Rural Network meeting, 4pm, ACLA, Lewiston. For more info, contact Naomi at 642-2015

December 17— MLGPA Board Meeting, 6-9pm, Maine Education Association building (Community Drive), Augusta

Maine Rural Network Meeting

The Maine Rural Network is forming a Lewiston-based social justice group. Join them and help make Maine the way it should be for everyone. The meeting is scheduled for

Sunday, December 13, 4pm, at the ACLA office, 4 Lafayette St, Lewiston. For more information call Naomi at 642-2015.



*Season's
Greetings*
from MLGPA