
6-1998

MLGPA News (June 1998)

Betsy Smith

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Betsy, "MLGPA News (June 1998)" (1998). *MLGPA News*. 19.
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MLGPA News

Politics, Education, Outreach

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

June 1998

Important Legislative Races Heat Up... And They Need Your Help!!

Several vital legislative races are in high gear as we near the June 9 primary. Two of our strongest supporters, Rep. Dick Maillhot of Lewiston and Senator Peggy Pendleton of Scarborough, are facing tough opposition in their democratic primaries. Because we lost the "people's veto" vote on February 10, many Legislators may not vote our way again, fearing they may misrepresent their constituents. But Rep. Maillhot and Sen. Pendleton are strong supporters who have said they will stand by us in any debate. Therefore, it is vital that we keep these Legislators in office.

Rep. Maillhot's challenger is anti-gay and anti-choice. It is crucial that Maillhot not lose his seat to this opponent. Despite living in an area which overwhelmingly voted to repeal the anti-discrimination bill, he has stood strong in his support for civil rights based on sexual orientation. He supported us when we needed him, and now it is our turn to support him. Please help.

Following is a list of things which are needed for both the Maillhot and Pendleton races. Please remember, without a

supportive legislature, we do not have the option of passing another anti-discrimination bill.

REP. RICHARD MAILHOT CAMPAIGN NEEDS (House District 86—Lewiston):

- ▼ Volunteers for ID and persuasion calls from May 26 – June 8 (5:30 – 8:30pm)
- ▼ Volunteers for GOTV (Get Out The Vote) calls, June 9, 4 – 7:30pm
- ▼ Letters to the editor of the Lewiston newspaper(s)
- ▼ Volunteers for Literature Drop, June 6 or 7, depending on weather
- ▼ Volunteers for Poll Watching, June 9
- ▼ Endorsements from local individuals or groups
- ▼ Last but not least... MONEY. Please send checks to "Maillhot for House," 34 Scribner Circle, Lewiston, ME 04240

To offer your services or for more information, call the MLGPA office at 1-800-55-MLGPA (or 761-3732 in greater Portland).

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Maine Anti-Violence Project for the LGBT Community

The newly formed Maine Anti-Violence Project (MAVP) met again on May 5 to continue planning its structure and services. Robb Johnson from the Violence Recovery Program of the Fenway Community Health Center in Boston was our guest and supplied us with an enormous amount of information about their program and how they got started. The Violence Recovery Program deals with the issues of violence and harassment within the LGBT community, providing both advocacy and support for victims. MAVP committee members are currently discussing what services are needed here in Maine and which of those are feasible to provide.

Maine Anti-Violence Project encourages participation from anyone who is interested. Though operating out of southern Maine, the committee will work hard to hold meetings across the state to allow full participation. In fact, the project needs input from everyone in order to know and meet the needs of those who have been harassed or victimized.

Until MAVP has its own phone line, it will be using the MLGPA phone (1-800-55-MLGPA). If you know of someone who has been harassed or violated, or you want to share or gather information, please call us.

There is a bill coming to the U.S. Senate called the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA), S. 1529, sponsored by Sen. Kennedy and Sen. Specter. This bill would amend the current hate crimes law (18 U.S.C. 245) to include the categories of disability, gender, and sexual orientation. This law already includes the categories of race, religion, national origin, and color. The HCPA would bring current law into uniformity with the recently-passed Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act. The HCPA would also allow federal law enforcement officials to assist local law enforcement with violent hate crimes when local or state laws are not adequate.

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MLGPA

Politics, Education, Outreach

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

Del Wilson

Board Members:

Harold Booth

David Garrity

Jennifer Goldman

Celeste Gosselin

Rick Gowen

Brian Kaufman

P.J. Mears

Teague Morris

Erik Richard

Mark Sullivan

Executive Volunteers:

Maggie Allen

Sam Sherman

Mailing Address:

PO Box 232
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

e-mail:

mlgpa@javanet.com

Office Telephone:

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



It's PRIDE Time!!

It's that season again. Summertime, sunshine, green grass, and PRIDE...

This year MLGPA is teaming up with Maine SpeakOut Project to organize a group of people to go to both the Boston and New York Pride celebrations. Since losing the election on February 10, it's especially important to show the country, or at least the rest of New England, that Maine is alive and kicking and that we will be back to attain our civil rights!!

There is a planning meeting on Sunday, May 31, 6-8pm, at the MLGPA office in Portland (1 Pleasant St. — the Peace and Justice Center of Southern Maine — 2nd floor). Please join us as we plan for one heck of a showing from the state of Maine.

▼ Boston Pride is happening on Saturday, June 13. For more information, either attend the planning meeting on May 31 or call SpeakOut (879-0480).

▼ New York City Pride is happening on Sunday, June 28. We'll plan to charter a bus and find free places to stay on Saturday, then be ready for the march on Sunday. For more information, either attend the planning meeting on May 31 or call Speakout (879-0480).

▼ Southern Maine Pride is happening on June 19-21. The annual Pride march is Saturday, June 20, with a gathering of groups in Monument Square, Portland, at 10:30am. The march begins at 12:00 from City Hall and ends in Deering Oaks Park with festivities from 12:30-4:00pm. Don't miss out on a weekend full of fun, frolic, and pride. Contact the Southern Maine Pride Committee at 878-9277 for more information.

▼ Bangor Pride is happening over the weekend of July 9-12. For more information contact Jim Martin (990-4426 or jim@maineguide.com) or write to PO Box 914, Bangor, ME 04402.

Legislative Races

SEN. PEGGY PENDLETON CAMPAIGN NEEDS (Senate District 31—Scarborough, Saco, OOB)

▼ Volunteers for Memorial Day visibility in Saco and Old Orchard Beach

▼ Volunteers to put up signs

▼ Volunteer to help with mailings

▼ Letters to the editor of local papers

▼ Volunteers for Literature Drops, June 4-8

▼ Volunteers for Poll Watching, June 9

▼ Volunteers for GOTV calls

▼ Financial contributions. Please send checks to "Peggy Pendleton," 110 Holmes Road, Scarborough, ME 04074

If you can help Senator Pendleton in any way, please contact Arn Pearson at 874-9668 to volunteer your services or get more information.

And finally, Rep. Michael Quint, an incumbent from House District 33 in Portland, is running against former Rep. Herb Adams in the June 9 primary. Adams held that seat until he was term limited out and is now challenging Rep. Quint to get it back. Quint, a gay man, strongly supported the anti-discrimination bill in 1997 and even came out during the House debate of the bill. He has been, and will continue to be, a strong and loyal supporter of a civil rights bill. The MLGPA Legislative Committee has recommended that MLGPA endorse Rep. Michael

Quint in this race. In accordance with our bylaws, this notice is to inform you that we will discuss and vote on this recommendation at a brief meeting on Tuesday, June 2, 5:30pm, at the Maine Education Association Building in Augusta. Any member interested in discussing and/or voting on this issue should attend.

Contributions to the "Keep Quint" campaign should be sent to:

Rep. Michael
32 Grant Street
Portland, ME 04101

Anti-Violence Project

Hate crimes, no matter who gets attacked, have at least two victims: the victim and the community to which the victim belongs. Everyone deserves the same protection regardless of his or her gender, abilities, sexual orientation, race, religion, or national origin. In fact, the FBI consistently reports that hate crimes perpetrated against gays and lesbians are the third-highest reported category of hate crimes.

Please write to your senator and ask her/him to cosponsor S. 1529.

The Honorable (Name of Senator)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Maine Lesbian / Gay Political Alliance

Board Meeting

April 16th

1998

6:35 Meeting called to order.

In attendance: *Dan Stevens, Teague Morris, David Garrity, Mark Sullivan, Rick Gowen, Jennifer Goldman, Susan Sparaco, Celeste Gosselin, Tom Coffin, Annette Camden, PJ Mears, Judy Edgerly, Betsy Smith.*

Prior to commencing with the approved agenda, Betsy announced:

- **The town of Brunswick has decided not to pursue a local ordinance but will instead organize now in preparation to support any future statewide legislation we might enact.**

Communications Committee Report:

- *David Garrity proposed the idea that the Maine Diversity Alliance host a statewide conference in the fall to be attended by any and all GLBTQ organizations in order to share our best practices and build relationships and a more efficient statewide network. It was suggested that MLGPA simply attend as one of the many groups and offer a mini version of the town meetings we have been holding throughout the state. It was stressed that MLGPA should not take a leadership stance at this convention but rather that of a participatory peer organization. This idea was met with unanimous enthusiasm and it was further suggested that MDA (Maine Diversity Alliance) might want to consider applying now for a grant that would fund this project. Forethought was given to the fact that representatives from groups who RSVP might want to be brought together ahead of time to exchange any prework that might enable us all to be prepared to make the most of this event.*

Susan Sparaco suggested that a project such as this necessitated a focused committee to organize and carry through with the plans. She pointed out that such a committee couldn't be brought together until after MDA had elected and enacted their board of directors.

- **Introductions were made when we were joined by MLGPA member Annette Camden.**

Finance Committee Report:

- *Finance Committee Chair Tom Little was not in attendance as his father had just recently had surgery. In lieu of a monthly report he had negotiated with Betsy prior to the meeting and it was decided that next month's report would be detailed to reflect both this month and next.*

General Announcements:

- **The Maine Anti-Violence Project, which is the first major undertaking for MDA, held its first meeting and 5 MLGPA board members were in attendance. The next meeting is scheduled for May 5th and all interested board members were encouraged to attend.**
- **Betsy proposed the formation of a Board Development Committee which would work with potential board members both prior to and after the election. It was also put forth that this committee would inevitably serve as a nominating committee. It was generally agreed that 3 or 4 people would be the most efficient and productive number for this type of work and Betsy expressed her desire to see volunteers from across the board representing different committees. She volunteered to be the representative of the executive committee and has called for 2 to 3 other volunteers. Please make your interest known to Betsy if this is something in which you would like to be involved.**

MWD Update:

- *To satisfy requests to meet with MWD we offered 3 dates that had been mutually agreed upon at the board retreat/transgender seminar March 28th. Although our thoughts were to wait until we had completed our statewide assessment of the situation through conversations with the community before discussing any forward motion, MWD did not want to wait that long. They countered with 5 earlier dates. Betsy felt that it would be in our best interest to accommodate their desire to meet sooner rather than be perceived / reported to be difficult. She sent out a mass email and called those that are not available via email in an attempt to determine the most commonly agreed upon date to accept. The decision to meet on May 13th was made and communicated to MWD. This will be a closed meeting with only those who comprise the MWD "kitchen cabinet" and MLGPA board members. Board members planning to attend will meet the night prior at Sue Sporaco's home in Bath.*
- *Celeste offered her perception and opinion of HRC's involvement in the campaign and relationship to MLGPA.*

- *Sue questioned the decision making process that led to our withdrawal from our stance on meeting dates agreed upon at the 3/28 meeting. While Betsy did solicit information from all board members as to which day would be best, Sue felt that by offering a choice of dates the implication was that the decision to meet earlier than was our intention had already been made. A discussion followed that addressed concerns that led Betsy to acquiesce such as the speculation that MWD would capitalize on our hesitancy, the fact that our position within the community was strong at this point, and the need to make this motion in light of the concern the legislature was developing with regard to clarity of community leadership and the continuance of our relationship with them (ie. Exactly who represents these issues to them and is a contact person for our community).*
- *The motion to maintain the commitment to meet on the 13th of May was made (Dan) and seconded (Rick). All were in favor. Continued discussion resulted in the decision to meet the night prior (May 12th in lieu of Executive Committee) so that we would have a unified understanding of what we would carry into this meeting.*
- *A motion was also made that we would affirm our current position without concession (Dave) and seconded (Mark). All were in favor.*

Communications Committee Report:

- *Press releases were distributed that reflected our continued work within the community via town meetings. These had been sent out for immediate release.*
- *Notes from the hate crimes meeting - at which the initiative took on the name of the Maine Anti-Violence Project - were distributed to further interest board member from MLGPA in becoming involved in the work of MDA's first endeavor.*
- *An MLGPA presence at the Democratic Convention in Presque Isle was decided and it was proposed that we buy ad space for \$50. This budget would not afford us the space needed for the ad and there were 3 private contributions by board members of \$50 each to the cause resulting in a \$200 budget. It was decided that this would be split and spent to secure an ad for both the Democratic and Republican Convention.*

Membership Committee Report:

- *Sara Hanna has regretfully resigned from her work with the board as a member of the Membership Committee.*
- *The motion to publish a conceptual membership directory (based on signed permission obtained on membership/renewal forms) was made (Mark) and seconded (Rick). All were in favor. This directory would be made available only to other members of the organization (such as that produced and distributed within the Rainbow Business Professional Association). Information on this will appear in the next newsletter.*

- *It was also proposed that we list the names of new members in the newsletter, again with permission only and at the discretion of the newsletter production team with regard to quantity or new members during any given month. A motion to proceed with the idea was made (Mark) and seconded (Dan) and all were in favor.*
- *Betsy requests that board members (already listed in the newsletter) who would be willing to have either their phone number/email address (either/both) printed in conjunction with their name please contact her with that information.*
- *A discussion of more clearly designating between members and contributors was tabled until such time as Harold could become involved in the conversation.*
- *A discussion was had of our policy/intentions for distributing our newsletter to organizations who are not necessarily "members" yet who, in exchange, provide us with their newsletter. Groups that came to mind were Northern Lambda Nord, Maine Rural Network, By The Way (publication based in the Bangor area). The decision was made to address this on a case by case basis and exchange our newsletter for regular information from groups such as these that would be of interest/value to us.*

Prior to ending the meeting Betsy reminded us that she would not be able to attend the town meeting in Belfast. Filling in for Betsy will be one/all of the following: Dan, Judy, Rick, David, Maggie, Sue.

She also asked if anyone could do a mini town meeting at Symposium as a workshop to provide MLGPA with a presence there. It was suggested that we contact Howard Solomon and David Rappoport to see if they might be willing/able. Judy urged that we attend/support Symposium this year.

Special Events Committee Report:

- *No project in the works at the moment.*
- *The PFLAG banner was never found after it was misplaced at the annual banquet in February. PFLAG was considering a new one prior to the loss at a cost of \$200 and would be delighted if we could contribute \$50. It was unanimously agreed that this was the least we could do in consideration of our responsibility for its disappearance.*

Lastly, Betsy addressed the issue of the format of board meetings as it had been brought to her attention by several people that the new method of having committee meetings prior to the full board meeting was not working well. It was decided that we would continue forward with this new format but that we could revisit this issue in the future.

8:55 Meeting Adjourned

MLGPA and MWD Meet to Discuss Past, Present, and Future

Last month, MLGPA and MWD had an opportunity to sit in a room together and discuss some pressing issues. There have been many questions as to the current political state of the LGBT community, such as whether Maine Won't Discriminate is planning to continue as an entity, whether MLGPA plans to continue its legislative presence and advocacy of "the bill," and what the options are for the next few years.

The meeting between the two organizations was held on May 13 and was facilitated by Kathryn Monahan Ainsworth. Nineteen people were in attendance. Following introductions, the meeting began with a presentation by each organization regarding its status, including but not limited to its history, current situation, and plans for the future.

MLGPA talked of its history as a membership organization, in which board members are elected at an open annual meeting every September. Since its inception in 1984, MLGPA has advocated for civil rights in the legislature, and plans to continue that advocacy long into the future. MLGPA is pleased with its ability to hire a lobbyist last year, which undoubtedly led to the passage of LD 1116, the amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act. Though currently unstaffed, MLGPA has plans to become a staffed organization in order to fulfill its mission of advocacy, education, and outreach even more effectively and successfully.

MLGPA is currently holding community meetings across the state in order to gather input from community members as to how we should proceed in the future. These meetings have given us great insight into how people feel about the referendum campaign, how we can attain civil rights in Maine, and the processes that will work best in local towns and rural areas. Following these meetings, MLGPA will likely conduct another round of meetings to define a strategic plan for the next few years. MLGPA feels that the way in which we proceed in the future should be community driven, broad based, and inclusive.

Maine Won't Discriminate told of its history, starting from its creation in 1994 in response to a statewide referendum. It worked hard to establish local chapters in each county, and created as broad-based a campaign as possible. Following the vote in November 1995, MWD retained one or two staff members to deal with finances and their official standing with the state, but for all practical political purposes, they disbanded. After the legislature passed the bill in 1997, MWD was resurrected. When the signature challenge failed, MWD went into high gear — they raised money, hired a campaign manager, and solicited professional services for poll-taking and consultation. The campaign manager selected a "kitchen cabinet," a group of individuals which she consulted on a daily basis when making decisions about the campaign. These individuals were chosen based on their skills and experience with running campaigns. It was not intended that they be selected through a democratic process.

Since the vote on February 10, MWD has received many letters and e-mails asking them to stay together as an entity and not disband as they did in 1995. They have consulted with many of their coalition groups (religion, business, labor, etc) who support their work toward attaining civil rights. Because of the growing power of the radical right in Maine (Christian Civic League is focusing next on choice issues), MWD feels that we

need to be in constant campaign mode for the next ten years, and that the challenge is how to stay in campaign mode while still supporting membership organizations like MLGPA, SpeakOut, Outright, and others. MWD believes that there is more than enough work to go around to support their existence — that important legislative work (legislative races in particular right now) is currently going undone, and that it is vital to fill the gaps. MWD is not a membership organization and does not plan to become one. They are a PAC (Political Action Committee).

A good portion of the meeting was spent on clearing the air from the most recent campaign. Challenging questions were asked of both organizations. In addition, questions were posed about the future and whether current structures allow for plans to operate in a democratic and inclusive way.

MWD presented an argument for conducting a signature drive in order to control the language and timing of the next civil rights referendum vote. MLGPA presented an argument for waiting until we fully communicate with the community, legislators, and newly formed local/rural organizing groups (another 2-3 months) in order to know which direction is going to serve us best. No final plans or decisions were made at the meeting. Another meeting was set for June 2 to continue the discussion.

Equity Institute Offers Diversity Training

Billed as two of the finest diversity trainers in the country, Carole Johnson and Jonathan Poullard will be in Portland for an intensive 5-day "Diversity Training of Trainers" this summer. Equity Institute of Maine, a Portland based organization whose mission is to reduce the "isms" in our community, is offering this training for anyone interested. People who should attend are: community leaders, trainers, educators, students, social workers, and anyone concerned with issues of diversity. The training will take place at Casey Family Services in Portland, June 22-26. For more information, contact Mare Wallace at 871-7195.

MLGPA Minutes to Appear In Newsletter

It was voted last month to begin including the MLGPA monthly meeting minutes with the newsletter. Since we are a democratically elected Board of Directors, and since we represent the LGBT community in legislative matters, we felt it was important that all members know what is happening at our Board meetings.

Something To Think About...

In the many political discussions that have taken place since the referendum, people have talked about possible strategies for attaining civil rights over the next few years. Two strategies seem to have the most support and we are very interested in learning your views on this matter. Many of you have shared those views in the community meetings, but not everyone has been able to attend. So please write (PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347) or e-mail (MLGPA@javanet.com) us with your opinion and feedback as to how you think we, as a community, should proceed.

Strategy #1: Submit an anti-discrimination bill to the Legislature in 1999 or 2000, with the intent that it would either: a) be referred to the people (i.e. proactive language) for a statewide vote in November 2000, the presidential election, or b) if the Legislature passes it, we would most likely be faced with a "People's Veto" (i.e. reactive language) in November 2000 or thereafter. The caution here is that no one knows what the next Legislature will do. There is a big chance that they will not support the bill.

Strategy #2: Start our own citizen initiative, by collecting signatures to put the question on the ballot ourselves in November 2000, the presidential election. The advantage is that we would control the timing and the language, and as long as we collected enough valid signatures, it would be guaranteed to reach the ballot. The disadvantage is that collecting 51,000 signatures is a lot of work. Would we have the resources and volunteer base to do the job?

Either approach is going to swing us into campaign mode. But we have time now to plan the best approach possible. Please let us know your thoughts.

MLGPA Proposes Changing Board Terms

MLGPA by-laws state that each Board term is one year in length. Current Board members are proposing an amendment that would create staggered terms and lengthen the terms to two years. This would result in less turnover each year, which would make the transition each September easier. It would be the goal that each new Board member have a veteran Board member to serve as his/her mentor, someone who can answer questions and guide him/her through the first few months of serving on the Board.

As with all amendments to the by-laws, we must notify our members at least 30 days in advance of the vote, so all members may attend the meeting at which this vote is taking place. The vote to amend the by-laws to create staggered terms and lengthen the term to two years will be taken at our July Board meeting — Thursday, July 16, 1998, 6–9pm at the Maine Education Association building (Community Center Drive) in Augusta. We encourage you to attend and if you cannot, feel free to send your input to us at MLGPA, PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347 or by e-mail at: MLGPA@javanet.com

If you have any social, educational or political events in your area and would like a hand organizing, please call us! We can help!

Calendar of Events

- May 27 — MLGPA Legislative Committee Meeting, 6–8pm, Maine Education Association Building (Community Drive), Augusta.
- May 31 — MLGPA/Speakout Planning Meeting for Boston and New York Pride Celebrations, 6–8pm, MLGPA office in Portland (1 Pleasant Street, 2nd floor). All welcome. For more information contact Speakout at 879-0480.
- June 3, 4, 5 — Training on HIV Prevention Counseling for Health Educators, South Portland, sponsored by Maine Department of Human Services. For more information contact Mark Griswold at 287-2899.
- June 10 — MLGPA Legislative Committee Meeting, 6–8pm, Maine Education Association Building (Community Drive), Augusta.
- June 13 — Boston Pride. For more information call the Pride Line at 617-522-7890, or by e-mail: bospride98@aol.com
- June 17, 18, 19 — Training on HIV Prevention Counseling for Health Educators, Bangor, sponsored by Maine Department of Human Services. For more information contact Mark Griswold at 287-2899.
- June 18 — MLGPA monthly Board meeting, 6–9pm, Maine Education Association Building (Community Drive), Augusta.
- June 19–21 — Southern Maine Pride Weekend. For more information call 878-9277.
- June 24 — MLGPA Legislative Committee Meeting, 6–8pm, Maine Education Association Building (Community Drive), Augusta.
- July 9–12 — Bangor Pride. For more information contact Jim Martin at 990-4426.
- July 16 — MLGPA monthly Board meeting, 6–9pm, Maine Education Association Building (Community Drive),