

ADVOCATE

OUR 2010 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Under the Dome

H1N1 Flu Virus Reveals Need for Sick Leave

Now more than ever, families need the protection of paid sick days. Flu season is winding down, but the impact of the H1N1 flu pandemic will endure long beyond winter 2010. This year, the H1N1 flu pandemic has brought to the public's attention the three simple steps the Maine Center for Disease Control (CDC) advises everyone to follow: cover your mouth when you cough, wash your hands frequently, and stay home from work or school when you're sick. But, for the more than 200,000 Maine workers without paid sick days, following that third piece of advice is never easy.

Everybody gets sick at one time or another, from the flu to the common cold. But right now, without access to paid sick days, not all of us can afford to get well. For those without paid sick days, the choices are to stay home from work and risk needed pay—or even discipline at work—or go to work sick.

And, when workers go to work sick, their co-workers pay the price by getting sick themselves. Employers pay a price, too: their workers aren't as productive as normal, and more will miss work as the flu spreads. Letting sick workers stay home will make all workers healthier.

That's the message the Maine Women's Lobby is bringing to the State House this year in support of L.D. 1665, "An Act To Prevent the Spread of H1N1." Introduced as emergency legislation, Senate President Libby Mitchell is championing this bill to guarantee earned paid sick days for Maine workers.

But, change is hard, and in a climate driven by fear around our economy, staggering unemployment rates, and stymied health care reform in Washington, even would-be supporters of the bill are adopting a dour disposition. Some would say hard times are not when we should be pushing for proactive policy change to improve women's lives.

At least, that's what some people are trying to tell us.

In fact, we've also been advised that instead of making policy changes to improve the lives of women, we'd be better off working in a soup kitchen or staying home and baking brownies. (At least we know we'd be helping the homeless in the soup kitchen; we haven't asked who we'd be baking the brownies for.)

It may sound tough, but the Maine Women's Lobby's lobbyist, Laura Harper, has dug in her sensible heels and approached her work in the State House with all her usual determination, vigor, and sass. Fortunately, she's not alone. Joined by 36 organizations around the state who have endorsed the bill, more than 30 businesses who are coming forward to share the business benefits of paid sick days, and a powerful grassroots operation aided by a

partnership with the Maine People's Alliance, the debate is moving forward. And, while at the time of this writing, the outcome of the legislation is uncertain, what we do know is that the Maine Work and Family Coalition has moved this debate forward.

The media reports, underscoring the economic benefits of a paid sick days standard, are an indication of this change. The Institute for Women's Policy Research's latest report, "Valuing Good Health in Maine: The Costs and Benefits of Paid Sick Days," (available at: www.mainewomen.org/learn.html) measures the bill's costs against the savings. What was found is that for every \$6.32 spent per worker per week, private businesses will save approximately \$10.50 per worker per week, for a net savings of \$4.18 per worker per week – that's \$37 million annually for businesses in Maine should L.D. 1665 become law. Businesses would realize those savings from a variety of factors—boosts in productivity when sick workers can stay home, reduction in disease in the workplace as workers keep their germs away from co-workers and customers, and limits on the unnecessary re-hiring and re-training costs that occur when workers must leave their job or be terminated as a result of inevitable illness. This makes paid sick days a job-retention strategy, something that everyone agrees is key to weathering this recession.

Says Mark Horton, owner of Woodman's Bar and Grill who recently joined dozens of other business owners in speaking up for paid sick days, "I proudly offer paid sick days to my 20 employees and feel that it is fair and reasonable to expect all Maine employers

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The Maine Women's Lobby delivers a "get well" basket to the Portland Chamber of Commerce. Advocates ask them to "wash their hands of their previous position on paid sick days."

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, October 6, 2010

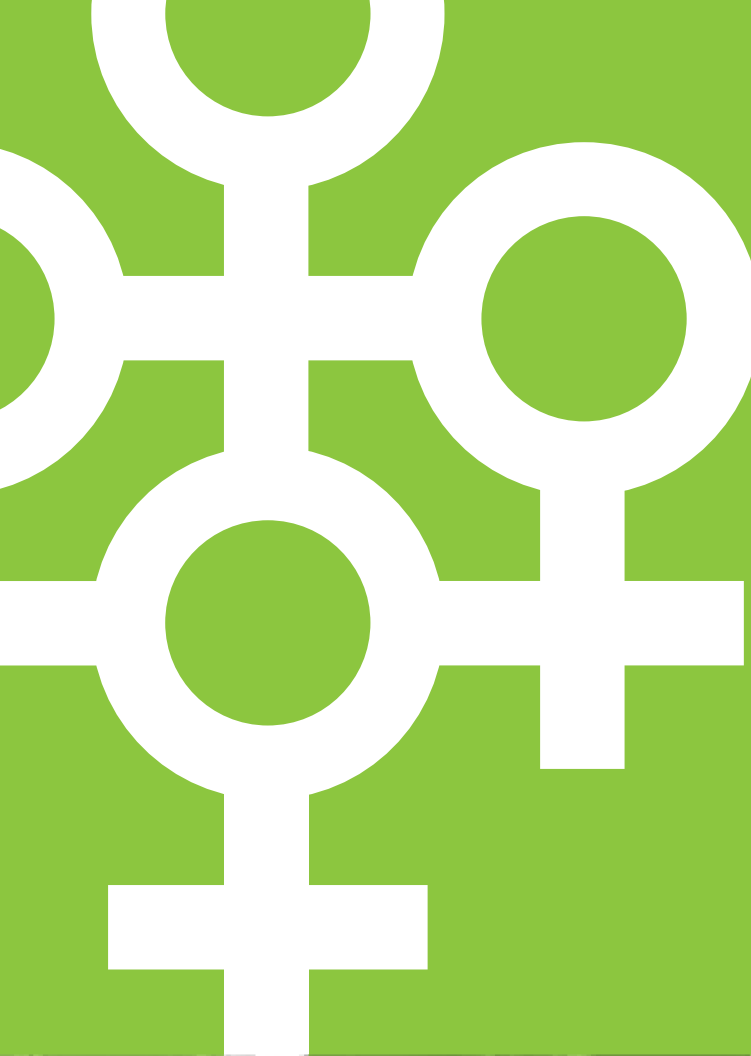
Maine Women's Gala & Auction: *Bidding To Break the Glass Ceiling*

Join us to celebrate a shared vision of equality for Maine women and girls, raise critical money for our work, reconnect with friends, and ... dance the night away!

The night will include dinner, a live and silent auction (with over 100 items), and dancing to the music of Three Button Deluxe. Be a part of this fun and festive event by becoming a sponsor, patron, donor, or volunteer.

Check our web site, www.mainewomenspolicycenter.org, often for the most current information. If you're interested in donating an auction item, please use the auction donor form (located inside this newsletter). For inquiries regarding sponsorship, donations, general information, or to be placed on the invitation list, please contact Kim Fleming at 207.622.0851, ext. 25, or kfleming@mainewomen.org.

See you there!



Cosmetics on Trial: Concerned about toxins not listed in the ingredient label, young women organized by the Maine Women's Policy Center, ship off their personal care products to an environmental health lab for testing.

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN
Maine Women's Lobby



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to do the same. It makes good business sense to have sick workers stay home rather than bringing contagion into my restaurant, potentially infecting my customers! I am confident that when all is said and done, paid sick days only help my bottom line with decreased turnover and increased productivity.”

An important component of L.D. 1665 is that it also provides paid “safe” days. Maine’s existing leave law, which the Maine Women’s Lobby championed ten years ago, enables victims and survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking to take job-protected leave to seek services, medical treatment, or attend court proceedings. This allows a woman to stay safe and keep her job while weathering some of the most difficult health circumstances. Because a day’s pay shouldn’t be the last obstacle between a woman leaving a violent relationship and safety, L.D. 1665 allows workers to use their earned paid time to access these necessary services as well. There is no “wrong” time to end domestic violence or prevent sexual assault.

Now is the right time! From protecting public health during a pandemic, to saving employers money during a recession, to supporting survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, L.D. 1665 is a bill that promises to protect working families and Maine’s economy.

Additional Maine Women’s Lobby Priority Legislation

L.D. 192, “An Act To Index the Minimum Wage to Inflation,” provides for annual increases to the minimum wage to keep pace with inflation. L.D. 1568, “An Act To Clarify Maine’s Phaseout of Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers,” closes a loophole in Maine law by requiring the phaseout of DECA, a flame retardant chemical that is harmful to women’s health and fertility, from use in shipping pallets.

The State Supplemental Budgets, FY 2010/2011: Facing an almost \$438 million budget gap, Governor Baldacci issued a supplemental budget proposal which includes sweeping cuts to services women rely on such as sexual assault intervention, family planning, and drugs for the elderly. The Maine Women’s Lobby has joined the Maine Can Do Better Coalition (www.mainecandobetter.org) in advocating that budget shortfalls be addressed with a balanced approach that includes strategic new revenue sources, targeted efficiencies, as well as cuts.

The Maine Women’s Lobby is Wired For Change!

Have you noticed that the action alerts you receive from us are looking exceptionally fancy these days? Thanks to a new system called Wired For Change, we can now let you know when your legislators need to be contacted. Also, the new program allows us to send you targeted e-mails—so as to avoid over-burdening your inbox.

So, if you haven’t already, sign up for our e-newsletter at www.mainewomen.org – and keep tabs on your elected officials.

Have you moved? Please update your mailing address. It’s easy! Just visit www.mainewomen.org and sign up – your new information will automatically replace the old.

Young Women Speaking up for Safer Alternatives

Current laws are failing to protect women from toxic chemicals—the toxins in consumer products that build up in our bodies and harm our health, including those commonly found in personal care products like cosmetics, fragrance, and shampoo. It’s time for Congress to follow Maine’s lead in passing comprehensive chemical reform to protect the health – including the reproductive health and future fertility – of women and girls.

And, who better to advocate for this reform than those who are directly affected? That’s why the Maine Women’s Policy Center has launched action groups with young women ages 16-24 to advocate for policies to require safer personal care products. Our goal: organize young women to advocate for a healthy future and to develop political leadership skills. They will work together toward a shared vision and will establish lasting ties to an activist community. If you’d like to learn more, contact our Community Organizer, Anne Sheldon, at 207.622.0851, ext. 23, or asheldon@mainewomen.org.

From the Executive Director

Sarah Standiford

I hope you’ve saved the date for the Maine Women’s Gala & Auction—a celebration of the Maine Women’s Policy Center’s 20th anniversary. This event will commemorate our shared vision and record of accomplishments on behalf of Maine women and girls—achievements that we first honored with the Maine Women’s Lobby 30th Anniversary Gala in 2008.



People often ask me what the real difference is between our two organizations, the Maine Women’s Lobby and the Maine Women’s Policy Center. After all, both organizations share the same mission. They also

share the same staff, phone lines, and office just across from the State House in Augusta.

What differentiates these entities is their focus, identity—and their tax status.

First, the practical. As we near tax season, you may well be aware that a financial contribution to the Maine Women’s Policy Center differs from a contribution to the Maine Women’s Lobby in that the gift is tax-deductible; that’s because the Maine Women’s Policy Center is a nonprofit, charitable organization distinguished in the IRS tax code as a “501 (c)(3).” The Maine Women’s Lobby is also a nonprofit, but it is termed a “501 (c)(4)” to which contributions are not tax-deductible. This tax status allows us to conduct an unlimited amount of lobbying.

Beyond the importance of having one entity that is empowered to lobby for the public good, there is a distinction in strategy as well. In our work for the Maine Women’s Lobby, our team, importantly, takes a very short-range view. Negotiating priority legislation, reviewing recently introduced bills—up to thousands of legislative documents per session—responding

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to urgent requests for information from lawmakers; these activities require daily—and sometimes minute-by-minute—determinations about how to move forward.

Looking back on 2009, it was the Maine Women's Lobby staff's intensive legislative campaigning, in collaboration with EqualityMaine and the Maine Freedom to Marry Coalition, that resulted in Maine's Marriage Equality Law. At no point was the passage of this bill assured. It took an immense campaign, combined with speedy and smart decision making on the floor of the State House, to make it possible for a majority of legislators and the Governor to support the bill. While the law ultimately did not survive the veto campaign, we know that the successful legislative endeavor—and powerful ballot campaign—has set the stage for a time when all couples, gay or straight, become equal under the law.

And, that long view is where the Maine Women's Policy Center comes in. Working with the leadership of our board and allies, the Maine Women's Policy Center develops the long-term policy change needed to achieve real improvements in women's lives and then develops the pathways necessary to win. For example, at a time when women equal men in the labor force, we are articulating a policy strategy to ease the work and family bind. Right now, too many people have to risk their job to care for family or have to put a family member at risk to keep a job. We're made to feel that this is a personal problem, but it's political – family values too often end at the workplace door. We need new workplace standards to meet the needs of real families today.

That's why, right now, the Maine Women's Policy Center staff is developing policy proposals and working with leaders in both D.C. and here in Maine to secure their ultimate success.

The bottom line is, the organizations work in partnership to secure a positive future for Maine women and girls and to champion ground-breaking policy change. Your contribution to either—or both—will have an enduring impact. Your participation in our celebration on October 6 recognizes not only the critical legislative initiatives upon which the Maine Women's Lobby was founded but also the strengthening and broadening work – under the scope of the Maine Women's Policy Center – needed to create a future where every woman has equal rights, equal opportunity, and the power to shape her own life.

Thank you for your support.

Girls' Day at the State House

On March 18, 2010, 100 girls, 50 volunteers, and several dozen elected officials, including Governor Baldacci, will participate in our Girls' Day at the State House program. Girls from every region of the state will spend the day learning how our state government works, the important role women play in shaping Maine's public policy, and how young women can have a voice on issues they care about.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support the Girls' Day at the State House program, please contact Bonnie Buckmore at 207.622.0851, ext. 22, or bbuckmore@mainewomen.org.

Meet the Women

of the Maine Women's Lobby and the Maine Women's Policy Center

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER ANNE SHELDON



Anne Sheldon re-joined the Maine Women's Lobby and the Maine Women's Policy Center in December 2009 as our Community Organizer. While a student at Bates College, Anne interned for the organizations, researching family friendly policies.

"It is exciting to be back to champion the issues I researched as an intern. The most rewarding part is cultivating new grassroots leaders in communities throughout Maine," said Anne.

Most recently an organizer with the Maine People's Alliance, Anne fought against TABOR II and campaigned for fair tax policies, organizing small farmers and business owners to preserve the Estate Tax.

Anne graduated from Bates College in 2009 with a bachelor of arts in Philosophy; she wrote her senior thesis on feminism and political theory. While in college, she spent a semester abroad studying community organizing and development in Khon Kaen Thailand with the Center on International Educational Exchange. She also received a grant from Bates to spend two months in Senegal working for a girls' empowerment NGO. Anne enjoys cooking and traveling and loves living in Portland.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR HONORABLE CHARLOTTE WARREN

Charlotte Warren joined the team in January 2008 as the Outreach and Communications Manager. In August 2009, her position changed to Associate Director. Her responsibilities include planning and conducting membership outreach and communications. In her new role, Charlotte has taken on the additional responsibilities of managing press work, directing online communications, and overseeing the organizations' grassroots, education, and research operations.



Charlotte's experience includes 11 years at Kennebec Valley Community College as the Math/Science Learning Specialist with the TRiO program, working to increase the success of first-generation and low-income students and students with disabilities. Charlotte earned a Master of Science in Adult Education from the University of Southern Maine and a Master of Social Work in Organizational & Community Practice from the University of New England.

Charlotte serves on the Hallowell Food Bank's Board of Directors. Additionally, after serving eight years as a City Councilor in Hallowell, Charlotte was elected Hallowell's Mayor this past November.

Join Our Monthly Giving Program

In these challenging economic times, every dollar you give makes a difference for Maine women and girls. Because we rely on private donor support all year long, I hope you'll consider joining our Monthly Giving Program by returning this form to **Maine Women's Policy Center, PO Box 85, Hallowell, ME 04347.**

With a monthly gift of just \$10, \$20, \$50, or whatever works for your budget, you provide a generous, steady source of income in these difficult times. Plus, it's a tree-free option. Here are some other advantages:

- ✓ You won't receive additional Maine Women's Policy Center solicitation letters, but we will keep you informed about our events and how your donation is making a difference.
- ✓ Your contribution will be automatically charged to your credit or debit card on the first business day of each month.
- ✓ You can change the gift amount or cancel your giving at any time.
- ✓ At the end of the year, you will receive a letter for tax purposes and notification that your pledge is continuing, and you will have the opportunity to increase or change your contribution.

Most importantly, what may seem like a relatively small monthly gift on your part adds up to a very significant amount over the year. Here are some examples of what your gift provides:

- ✓ \$10/month → \$120 per year: Provides staffing and materials for a two-hour, direct-advocacy training for 20 women.
- ✓ \$20/month → \$240 per year: Covers the cost of four young women's participation in our celebrated *Girls' Day at the State House* program.
- ✓ \$50/month → \$600 per year: Disseminates cutting-edge research to lawmakers and opinion leaders.

Please charge my credit/debit card \$ _____ **monthly**, beginning _____ (month/year).

VISA MasterCard American Express Discover

Credit card # _____ Expiration date ____ / ____

(3 or 4-digit) V-code _____ Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (days) _____ (nights) _____ E-mail _____

Thank you for making a difference for Maine women and girls.

www.mainewomenspolicycenter.org



Maine Women's Policy Center

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN



Maine Women's Policy Center

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Maine Women's Gala & Auction

Bidding To Break the Glass Ceiling

Auction Date: Wednesday, October 6, 2010, at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland, Maine.

Proceeds from the live and silent auction will benefit our advocacy to increase opportunities for Maine women and girls.

For more information, visit www.mainewomenspolicycenter.org.

Auction Donation Form

Name of organization or individual _____

Name to list as donor _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Contact name _____

I would like to donate the following item for the auction:

Donated Item is _____

Item Description _____

Value \$ _____

Please list any expirations or restrictions that may apply:

Item is to be picked up or delivered (circle one). Where & when _____

(If you would like your item included in our auction catalog, pick up/delivery needs to occur on or before June 11, 2010).

Donor Signature

Date

Volunteer/Staff Signature Upon Item Receipt

Date

The Maine Women's Policy Center is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization (EIN 22-3093407). Your gift is deductible to the extent allowable by law.

A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to you and will serve as your receipt.

Thank you for your support of Maine Women and Girls!

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