

It's 2008, and the Maine Women's Lobby is celebrating 30 years of achievements on behalf of Maine women and girls.

We're proud of our successes – advancing first-in-the-nation legislation to secure employment leave for victims of violence, implementing Maine's Equal Pay law, securing the first sexual harassment training requirements, and much, much more. But, we're nowhere near done. Please join with us to celebrate and write the next chapter of the Maine Women's Lobby.

SAVE THE DATE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

ANNIVERSARY GALA

Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks
South Portland

For sponsorship opportunities, contact info@mainewomen.org.

THE MAINE WOMEN'S

ADVOCATE

A PUBLICATION OF MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY AND MAINE WOMEN'S POLICY CENTER

SPRING 2008

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE 123RD LEGISLATURE

Under the Dome

Collective Effort Restores Critical Funding

In the final weeks of the 123rd Legislature, a nearly \$200 million budget shortfall and proposed cuts to vital health and human services and education dominated the legislative debate. Ultimately, the Legislature enacted a budget that restored many of the most devastating proposals but still targeted severe cuts to services for the developmentally disabled and elders in need of care.

Budgets are statements of values. Governor Baldacci's supplemental budget proposed unprecedented cuts to programs that serve the health and well-being of our communities. The budget would have *eliminated* state funding for domestic violence and sexual assault programs, removed prescription drug coverage for childless adults on Medicaid, and would have kept nearly 7,000 individuals out of the Medicaid program entirely. Cuts in state funding for family planning services threatened to close over a dozen clinics throughout the State.

We argued that these proposals were shortsighted. Though designed to reap immediate savings, they were likely to have long-term, devastating impacts—and even higher costs down the road. Costs would shift to more expensive and inefficient outcomes, like emergency room visits, nursing home care, shelters, food pantries, and even jail time. Some, such as victims of violence and abuse, would go without any help at all. Women would have been the biggest losers if the proposed cuts were enacted.

When the State faces financial shortfalls, it becomes even more important to be strategic in our public investments. That's why the Maine Women's Lobby called for an approach that included targeted cuts and efficiencies, the raising of revenues, and the use of some portion of "the rainy day fund," which exists to stabilize the budget in times of crisis.

Fortunately, we were not alone in calling for a better way. The Maine Women's Lobby worked with a coalition of 140 organizations to reject these cuts and call for a solution to the shortfall that upholds our community values of health and safety. We helped mobilize the largest crowd at the State House in recent memory – over 1,000 people packed the halls on March 12, 2008 to demand a better way. Hundreds of e-mails

and calls to legislators followed. Details of the action and photos are on the web at www.MaineCanDoBetter.org.

We were proud to play a role in putting people front and center in the budget debate. The Maine Women's Lobby will, however, remain vigilant against proposals that erroneously suggest we can cut our way to prosperity. Maine can do better.

Girls Make Their Voices Heard

2008 Girls' Day at the State House a Tremendous Success

On March 27, 2008, girls were in the majority at the Maine State House. That's because the Maine Women's Policy Center's 12th Annual Girls' Day at the State House brought 100 girls from across Maine together with more than 60 volunteers, lobbyists, and legislators for a day of learning, leadership, and exploration.

Held each year to commemorate Women's History Month, Girls' Day at the State House teaches a diverse group of girls about the legislative process and the important role women play in shaping public policy.

continued on page 2



Governor Baldacci – sporting his "Girls Rock the House" t-shirt—meets with the girls in the State House Hall of Flags.

2008 Girls' Day at the State House a Tremendous Success

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Maine Women's Lobby



P.O. Box 15
Hallowell, Maine 04347
www.mainewomen.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 56
Waterville, Maine

The event was sponsored through generous contributions from the Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation, George A. Ramlose Foundation, Margaret Chase Smith Library, Verizon, Time Warner, a generous anonymous sponsor, and dozens of other businesses, individuals, and organizations.

Throughout the day, girls debated L.D. 2034, which would have prohibited an adult from furnishing an energy drink to a minor. Participants worked with real lobbyists and journalists in organizing mock public hearings and mock press conferences focused on the bill. In addition, the girls met with Governor Baldacci and with elected and appointed women leaders. Of course, the favorite activity of the day was the State House scavenger hunt.

Said Madeline, from Orrington, about her experience at the Legislature, "I think you should keep doing this so that girls become aware that they have as much of a chance of being here as boys and so they know they have a say in everything."

After a busy day at the State House, the girls left Augusta with new friends, a Girls' Day Action Guide, and most importantly, a clear vision of how they can get involved and make a difference in their schools, communities, and their state.

The Ick Factor

MaineSneezes.org Highlights the Public Health Cost of Denying Paid Sick Days

The Maine Women's Lobby has been working for months to build support for legislation to guarantee the ability of workers to take time off when they are sick. While the paid sick days bill will not advance this session, Maine Women's Lobby will continue to draw attention to the public health costs when workers are denied paid sick days.

In February, we unveiled a set of high-impact ads and a web site to drive home a major message of the campaign. Some of the ads are funny, others may make you say, "yuck" – but, they all

Sneeze Facts

- Fewer than half of Maine workers have paid sick days – and only 4% of restaurant workers.
- A sneeze travels over 100 miles an hour.
- Sneezes spray a cloud of droplets up to four and a half feet away.
- The germs in sneezes stay alive and contagious for up to two hours.
- Someone working sick with the flu infects 18% of their coworkers, on average. A sick worker may infect one of every five coworkers, according to research on how the flu spreads.

make the point that everyone's health is at risk when people are forced to work through illness in order to pay the bills.

During this long winter, the Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged sick people to stay home from work to stop the spread of the flu virus, but the fact remains that nearly half of all workers couldn't take that advice because they don't have any paid sick days. Only 4% of restaurant workers have any paid sick days!

The new ad campaign, which can be found at MaineSneezes.org, includes some interesting statistics about sneezing and fun accompanying media about germs. Here's one choice fact: A sneeze leaves the nose at over 100 miles an hour and can spray droplets up to 4 ½ feet with germs that can live for two hours or more on surfaces such as doorknobs, desks, and keyboards!

Everybody gets sick. Paid sick days are the cure.

From the Executive Director

Sarah Standiford



A weakening economy, subsequent budget shortfall, and supplemental budget proposals dominated headlines – and much of the State House debate – this legislative session. As I write this, however, there is still much left on the table before the Legislature adjourns (hopefully) in April.

Fortunately, not all our activity at the State House was defensive this year. In addition to our efforts to promote paid sick days, the Maine Women's Lobby worked successfully as part of the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine to craft a state solution to keep toxic chemicals away from kids and out of our bodies.

Studies show that Maine children are routinely exposed to hazardous industrial chemicals that leach out of products they encounter every day: plastic containers, toys, jewelry, baby bottles, water bottles, shampoos, lotions, and thousands more products. Some of these chemicals, such as phthalates and bisphenol-A are of specific concern to women's health – they can increase breast cancer risk and reduce women's fertility.

L.D. 2048, "An Act to Protect Children's Health and the Environment from Toxic Chemicals in Children's Products," passed on April 16. It will help restrict kids' exposure to known unsafe chemicals. From grassroots education to lobbying in the halls of the State House, the Maine Women's Lobby is moving the discussion about women's health forward through our work on environmental health and safety.

Other successes this session included a resolve regarding the recommendations and proposed legislation on higher education for low-income adults (see insert), a minimum wage increase, Dirigo Health, and much more. A short session – but an active one! For updates on our priority bills, please sign up for our monthly e-mail updates by contacting us at info@mainewomen.org.

New Logo: Same Mission

Maine Women's Lobby Unveils New Communications Materials



You've likely noticed *The Advocate's* fresh new colors and design. In commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Maine Women's Lobby, we are proudly unveiling a new graphic identification program.

While our look has changed, our mission remains the same. We are confident the new logo will clearly identify our organization and help engage more women in our advocacy for social change.

The new design evolves from the age-old symbol for 'woman.' The crisp, assertive logo reflects the four core values of the Maine Women's Lobby:

- economic security
- civil rights
- freedom from violence
- secure health care and reproductive rights

The logo was designed by Woodworth Associates, Graphic Design & Communications of Brunswick, Maine. We are grateful to Woodworth Associates for their expertise and support.

We thank Spire Printing for the generous in-kind donation of print services for our new letterhead, envelopes, business cards, and membership materials.

New Database Heightens Lobby's Member Communications

In January, Development and Administrative Manager, Bonnie Buckmore, oversaw a major database transition from our outdated database to a terrific new system. Thanks to a generous bequest from longtime member, Elizabeth Crandall, and support from the Dyer Family, we have upgraded our membership management software to the industry standard, Raiser's Edge from Blackbaud. We're confident you'll see some of the benefits, such as more targeted communications and timely membership renewals. What you won't be able to see is the time savings we're enjoying when it comes to running reports and enhancing our communications with members by legislative district.

Of course, during this period of transition to the new system, we're likely going to be ironing out a few wrinkles. Please let us know if you notice any problems such as duplicate mailings, address or salutation corrections, etc. by e-mailing us at info@mainewomen.org or by calling us at (207) 622-0851. Our goal is to better communicate with our supporters and build our membership, allowing us to advocate on behalf of Maine women and girls with greater power and efficiency.

Meet the Women

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

VOLUNTEER LILLIAN PEASE



If you've ever visited our office in Augusta, chances are you've met longtime Maine Women's Lobby member and volunteer, Lillian Pease.

Rarely does a week go by without Lillian in the office, processing mailings, filing, or archiving important documents. Lillian's tenure with the organization has persevered through two Executive Directors, many boards of directors, and at least three office spaces. Lillian also served on the Board of Directors for several years and is a member of the Legislative Committee.

Lillian's interest and experience in volunteering derives from her own 17-year history working as an Executive Director for Fidelity House, a nonprofit organization in the Greater Boston area which provides residential services for mentally retarded people. She also volunteers with Literacy Volunteers, the Dresden Democratic Committee, the Dresden/Richmond Swap Shop, and her local church.

Lillian casts a wise eye towards the support responsibilities she carries at the Maine Women's Lobby, "I understand how important it is to do those so-called 'mindless' jobs because they have to be done and ought to be done cheerfully! They are essential to the work of the organization." Lillian's stories, jokes, and conversation bring levity to these tasks and to all the goings-on at the office.

Few volunteers have Lillian's caliber of non-profit management experience. She is interested especially in volunteer supervision and membership development. "Since I'm now a 'professional volunteer,' I recognize the importance of the care and feeding of volunteers. It's kind of a neat trick to use a volunteer well." Lillian's particular interest for the Maine Women's Lobby includes a vision for connecting and building member networks throughout Maine's communities.

When not volunteering professionally, Lillian spends time with her husband, Fred, at their home in Dresden, and in contact with their four children and their families. She enjoys gardening, Sudoku, crossword puzzles, counted cross stitch, participating in a monthly book review group, and their big yellow lab, "Bear."



Building Pathways to Prosperity for Maine Workers

Maine Women's Policy Center Releases New Report and Policy Recommendations

Too many Mainers fall into the category of "working poor," punching-in each week at low-wage jobs with few benefits. At the same time that these workers are struggling to make ends meet, Maine business leaders are expressing the urgent need for a trained workforce. Education is the key to unlocking this deadbolt. In fact, providing low-wage workers more access to higher education will not only create lasting change for families, but will also contribute to the success of Maine's economy.

So far, however, few higher education initiatives have focused explicitly on low-wage workers. That's why the Maine Women's Policy Center has partnered with Maine Equal Justice Partners to release *Succeeding in the New Economy: Pathways to Prosperity for Maine Workers*.

Education Helps Low-income Women Achieve Their Dreams

Sally is an Occupational Therapy Assistant student at Kennebec Valley Community College. She is raising her 2-year-old daughter on her own, attending school, and working part time. "I want a home, a car. I want to be able to give my daughter everything she needs...and some of what she wants. I want to have a normal 9 to 5 job...I want to enjoy my work."

Even though the benefits of education are clear, the pathway is muddled with challenges. Paying for college is a hurdle many students must overcome when they decide to go to school. But for low-wage workers, tuition payments are the first in a long line of financial obstacles that block their path. The price of childcare, transportation, and necessary supplies make earning a college degree almost impossible for many Maine workers. And, getting time away from work to pursue a degree can lead to a loss in much-needed wages.

Throughout 2007, the Maine Women's Policy Center collaborated with Maine Equal Justice Partners to research barriers to higher education access and studied policy approaches from other states. We

conducted focus groups and interviews with Maine adults either currently in school or trying to get there. Throughout this past fall, Maine Women's Policy Center Executive Director, Sarah Standiford, served on a legislative Commission that studied access to postsecondary education for low-wage, low-skilled adults. These efforts culminated in the concurrent release of recommendations by the Commission to the Education and Labor Committees and the publication of our new report, now available on our web site, www.mainewomen.org.

In short, as the lifelong value of a postsecondary degree increases, so, too, should the efforts of policymakers to create educational opportunity for those most in need of the benefits. It is time to develop concrete strategies to light the pathway to prosperity for Maine's hardworking families.



Maine Women's Policy Center Calls on State Policymakers to Enact New Strategies

Opportunities for Action

Fortunately, there are proven models available and promising policy opportunities that, if implemented, would have an immediate impact on the ability of adults to get a degree and, thus, a well-paying job. Here are just a few of the recommendations in our new report *Pathways to Prosperity*:

Maximize Existing Resources

- Help workers “package” resources to support degree attainment. For example, many low-income adults qualify for essential supports that would help them enter and stay enrolled in college, but they do not know what is available. There should be uniform procedures at Career Centers and other venues for familiarizing would-be students with programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, subsidized childcare, MaineCare, and food stamps.
- Require clear-cut policies and written notification to students on use of “professional judgment” by financial aid administrators. There is a valuable support, little known by students, created by Federal law to allow financial aid administrators to use their professional judgment on a case-by-case basis to change a student's financial aid award based on circumstances such as recent job loss, divorce, or unusually high medical expenses. These adjustments often result in an increase in Federal financial aid to students. Educational institutions should be required to adopt a written policy related to the use of professional judgment and make that policy available to students.

Develop New Opportunities to Ensure Student Success

- Create a flexible, State-funded financial aid supplement. Providing universal, flexible financial aid to cover such needs as books, tuition, childcare, and counseling is a proven method for increasing the success of adult students.

- Expand the successful TRiO program through a State match to Federal dollars. The Federal TRiO programs assist low-income, first-generation college students to enter and succeed in college through one-on-one counseling and support. National studies clearly demonstrate their success, and in Maine, demand for these programs far exceeds available resources.
- Monitor and expand the Competitiveness Skills Scholarship Program. This newly established program holds great promise for providing a clear path to degree attainment because it provides counseling and career planning, identification and “packaging” of supports, and makes additional funds available to cover tuition and support services not otherwise covered by existing programs. Maine policymakers should monitor the success of this program and consider a future increase in program funding with the goal of serving more participants.

Coordination and Oversight

- Develop an overarching entity to provide evaluation, data collection, and accountability for Maine's workforce development efforts. Governor Baldacci established the Workforce Cabinet to create a cohesive strategy for workforce development. However, there is no statute clearly delineating its responsibility or authority and few resources to support its efforts. Maine should codify the role of the Workforce Cabinet and provide resources so that it can guide a sustained effort to increase skills attainment of adult workers and meet the needs of Maine employers.