

ADVOCATE

THE LEGISLATIVE REPORT: 2010 - 2011

Under the Dome

Despite navigating an entirely new Legislature with hundreds (HUNDREDS) of bills aimed at decimating existing legal protections serving women and girls, we were able to defend Maine's progress by joining forces with our allies to craft bipartisan consensus on critical bills. Here's a roundup of the Maine Women's Lobby's efforts this session:

The Good (well, actually, the great)!

Maine lawmakers stood firm against efforts to roll back access to reproductive healthcare and civil rights protections for transgender Mainers. The bills were defeated by wide margins—and for good reason. Mainers have a longstanding history of valuing personal privacy, which these bills sought to invade.

Lawmakers put the privacy and health of Maine women and teens ahead of partisanship by resisting efforts to erect unnecessary barriers for those seeking to exercise their rights to have an abortion and access comprehensive healthcare.

The Bad (really, really bad).

Unfortunately, there were some destructive, non-economic bills that were proposed this session. Among them were two bills that would make it harder than ever for Mainers to register to vote and cast a ballot: one requiring photo ID at the polls (sent back to committee), and the other eliminating Maine's 38-year tradition of same-day voter registration (signed into law). The Maine Women's Lobby is currently working with a coalition of 17 partners to mobilize a people's veto to restore same-day registration and will continue fighting to defend attacks on our most sacred constitutional right – the right to vote.

The Tabled.

The fight to defend existing protections will continue in January, when bills tabled during this session will again be taken up. These include attacks on public-sector collective bargaining and existing overtime pay and collective bargaining rights for workers at the notorious DeCoster egg plants.

The State Budget.

Governor LePage's original budget proposal would have eliminated or reduced access to healthcare and prescription drugs for 70,000 Mainers, severely cut General Assistance, and reduced access to all state-funded benefits for legal immigrants. It would have also imposed a strict, 5-year time limit on benefits (no exceptions) and

eliminated TANF benefits for entire families, including children, whenever parents were sanctioned.

After hours of negotiating, Appropriations Committee members deserve significant credit for moderating Governor LePage's most extreme initiatives. They were able to protect healthcare for nearly 70,000 people, mitigate the worst TANF restrictions, and protect programs that help Maine families who are struggling during this difficult economy.

The final budget is far from perfect, however. Many legal immigrants will lose access to healthcare and struggling single parents will have a harder time meeting requirements of the TANF program as they seek employment. Sadly, the safety net has been weakened while the wealthiest Mainers get millions of dollars in tax cuts, including a doubling of Maine's estate tax exemption. Enriching the highest income-earners at the expense of those struggling to get by is irresponsible and unsustainable.

The Maine Women's Lobby will continue to work with Maine Equal Justice Partners and our allies to argue for a fiscally responsible approach to funding state priorities, while defending the safety net that keeps our communities strong.



Maine Women's Lobby member, psychiatric nurse Annie Lunt, speaks at one of the numerous press conferences held throughout the legislative session in opposition to the proposed anti-choice bills.

BECOME A MAINE WOMEN'S LOYAL LOBBYIST!

Members who give monthly—whether it is \$50, \$25, \$10 or even \$5 a month—provide a valuable service because it's income we can depend on throughout the year.

We also save on paper and postage. And, it's good for our environment!

More and more members, are telling us that they find it's the easiest way to give.

Maximize your investment in women and girls by becoming a Loyal Lobbyist today!

To become a monthly sustainer—a Loyal Lobbyist—fill out the enclosed response form or visit us at www.mainewomen.org.

As a benefit, we'll send a Maine Women's Lobby static sticker (perfect for the car because it won't stick permanently) to everyone who signs up as a monthly sustainer this summer!

Thank you!

On June 21st, Governor LePage signed a bill that would eliminate same-day voting rights in Maine. A group of Maine voters immediately gathered at the Maine Women's Lobby office in Augusta to file an application to veto the bill. Here, they are holding the women's suffrage flag after signing the application.

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Maine Women's Lobby



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The Maine Women's Lobby Goes to Washington

In July, the Maine Women's Lobby sent a delegation of women to Washington, D.C. to attend the 2011 National Summit on Paid Sick Days and Paid Family Leave. As a member group of Family Values @ Work (FVAW), we joined together with over 20 state delegations and leaders from more than 25 national organizations, all of whom serve as key members of our nationwide work-family coalition.

The summit was attended by more than 200 workers, public officials, business owners, funders, and advocates from civil rights, labor, women's, children's health, and caregiver groups who share one goal—advancing paid sick days and paid family leave policies.

In addition to learning about the latest campaign research, receiving an update on federal work-family legislation from Capitol Hill staffers, and discussing base-building strategies, our delegation attended a Congressional reception on Capitol Hill (see photo below)—and that was just the first day!

The second day of the summit was devoted to meetings with our members of Congress, with whom we discussed the positive impact of paid sick days on women struggling to care for their families.

The Summit was sponsored by Family Values @ Work and The National Partnership for Women & Families.



The Maine Women's Lobby delegation poses behind the Senate podium for a light-hearted photo during a reception on Capitol Hill.

You're Invited!

In 1978, the Maine Women's Lobby was formed to represent the interests of women and girls statewide. Working in partnership with the Maine Women's Policy Center, we have championed economic security, defended reproductive privacy, worked to end

violence and discrimination, and engaged young women in the policymaking process. Please join us in celebrating and defending these achievements, and help raise support for our important work.

This summer and fall, members, like you, will be hosting house parties across the state in the following areas:

Bangor – September TBA
Damariscotta – September 8
Mid-Coast – September 22
Presque Isle – October
Cumberland – November

If you would like to attend or be included on the invite list, please contact Kim Fleming at 207.622.0851 ext. 25 or through email at kfleming@mainewomen.org.

From the Executive Director

Sarah Standiford



What a remarkable legislative session. This year, the Maine Women's Lobby effectively countered the deeply flawed rollback agenda promoted by Governor LePage by working to protect women's reproductive privacy, defend the Maine Human Rights Act, sustain teen work-

hour protections, maintain collective bargaining rights, and much more. While there will undoubtedly be significant harm done as a result of cuts included in the state's biennial budget—notably to legal immigrants who will lose access to healthcare—the story from the budget process is what the bipartisan Appropriations Committee was able to do against the odds. The committee maintained health and prescription coverage for 70,000 Maine people and still crafted a compromise budget.

Clearly, our definition of success has changed. When the Legislature convened in January of this year, our priority was to defend 30 years of protections aimed at improving the lives of women and families. In past years, our practice has been to track approximately 150 bills per session, while exerting leadership on about 20. This year, our lobbyist and her legislative committee monitored 450 bills and actively lobbied nearly 50. In fact, we expended more than double the usual direct lobbying hours. Fortunately, supporters like you stepped up—more members contributed this year and over 3,000 new activists joined our grassroots network. Over 650 activists took action, sending more than 3,022 emails and making countless phone calls over a 6-month period. You made the difference.

Next year's short session will be equally challenging, but the Maine Women's Lobby is positioned to once again succeed in keeping women's voices front and center. We are ready to make sure that women's voices are heard and valued now and in the future.

That work will be guided by new leadership, as I am transitioning to a new job this summer. As Regional Field Manager for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, I will still be living and working in Maine, but will be supporting the field and electoral programs of the affiliates throughout New England. Now is a critical time to be building the movement for reproductive rights and social justice and I'm thrilled to be participating in this way.

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I am, of course, sad to be leaving the exceptional staff, board, and membership of the Maine Women's Lobby. These past eight years have given me an incredible opportunity to get to know each of you and to learn what you value most. I've benefitted from your wisdom and have been fortunate to share the stories of the tremendous impact our work has had on Maine women and girls.

Your investments have made advancements for Maine women possible through the work of our exceptional Maine Women's Lobby team—and what a team it is! Please join me in thanking them and supporting them under the leadership of the next Executive Director.

Supporters make 15th Annual Girls' Day at the State House a huge success

Each year, the Maine Women's Policy Center brings 100 eighth grade girls to the state house for a day of learning about the role women play in our state government.

"I learned more about politics and how women get into the legislature. After listening to the women speakers, it reminded me of who I was." (Faith – Swan's Island.)

Many thanks to our generous sponsors of the 2011 Girls' Day at the State House program. Your support enabled us to offer leadership opportunities to young women as well as a fun-filled day of education about the policy-making process. We thank our sponsors for helping young women get the skills they need to take the reins of public life.

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Meet the Women

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

LINDA SMITH DYER FELLOW
NICOLE R. BISSONNETTE



As this year's Linda Smith Dyer Law Fellow, Nicole is responsible for researching and developing materials in areas such as reproductive rights, pay equity, and domestic violence. She is pursuing a career in public interest law, with a focus on issues facing women and children. She is in her second year at the University

of Maine School of Law, where she leads the Women's Law Association and serves on the board of the Maine Association for Public Interest Law and the Curriculum Committee.

"This experience has been a great opportunity to delve into existing law and communicate the impact of legislative decisions to the women and girls whose lives will be affected," she said. "I am grateful for the opportunity to work with such dedicated women to honor Linda Smith Dyer's commitment to these issues."

Nicole was raised in Lewiston and attended Boston University, where she graduated magna cum laude with degrees in Political Science and Print Journalism. After college, she served three years with Teach for America before returning to Maine, where she enjoys playing sports, serving as a mentor, and entertaining her five nieces and nephews.

To learn more about the Linda Smith Dyer Fellowship, visit www.mainewomenspolicycenter.org.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
JANET E. PIERCE



Janet joined the Maine Women's Lobby and Maine Women's Policy Center in March of this year as our Administrative Assistant, providing support to all levels of the organizations.

Janet brings three decades of experience to her position, including 35 years in state government, lastly as a Personnel Officer.

"I have been so impressed with the quality of leadership and passion exhibited by the women at these organizations," she said. "I am excited to be able to support the great work being done to improve the lives of women and girls in this state."

After she officially retired from state government, Janet decided to continue working part-time, taking positions with the Property Management division of the Bureau of General Services, and in several state departments doing reception, data entry, accounting, and payroll tasks. Janet lives in Augusta close to her three children and five grandchildren. She is an active member and volunteer at the Christ Church Episcopal in Gardiner.

Legislative Report

125th Legislature, First Regular Session

The Maine Women's Lobby tracked a record 450 bills, and prioritized more than 50 for action.
Below is a summary of our top legislative priorities.

Reproductive Privacy

L.D. 31 – An Act to Protect the Safety of Maine Children by Requiring the Express Consent of a Legal Guardian to Dispense Prescription Medication to a Minor

Maine law currently allows minors to confidentially access substance abuse counseling and treatment, mental health care, and family planning services. This bill would have prohibited healthcare professionals from dispensing prescription drugs to a minor without the express consent of the minor's parent or legal guardian, effectively eliminating minor's confidential access to birth control. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

L.D. 116 – An Act to Require a 24-hour Waiting Period prior to an Abortion

This bill would have required two in-person visits to an abortion provider: one to provide informed consent and another, 24-hours later, to have the procedure. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

L.D. 924 – An Act to Educate Women on the Medical Risks Associated with Abortion

This bill's requirements would have resulted in physicians reading a biased script to a patient at least 24-hours before she could obtain an abortion. The physician would have also had to provide the patient with an accompanying brochure from the Department of Health and Human Services. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

L.D. 1457 – An Act to Strengthen the Consent Laws for Abortions Performed on Minors and Incapacitated Persons

This bill would have repealed Maine's successful Adult Involvement Law and required a parent or legal guardian to give his or her notarized, written consent before a minor could access abortion services. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

L.D. 1463 – An Act Regarding Offenses Against an Unborn Child

This bill would have created a new class of crime for harm to a fetus and conveyed legal status to the fetus that is separate and distinct from the woman. Though the bill included language that pregnant women could not be prosecuted, similar laws in other states have been used to prosecute women who had accidents that endangered their pregnancy or who sought treatment for drug addiction. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

Voting Rights

L.D. 199 – Act to Strengthen Maine's Election Laws by Requiring Photograph Identification for the Purpose of Voting

This bill requires that voters show a photo ID before they are allowed to cast a ballot. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Sent back to committee and carried over.**

L.D. 1376 - An Act To Preserve the Integrity of the Voter Registration and Election Process

This bill eliminates same-day voter registration and registration within two business days of the election. It also restricts early voting by prohibiting registrars from issuing absentee ballots three business days before an election. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Enacted; People's Veto effort in progress.**

Civil Rights

L.D. 1046 – An Act to Amend the Application of the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Public Accommodations

This bill would have allowed public or private entities to discriminate against transgender individuals by restricting access to rest room or shower facilities. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

Economic Security

L.D. 207 – An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Tips Used in Payment of Service Employees

Originally, this bill would have repealed an entire section of Maine law stating that tips are the sole property of the tipped employee and not the employer or the “house.” After intensive negotiations, the bill was rewritten to clarify and strengthen existing law for tipped employees. **MWL Position: Support.* Status: Enacted.**

L.D. 309 – An Act to Make Voluntary Membership in a Public Employee Labor Organization in the State

This bill jeopardizes the future of public-sector collective bargaining by preventing public-sector unions from collecting fees from non-union members who benefit from the union’s wage negotiations.

MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Sent back to committee and carried over.

L.D. 447 – An Act to Raise the Minimum Wage

This bill would have increased the minimum wage from \$7.50 to \$7.75 per hour starting October 1, 2011 and \$8.00 per hour starting October 1, 2012. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Defeated.**

L.D. 516 - An Act to Amend Maine Law Regarding Employment Practices for Certain Minors

This bill would have eliminated restrictions on teen work hours, including repealing limits on how late teens can work. After amendments, the final bill increased the number of hours teens can work from 20 to 24 hours per school week and from 4 to 6 hours on a school day. Teens can also now work until 10:15 p.m. on a school night (up from 10 p.m.). **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Enacted.**

L.D. 695 - An Act To Reduce Taxes and Promote Employment

This bill would have increased the state earned income tax credit (EITC) from 5% to 10% of the federal credit and would have made it refundable. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Defeated.**

L.D. 1043 – State Budget, FY 2012 -2013

Governor LePage’s budget proposal would have eliminated or reduced access to healthcare and prescription drugs for 70,000 Mainers, severely cut General Assistance, reduced access to all state-funded benefits for legal immigrants, eliminated TANF benefits for children if parents failed to comply with program rules, and imposed a strict 5-year time limit on benefits. After much negotiation the final bill protected healthcare for nearly 70,000 people, mitigated the worst TANF restrictions, and protected programs that help Maine families struggling during this difficult economy. However, many legal immigrants will lose access to healthcare and struggling single moms will have a harder time meeting requirements of the TANF program, while the wealthiest Mainers get millions of dollars in tax cuts. **MWL Position: Supported.* Status: Enacted**

L.D. 1207 – An Act to Amend the Labor Laws Relating to Certain Agricultural Employees

This bill would have originally repealed rights to overtime pay and collective bargaining for agricultural workers employed at large egg farms, namely those affiliated with the infamous Jack DeCoster. It was amended in committee to repeal agricultural workers’ right to organize.

MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Sent back to committee and carried over.

Environmental Health

L.D. 412 – Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 882: Designation of Bisphenol A as a Priority Chemical and Regulation of Bisphenol A in Children’s Products, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection

This bill set limits on the use of Bisphenol A (BPA) in children’s products.

L.D. 1129 – An Act to Provide the Department of Environmental Protection with Regulatory Flexibility Regarding the Listing of Priority Chemicals

This bill was initially introduced with far-reaching rollbacks to the Kids-Safe Products law (protections which were established to shield children from harmful chemicals). After successful negotiation, the final bill retained current protections, provided increased clarity for regulators, and strengthened the existing law.

MWL Position: Support.* Status: Enacted.