

# Legislative Report

## 123<sup>rd</sup> Legislature for the First Regular Session

*The Maine Women's Lobby tracked 100 bills, and among those, prioritized nearly 40 for action.  
Below is a summary of our top-priority legislation.*

### Creating Economic Security and Opportunity

**L.D. 12: An Act To Establish a Residency Requirement for MaineCare Recipients:** Requires an individual to prove that she has lived in Maine for at least 30 days to be eligible for MaineCare. Contrary to some assertions, data from the Department of Health and Human Services clearly shows that people are not moving to Maine to get benefits such as MaineCare. A residency requirement would harm those individuals and families who need help the most, such as women fleeing from domestic violence or those returning to Maine to be with their families during difficult times. In addition, the federal Medicaid regulation states that a residency requirement is not legal. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

**L.D. 28: An Act To Establish a Statewide Residency Requirement for General Assistance:** Requires applicants for General Assistance to prove they have been living in the state for at least 30 days before qualifying for benefits and poses the same risks to women as L.D. 12 (above). **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

**L.D. 957: An Act To Enact a Five-point Welfare Reform Plan:** This bill imposes a residency requirement for General Assistance, puts a 60-month lifetime maximum on TANF benefits, and increases the weekly work requirement to receive benefits to 40 hours a week. The lifetime maximum would deny further benefits to many participants who have no other resources, and the 40-hour work requirement would erect an impossible barrier for participants with health issues or for parents who must care for their children. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

**S.P. 717: Joint Study Order Establishing the Commission To Develop Strategies To Increase Postsecondary Access, Retention and Completion for Low-Wage, Low-Skilled Adults:** The Commission is directed to study strategies for increasing postsecondary education opportunities for low-wage workers. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted.**

**L.D. 1261: An Act To Clarify Intermittent Leave under the Family Medical Leave Laws:** Amends Maine's Family Medical Leave Law to clarify that leave can be taken for intermittent uses (such as for acute asthma attacks or chemotherapy treatment) as opposed to only in one continuous period. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Public Law 07 – Ch. 233.**

**L.D. 1445: An Act To Calculate the Livable Wage and Measure the Bureaucratic Costs To Subsidize Workers Paid Less Than a Livable Wage:** This bill defines "livable wage" and directs the Department of Labor to calculate the livable wage for families based on household size using well-established methodology to calculate a basic needs budget. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Public Law 07 - Ch. 363.**

**L.D. 1454: An Act To Care for Working Families:** Guarantees a minimum number of paid sick days for workers to care for themselves or immediate family members. Businesses with 25 or more employees would offer one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to nine days each year. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Carried Over.**

**L.D. 1543: An Act To Clarify the Use of Tips in Payment of Service Employees:** Clarifies that tips given to service employees become their property, including credit card tips, and employees cannot be required to pool or split their tips with other employees. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Public Law 07 - Ch. 367.**

**L.D. 1697: An Act To Ensure Fair Wages:** Increases the minimum wage to \$7.70 in 2008 and \$8.40 in 2009, with readjustment in following years to be based on the Consumer Price Index for the purpose of retaining purchasing power. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Carried Over.**

**L.D. 1884: An Act To Create the Competitiveness Training Fund and Improve Maine Employment Security Programs:** This bill provides funding that allows CareerCenter customers earning below 200% of the poverty level to obtain a degree or certificate in training programs for jobs in a high-growth, high-wage industry clusters. It also reduces unemployment taxes for businesses, removes the Social Security offset for people receiving unemployment insurance, and maintains

unemployment benefits for workers only able to work on a part-time basis. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Public Law 07 – Ch. 352.**

**L.D. 1925: An Act To Cut Taxes on Maine Residents by over \$140,000,000:** This comprehensive tax reform bill reduces income taxes and increases the homestead property tax deduction and the circuit breaker program, funded by increasing the sales tax on certain products and services. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Defeated.**

### **Protecting Against Violence**

**L.D. 988: An Act To Improve the Protection from Abuse Laws:** This bill expands abuse protection by allowing current and former dating partners and victims of sexual assault or stalking to seek relief under protection from abuse laws. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Public Law 07 - Ch. 340.**

**L.D. 1039: An Act Regarding the Determination of the Predominant Aggressor in Domestic Violence Situations:** Requires law enforcement to develop a policy for determining the predominant aggressor in domestic violence situations. This is needed to avoid arresting the victim in instances where the perpetrator and victim may not be immediately distinguishable. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Resolve, Ch. 98.**

**L.D. 1627: An Act To Protect Families and Enhance Public Safety by Making Domestic Violence a Crime:** This bill allows law enforcement to charge an abuser with the crime of domestic violence, which differentiates crimes against family members from simple assault, stalking, or threatening. This charge carries an elevated sentence in cases where the abuser has committed previous similar acts of violence. Making domestic violence a crime enables prosecutors to establish a pattern of abuse to be considered during sentencing, instead of treating each incident of violence as a separate matter. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted. Public Law 07 – Ch. 436.**

**L.D. 1873: An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Stalking:** Improves stalking laws by expanding the definition of stalking to include causing a victim to suffer emotional distress, fear property damage, or fear harm to a pet. The bill takes into account technological advances by including electronic methods of harassment, observation, or tracking and provides for an elevation in charge due to aggravating factors. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Carried Over.**

### **Ending Discrimination**

**L.D. 375: An Act To Amend the Family Medical Leave Laws:** Expands Maine’s Family Medical Leave Law to include domestic partners and the child of a domestic partner in the list of family members that an employee can take medical leave to care for. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Enacted.**

### **Ensuring Access to Health Care**

**L.D. 61: An Act To Add Abortion Providers to the List of Mandated Reporters to the Department of Health and Human Services:** Requires abortion providers to report abuse or suspected abuse of a child. MWL opposed this bill because as health care workers, abortion providers are already mandated to report child abuse, making further legislation unnecessary. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

**L.D. 973: An Act To Require the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention To Publish Abortion Statistics:** Singles out abortion relative to other vital statistics by requiring the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to republish and place on their web site abortion statistics for the State going back to 1999, along with identifying statistics which could put providers at risk. **MWL Position: Oppose. Status: Defeated.**

**L.D. 1309: An Act To Provide Equity in Funding for Women’s Health Services:** Ensures equal access to abortion care by providing financial assistance to low-income women seeking abortion services who do not have private insurance. **MWL Position: Support. Status: Defeated.**

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