



Economic Self-Sufficiency and Family Security

The Maine Women's Lobby is committed to enhancing economic security and opportunity for all women.

Highlights of Legislative Achievements 1978-Present

1982 Welfare, Education, Employment and Training program created.

With this law, Maine's commitment to significant education for women on welfare and the Maine Women's Lobby's advocacy for education for women receiving public assistance began.

1988 Family Medical Leave Act passes in Maine.

The Maine Women's Lobby advocated for passage of this law in 1988 and for subsequent expansions in 1991 and 1997. Maine became one of the first states in the country to enact such legislation, which provides unpaid leave to Maine workers in establishments with 15 or more employees.

1989 Occupational Safety and Health Training for Video Display Terminal Workers enacted.

The Maine Women's Lobby advanced this *first-in-the-nation legislation* which launched modern ergonomic protections by requiring that safety information be given to computer operators.

1992 Non-traditional Occupations Training Act.

The Maine Women's Lobby promoted this legislation which required administrators of the Job Training and Partnership Act to focus attention on non-traditional occupations (NTOs). Jobs that meet the definition of NTOs for women have significantly higher rates of pay.

1997 Maine Legislature enacts the Parents as Scholars Program.

This *first-in-the-nation state program* established access to education for TANF recipients, empowering low-income parents to earn a degree and a well-paying job. The Maine Women's Lobby worked closely with Maine Equal Justice to pass this bill.

1997 Maine Legislature passes a Resolve requiring the Maine Department of Labor to promulgate rules to implement a 1965 comparable pay statute.

The statute states that employees' wages in the same establishment must be based on skill, effort and responsibility. This legislation brings the promise of fair pay for women one step closer to reality.

1998 Maine passes legislation that maintains a safety net for families after five years of public assistance as long as they continue to adhere to rules.

In the era of devolution, Maine becomes the first state in the nation to provide this guarantee to its poorest citizens.

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- 2001** **Maine becomes the *first state to develop guidelines* for implementing a law requiring that women are paid fairly for the value of their work.**
Maine's Equal Pay law had been on the books since 1965, but steps had never been taken to implement it until the Maine Women's Lobby promoted this bill. The Maine Department of Labor's guidelines strengthened enforcement of that law and provided employers with guidance and an incentive to comply.
- 2003** **Part-time Unemployment Insurance enacted.**
The Maine Women's Lobby worked to extend unemployment insurance benefits to people who choose to work part time rather than full time—the majority of whom are women—and made that protection permanent through legislation passed in 2007.
- 2004** **Maine's minimum wage increases.**
The Maine Women's Lobby works to raise the minimum wage from \$6.25 to \$6.35 in October 2004 and by 15 cents more in October 2005. Our second effort resulted in an increase from \$6.50 to \$6.75 in October 2006 and to \$7.00 in October 2007.
- 2005** **Maine provides flexible sick leave.**
The Maine Women's Lobby developed legislation requiring businesses with 25 or more employees that provide paid sick leave or vacation time to allow their employees to use earned time to care for an ill child, spouse, or parent.
- 2007** **Access to education increased through the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program.**
The Maine Women's Lobby worked to enact the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, a program administered through the unemployment insurance fund which helps low-wage workers access a post-secondary degree or training credential to secure a well-paying job.
- 2007** **Family Medical Leave expanded.**
The Maine Women's Lobby helps pass a bill clarifying the use of Maine's Family Medical Leave Law for intermittent needs, such as acute asthma attacks and chemotherapy appointments.
- 2008** **Minimum wage increased.**
The Maine Women's Lobby advances legislation increasing Maine's minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour in 2008 and to \$7.50 per hour in 2009.
- 2008** **More families covered under Family Medical Leave.**
The Maine Women's Lobby helps pass a bill expanding use of Maine's Family Medical Leave Law to include siblings when financial and living arrangements are shared. This bill allows an employee to take job-protected leave to care for a sibling with a serious health condition when a sibling dies while on active duty in the Armed Forces.