

Maryland NOW Times

Volume 33, Issue I

Spring/Summer, 2014



Maryland NOW Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 17th

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Registration opens at 9:30 a.m.

Montgomery County Education
Association Conference Center
12 Taft Court, Rockville, MD 20850

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Maryland NOW PAC Endorses Heather Mizeur for Governor

By Sandy Bell, Maryland NOW PAC Chair

The Maryland NOW Political Action Committee voted this past winter to endorse Heather Mizeur in her bid to become Maryland's next governor.

Mizeur's team which includes Delman Coates for Lt. Governor faces two other Democratic tickets in Maryland's June 24 primary election.

"We believe that of all the candidates Mizeur and Coates best understand the issues that affect women and their families in our state," announced Sandy Bell, MD NOW's PAC

Chair. "We take great pride in this endorsement."

The PAC considered Mizeur's work on many aspects of health care re-



form coverage, and family planning for low-income women.

She also has a strong record on the environment, working against shale drilling in Western Maryland. She has spoken out against the Keystone Pipeline, urging President Obama to reject this project.

The PAC also noted her work fighting for transparency in state government on the Maryland Open Government Act.

When elected, Mizeur will be the first openly gay governor in the country and our state's first woman governor. Many feel that her remarks from the floor during the General Assembly's debate on same-sex marriage helped sway votes to make Maryland the eighth state to pass Marriage Equality.

Maryland NOW Conference Set for May 17th

By Sara Wilkinson

Maryland NOW's Annual State Conference will focus on the issue of Infant Mortality in our state.

Titled "Women's Healthcare Challenges in Maryland: Infant Mortality

and Low Birth Weight Babies" the conference will be held on May 17 at the Montgomery County Education Association Conference Center in Rockville, Maryland.

Details are on page 7 on this newsletter. We will

also have more information on our website as it becomes available. While recently rated #1 in the nation for women's well-being, Maryland has an infant mortality rate approximately twice the rate of the best state, as rated in the 2012 Congressional Quarterly Report. There is a disconnect (see Page 2)

Maryland NOW Notes

By Sara Wilkinson, President



I was honored when our members elected me as President in May 2013. Since then, I've had a full plate of work on behalf of our state. I truly enjoyed attending

the National NOW Conference last summer in Chicago, and marching on Washington with civil rights activists for the 50th anniversary of that historic event.

I've also been busy networking with other progressive and feminist organizations across the state for collaborative discussion.

I've made a priority of updating NOW's web site. It's state-of-the-art and we want to use the tools it provides to increase online activism with members. For example, on the 41st Anniversary of *Roe v Wade*, we cohosted a Tweet Chat about

abortion rights—all via the Internet! Participants wrote in 144 characters or less their thoughts on where we've come on abortion rights and why the issue is still vital for all feminists.

I was truly proud when our Maryland NOW PAC provided an early endorsement of Heather Mizeur for Governor. We'll be adding other state-wide and district candidates soon. (Please see our announcement of other PAC endorsements on page 5 of this newsletter.)

One of my goals for Maryland NOW's future is to start a Maryland NOW foundation. There are many projects that we can champion more effectively as a 501(c)(3). This is a big step as Maryland NOW has never had a foundation and I welcome any members who would like to join me in establishing this new part of Maryland NOW's structure.

The 2014 Legislative Session (detailed on page 6) kept us all busy, and we feel we really made a difference as many of the bills we supported passed! Please join us for another year of action on behalf of women's rights!

Meet Sara!

Maryland NOW was indeed fortunate to have elected Sara Wilkinson as our President at last year's state conference. She has worked tirelessly on projects, like updating our website, and has brought new insight into issues to attract more young activists to NOW.

Sara had previously helped reactivate Baltimore NOW by writing new bylaws, electing officers, increasing its presence and organizing projects and events for more chapter visibility. Primary issues for Sara include reproductive justice and human rights. Her guidance and vision in helping Maryland NOW increase our online presence are readily apparent with our new web site design. She was active in the push for marriage equality, organized phone banks to back equal marriage in other states, and spoke at a rally in Annapolis in February for transgender rights.

Sara came to Maryland from Minnesota in 2010 after completing law school at the University of Minnesota. She works at Maryland Legal Aid, where she represents low-income people, especially seniors, with civil legal problems. She attended Smith College, inspired by NOW activist alumnae Betty Friedan (1942) and Gloria Steinem (1956).

2014 Maryland NOW State Conference

(Cont'd from Page 1)

between Maryland's obvious assets and the tragedy of infant mortality and developmentally disadvantaged children.

While Maryland has made progress thanks to Governor O'Malley's initiatives, African-American babies are still dying at almost twice the rate as Caucasian babies.

Maryland NOW is planning to work with state and local departments and organizations to focus attention on this disconnect to develop a statewide coalition to support successful prevention and remediation programs.


Our conference speakers will address:


- Maryland Statistics and Programs on Infant Mortality and Low Birth Weight Babies
- Local Prevention and Remediation Efforts
- Volunteer Organizations
- Legislative Perspectives


We hope you will join us and take advantage of this opportunity to meet other MD NOW members and get involved in this and other feminist projects for women in our state.


Contact Us!

 www.facebook.com/Maryland National Organization for Women

 @maryland_now

 www.marylandnow.org

 (410) 347-1455

 Maryland NOW
P.O. Box 7716
Silver Spring, MD 20907

The Maryland NOW Times is published annually by the Maryland Chapter, National Organization for Women, representing NOW members in our state since 1972. MD NOW is a feminist civil rights organization.

The Communications Committee of Maryland NOW, Barbara Hays, Chair.

Maryland NOW Launches Updated Web Site

By Sara Wilkinson

Maryland NOW is very excited about our latest upgrade to the organization's web presence for women in Maryland. Our new site was launched in January and connects our members to our Facebook and Twitter pages. Viewers can read our blogs, and check out our photos from recent actions.

Maryland NOW realized early on the importance of a web presence and of using social media. We acquired our domain name in the late 1990's. We funded a major upgrade in 2004 when we hired King Cow Interactive, LLC to design our first major professional effort. King Cow Interactive, a Maryland-based company, specializes in organizational content management of progressive organizations web sites, so that members of the group can quickly update or add material without having to take the time to go through a middle party to do the work. This also makes having and maintaining a site affordable for small organizations.

Our first professional effort 10 years ago, led by David Choy and Terry O'Neill (who is currently National NOW's President),

was a very exciting venture. However, it was clearly much in need of an upgrade. Thanks to David Choy and Sarah Ahmed, along with my help as president and several other NOW volunteers, a fantastic new web design for Maryland NOW is a reality.

Basing their work on a survey of many site users, and modeled after other national sites, our web site allows our volunteers to do work (online, written, or campaign actions) and be credited by name through the site's campaign and issue pages. A Get Help section, which can constantly be updated with new information, connects users with other women's organizations across the state on issues ranging from medical care to legal help.

Our blog is written by a variety of volunteers on wide-ranging feminist issues. Descriptions of our legislative system, Maryland-specific campaigns, and a feminist calendar are all incorporated into the web site.

If you'd like to get involved with our so-

cial media pages or write content for our web site, please contact us. We have an excellent framework and we want people who will help us grow in the 21st Century.



Images courtesy of David Choy, King Cow Interactive, LLC.

Meet Two Generations of Maryland NOW Leaders

Holly Joseph came to Washington many years ago to work for her U. S. Senator, Henry Bellmon of Oklahoma. Several years at the Department of HEW (now HHS) followed. She joined Montgomery County NOW in the early 1980's and soon after became an important key to chapter leadership as she joined the chapter's board, with her attention to detail, excellent writing skills, and networking abilities—all fueling her strong interest in women's equality.



Her interest in electoral politics has made her both a keen observer in Annapolis during the legislative session and a key part of NOW's Political Action Committee work. She currently serves as co-president of MC NOW chapter and chair of the MC NOW PAC. She is also Maryland NOW Treasurer. She has a son and a daughter, and a granddaughter—who is already a great feminist. Holly hopes for the passage of ERA in her lifetime. Her interests outside of NOW include gardening and reading.

As an impressionable teenager growing up in Illinois, Anne Kotleba watched the 1996 USA Women's Basketball Team win Olympic Gold, inspiring a deeper conversation about women's athletics in America. Her passion for gender equality in sports grew into a life of feminist organizing.



She has degrees from Augustana College in Studio Art and Political Science and an MFA in Community Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art. For Anne, NOW bridges gender with race, class, ability, and overall "othering" to come together against systemic injustice, enriching the lives of all people. Anne currently serves as the President of Baltimore NOW leading the chapter's focus leading the chapter's focus on advancing rights for LGBT people, combating sexual violence, and promoting reproductive rights and justice.

Anne currently serves as the President of Baltimore NOW.

Maryland NOW Political Action Committee 2014 Endorsements

Delegate Heather Mizeur and Reverend Delman Coates for Governor & Lt. Governor

Brian Frosh for Attorney General

The Maryland NOW PAC is still in the process of choosing other candidates to endorse. We expect all decisions to be made by April 21st, and posted on our website shortly thereafter.

By Authority: The Maryland NOW Political Action Committee

2014 National, Regional and State Conference Information

The National NOW Conference: The 2014 National Conference, "Faces of Feminism: Strength in Diversity," will be held June 27-29 in Albuquerque New Mexico at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. This is an opportunity for us to gather and tackle the critical issues on NOW's agenda and shape the future of women's rights. Please check back with National NOW's web site for more information: www.now.org.

The Conference will consider bylaws changes which will clarify language in the current bylaws regarding distribution of rebates to chapters and states, reduces the number of regions to six, changes regional representation from proportional based on membership size to two board members, and one additional member if a delegation includes a member who is non-white or of ethnically diverse origin, and elects Board Members at Regional Meetings held at the National Conference. Please check www.now.org for more information about these changes.

The Mid-Atlantic Region, made up of the states of Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, will conduct the election portion of its conference on Saturday, May 31 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at the Sewall-Belmont House, 144 Constitution Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Notice to Maryland NOW At-Large Members: Be a National Conference Delegate

Every NOW chapter is allotted delegates to our national conference each year based on its total membership as of 120 days prior to the conference. All voting at the conference is conducted by delegated members. Some chapters fill their delegate allocations with members from their chapters, others do not fill all their allocations; delegate "slots," as they're called, can be filled by any member in good standing, not just by members from that chapter. A state's non-chapter members, or at-large members, are also entitled to a delegate allocation-on the same basis as a NOW chapter (the formula is in our National NOW bylaws).

At-large members can become delegates representing our state's membership by coming to our annual meeting and choosing delegates from among their group to attend the national conference. Maryland NOW welcomes its at-large members to get involved, perhaps consider changing their affiliation to a chapter, and become more active in our work!

Maryland NOW 2014 Nominating Committee

If you are interested in serving as a Maryland NOW officer, please check out the Maryland NOW web site for the description of our state's officer duties. Let one of the members of the 2014 Nominating Committee know of your interest, and come to the state conference to participate in our election of officers. Nominating Committee members are Rosezella Canty-Letsome - Rozella.Canty-Letsome@marylandnow.org, Linda Fihelly - fihelly@hotmail.com, and Barbara Hays - BLHays@aol.com. These committee members can also answer any questions you may have.

2014 General Assembly Session Report

By Sandy Bell, Action Vice President

With this year's passage of the Fairness for All Marylanders Act, we finally succeeded in getting all Marylanders covered by anti-discrimination law. In 2001, we were successful in getting sexual orientation added to Maryland's anti-discrimination law. We tried at that time to add gender identity to the legislation, but it would take over a decade to finally get that added and this session we finally succeeded.

Many bills we worked on were passed; however, amendments were added so they weren't all we had hoped for, including the above mentioned bill. The Minimum Wage Act passed but the time frame for raising the wage to \$10.10 per hour was extended from 2016 to 2018 with no increase for tipped workers, and allowances for employers to pay a lesser wage to employees under 20. Unfortunately, the Earned Sick and Safe Leave Act never made it to the floor of either chamber for a vote. Some legislators we spoke with told us they felt that passing this bill along with the minimum wage bill

would be too burdensome for businesses.

Several Peace Order and Protective Order bills passed; one actually took almost ten years for advocates to pass, bringing Maryland law in line with most other states by changing the burden of proof in domestic violence cases. The definition of "burden" is now a "preponderance of the evidence."

Also passed was a bill to change the circumstances for a Permanent Final Protective Order – the bill will add the crime of second degree assault to the list of enumerated crimes in domestic violence cases and will require a convicted abuser to have served at least 12 months of a sentence, as opposed to 5 years. Also passed was a bill that adds extra penalties to a sentence for an abuser who commits an act of violence in the presence of a minor.

Pregnant detainees and inmates will no longer be in restraints when in labor or during delivery; and expectant parents not currently covered by the federal Family Medical Leave Act will now have protected job security with the option of taking up to six weeks of unpaid time off at the birth or adoption of a child in our state. Unfortunately, rapists still have parental rights since

some legislators were concerned about women bringing false charges of rape.

The only piece of legislation we actively opposed was an increase in the Maryland estate tax exemption from the current level of \$1 million to the federal level of 5.34 million which will only benefit about 3% of Maryland's population and will take revenue away from Maryland's coffers at a time when the budget is already strained. This bill did pass.

For more information about our work in Annapolis during this legislation session, please see Maryland NOW's web site (www.marylandnow.org) for a full report.

Maryland NOW's 2014 Lobby Night

Organized by Sandy Bell, the group visited six Senate and House members on behalf of 10 bills. L-R are Susan Martin, Linda Fihelly, Jeannette Feldner, Barbara Hays, Sara Wilkinson, Sandy Bell, Edith Miller and Holly Joseph. Photo by Mike Hersh



our founding mothers accomplished in making life for women what it is today.

Maryland NOW still has 96 women as members today who joined during that decade who still support our state organization. Many thanks for all your years of support and work — We certainly have a great heritage to work with!

Thanks to David Dismore of Los Angeles who is a video and news archivist and a researcher for the Feminist Majority Foundation for this information.

Hats Off to the Feminists of 1972

Maryland NOW was founded in 1972. National NOW's bylaws officially created state organizations in 1976, but Maryland NOW members were already working hard on issues to improve women's lives in our state.

On the national stage, June 23, 1972 was when Title IX was signed into law. The year before in 1971, the Supreme Court handed down their first decision striking down discrimination on the basis of sex in *Reed v. Reed*. There were no domestic violence shelters anywhere in the U.S. and spousal rape

was still legal in all states until 1975, and not outlawed in all 50 until 1993.

In 1972, abortions in Maryland could only be obtained in cases of rape, fetal deformity or serious danger to a woman's health. (In 1992, Maryland voters agreed in a referendum vote to write *Roe v. Wade* language into Maryland law.) Maryland ratified the E.R.A. on May 26, 1972 and passed a state E.R.A. that same year.

Younger feminists appreciate the level of discrimination women faced back then, and are ever grateful for the amount of work

Maryland NOW Chapters are looking for YOU

Maryland NOW has members in every county in our state. We have active chapters in the larger cities in our state, but also – for years since NOW was founded – we have had bases of support in the smaller towns and rural areas of our country and they have accomplished a great deal over the years to advance women’s rights. No group is too small to be a chapter of NOW.

Maryland NOW is seeking to re-establish and strengthen chapters outside of the state’s major metropolitan areas. The need to make sure we have active chapters in these areas is evident when one considers how few women’s rights supporters serve in Maryland’s General Assembly from these smaller cities and towns. YOU can be a leader! Regardless of whether you are a newer member or a long time supporter, Maryland NOW can help you with materials, organizing help, and support.

Affiliate! Many members who aren’t already affiliated with a chapter aren’t aware that they can do so at no additional cost, and at any time – not just when they renew their dues. Use the list of e-mails below, or the contact information for Maryland NOW found on page 2 of this newsletter, or check our website for more contact information under the Chapters tab.

Chapters of NOW in Maryland

Anne Arundel NOW – AnneArundel@marylandnow.org

Baltimore NOW – BaltNOW99@gmail.com

Montgomery County NOW – Montgomery@marylandnow.org or info@mcmdnow.org

Northern Prince George’s County NOW – NPG@marylandnow.org

Southern Prince George’s County NOW – SPG@marylandnow.org

Takoma Park NOW – TakomaPark@marylandnow.org

Washington County NOW – WashingtonCounty@marylandnow.org

Frederick County, Howard County, and Eastern Shore members: Please contact president@marylandnow.org to learn about efforts to reactivate chapters in your area. You may also call our state phone (see page 2), or mail this form to the address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, and Zip: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

- Please let this chapter know that I want my membership transferred into their chapter: _____
- I have the following skills I would like to contribute to NOW’s work at the state or local level (such as working with our web site, monitoring federal or state legislation, or working with our MD NOW PAC) _____
- I’d like help from Maryland NOW in starting a chapter near where I live. Please call or send me an e-mail.
- I really appreciate the work you are doing. I’m sending a contribution to the address below, or I’ll call or email about making a contribution through your PayPal account.

Contact us through the web site, or mail this form to Maryland NOW, P.O. Box 7716, Silver Spring, MD 20907

Maryland NOW 2014 Annual Conference

“Women’s Healthcare Challenges in Maryland: Infant Mortality and Low Birth Weight Babies”

Featuring speakers from Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, County Health Officers from Montgomery County and the Eastern Shore, the National Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition, and many more.

Conference Times

Registration: 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Join us for bagels and coffee.

Sessions start at 10:00 a.m.

Credentialing: All day, except during voting

Business Meeting (including nominations for office) 10:00 -10:30 AM

Voting: 12 noon – 3:00 PM

Fees

\$35 for members (a sliding scale is available for any amount)

\$45 for non-members

\$20 for students

Registration closes through the MD NOW web site on May 13. Please pre-register through our web site to guarantee availability of a lunch.

Agenda

A full agenda will be available on our web site follow a state council adoption on April 27.

Please check it for any specifics or questions you may have.

Location

Montgomery County Education Association Conference Center
12 Taft Court
Rockville, MD 20850

This location is accessible. Please let us know if you have any special needs.

Credentialing?

In order to vote, our bylaws require you to have at least 60 days’ membership in Maryland NOW. We will have information from the National NOW Membership Database that includes all the names of all eligible voters and can check if there are questions.

Questions about the Conference?

Special Dietary Requests?

Contact irish20901@yahoo.com

The 2014 State Conference has been organized by the Montgomery County NOW Chapter with Linda Mahoney—Conference Chair.

Credentialing and Elections

Rosezella Canty-Letsome,
Chair, NPG NOW

Chitra Panjabi
National NOW VP Membership

Maryland NOW—You can take us anywhere!



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