DEI Newsletter 2023 Issue 2

University of Maine School of Law
Maine Law students volunteering with Friends of Casco Bay (left), which works to improve and protect the bay, and the Locker Project (right), an organization that supports children and families experiencing food insecurity, during the Day of Service on October 6.

Maine Law DEI Committee Newsletter | Nov.-Dec. 2023

If you have an event or news item to share in an upcoming newsletter, please let us know by completing this News & Events Submission Form.

Please contact us if you have ideas for events or if you would like to convene a conversation. You can reach the DEI Committee at law.deicommittee@maine.edu.

Student representatives on the Committee serve as liaisons and are another resource for sharing feedback and ideas. Please see the list of student reps on page 3.

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In the Spotlight

- On September 20, the DEI Committee hosted the second annual Voter Registration Day Event with guest speakers Joann Bautista, ’18, Deputy Secretary of State, and Anna Kellar, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Maine. The speakers shared insights on the important work being done in Maine to protect and promote voting rights, with a particular emphasis on elections at the municipality level. The speakers also discussed the volunteer opportunities to help protect elections and ensure equity of access. Volunteers from the LWV of Maine, including a Maine Law alumna, were on hand at the event to register voters. Check out the LWV of Maine’s Voter Guide resource, which was sponsored in part by Maine Law.

- On October 3, Maine Law and Students for the Sixth Amendment co-hosted Answering the Call: Serving Your Community in Public Defense. For the event, the co-hosts welcomed the Department of Justice Office for Access to Justice. The event included introductory remarks by Rachel Rossi, Director of the Office for Access to Justice, and a panel that included Marshall Pahl, Deputy Defender General and Chief Juvenile Defender for Vermont; Pamela K. Jones, Managing Attorney for New Hampshire Public Defender; Mackenzie Deveau, public defender from the Maine Rural Defender Unit; and Amber L. Tucker, Maine Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers President. Read the News Story about the event on the Maine Law website.

- Maine Law’s first Day of Service event on October 6 was a rousing success, with 64 students participating in 8 different volunteer opportunities. President and Dean Leigh Saufley and Professor Marcia Levy spoke to the students about the vital importance of pro bono work in the legal profession while everyone had lunch in the Living Room, and then students traveled to their volunteer sites.

  Lindsey Boston, a 1L student, spent the afternoon with EqualityMaine identifying legal needs and barriers to obtaining legal assistance among the state’s LGBTQ+ community as part of EqualityMaine’s feasibility study for an LGBTQ+ legal aid clinic. As Lindsey noted, “When you are a law student living and studying in the immediate Portland area, you can lose sight of the fact that Maine is expansive, and those in the LGBTQ+ community live all throughout the state, from Kittery to Fort Kent.”
Several Maine Law students joined the Maine State Bar Association’s Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Lawyers Section on October 12th at Bernstein Shur for an evening of networking and connection. Representatives from the Black Law Student Association were in attendance as well as the Multicultural Law Society.

The MSBA BIPOC Lawyers Section is open to members of the bar association who identify as BIPOC or who wish to support its mission for providing support, mentoring, networking, education, and fellowship for the state’s BIPOC legal community. Specifically, the Association is committed to increasing the number of lawyers from historically underrepresented populations.

The Maine State Bar Association offers information about their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on their website. More information on the American Bar Association’s DEI resources are available online.

The 2023 National Celebration of Pro Bono was held from October 22-28, 2023, with the theme "Voices of Democracy: Ensuring Justice for All." Here at Maine Law, the celebration took the form of the Celebration of Pro Bono Program, which was held on October 23 and featured a panel of practitioners that discussed pro bono as a means of providing access to justice and the many forms that pro bono work can take.

As Visiting Professor & Director of Externships & Pro Bono Marcia Levy noted, “Poverty, structural racism and bias impact how the judicial system interacts with BIPOC communities. Often the most marginalized are denied access to justice. Pro bono service helps to fill that justice gap. Students who engage in pro bono not only address the issue of access, but also learn cultural humility as they engage with diverse communities.”

Bar Association Opportunities

Did you know that membership to the Maine State Bar Association is free for current law students? You can sign up to receive communications directly at www.mainebar.org/page/join. The BIPOC Lawyers Section and Women’s Law Section are two resources for law students that provide opportunities for education, networking, and support.

- The Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) Lawyers Section provides support, mentoring, networking, education and fellowship for Maine’s BIPOC legal community, to address the unique issues faced by Maine attorneys of color, and to increase diversity in the Maine Bar. For more information, please contact: Section Chairpersons Tom Douglas at tdouglas@douglasmedaniel.com or Carlos Diaz at diaz@cumberlandcounty.org.
- The Women’s Law Section provides a forum for women lawyers to gather for regular educational programs, networking and discussion of issues of interest to women attorneys.
Meet the DEI Committee’s Student Organization and Student Representatives

The DEI Committee membership includes standing representation by members of the Black Law Student Association, the Multicultural Student Association, and the LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Group. Students are also invited to apply to serve as representatives on the Committee.

Please meet this year’s representatives to the Committee, who serve as liaisons between their student organizations or the student body and the DEI Committee. Just like faculty and staff committee members, they are a resource for your feedback and ideas and can answer questions about the Committee’s work.

Black Law Student Association

- Andy Almonte, President (2L)
- Alternate: Jevaun Quinn (3L)

Multicultural Law Society

- Sahra Hassan, President (3L)
- Nicole Onderdonk, Diversity Committee Liaison (3L)

LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Group

- Benjamin Clark (2L)

Student Representatives:

- Aysha Vear (2L)
- Amber Kachmar (1L)

Upcoming Events at Maine Law

- **November 6:** Ballot Question 6 & Wabanaki Sovereignty: Restoring Rights in the Wabanaki Homeland. Featuring guest speaker Maulian (Dana) Bryant (she/her/hers), Tribal Ambassador for the Penobscot Nation and President of the Board of Directors of the Wabanaki Alliance. *Lunch hour in the Moot Court Classroom*

- **November 17:** Third Annual Indian Law and History Lecture. 11 am – 1 pm in the Moot Court Classroom.

Around Town

- **November is national Native American Heritage Month.**

- **November 2:** The Robert Talbot Civil Rights Speaker Series. Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross will speak on Maine’s Path to Inclusion and Equity: Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities Ahead. Free with registration. **Register here.** 5:30 – 7 pm, Buchanan Alumni House in Orono.

- **November 8:** *Dawnland* Screening. Contact Samara Ray (sray@portlandmaine.gov, 207-808-5400) for tickets to this free event. 9 pm at Merrill Auditorium.

- **December 5:** *Wabanaki Sovereignty - Benefit to All Maine Residents*, a presentation by Corey Hinton and Darren J. Ranco, PhD. **Registration required.** 9-11 am, Virtual


Holiday Shopping Guide

- **Black Owned Maine**
- **Shop Queer**
- **Maker's Market of local crafters/artisans**