

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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State of Maine  
Executive Department  
Division of Community Services  
Augusta, Maine 04333

JAMES B. LONGLEY  
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. WILSON  
DIRECTOR

August 15, 1977

TO: Governor James B. Longley  
FROM: Task Force Members: Joyce Harmon, Dowl Plummer,  
Sylvia Lund, Marge Murphy, Pat Ryan, Bob Stolt,  
Donna Mundy, Fred Williams, Bob Talbot, Joseph  
Nicholas.  
RE: August 15th Report

The major purpose of the Task Force as quoted in the Executive Order, " The Task Force is created for the sole purpose of examining the Maine Human Rights Act and related statutes to determine what, if any changes need to be made to better provide for equal rights and equal opportunity for all the citizens of the State of Maine."

After three meetings and careful examination of other States legislation and procedures, the Task Force is submitting these recommendations.

The Law is adequate and contains major classifications which need to be protected under Human Rights categories -

1. The Task Force recommends that no new categories of protected classes be added to the Human Rights Act at this time.
2. The Task Force also suggests that the Human Rights Commission conduct a study of the present statute to determine its effectiveness, consistency, and adequacy.
3. The Task Force suggests that the Commission strengthen its education and information function so that all persons are aware of their duties and responsibilities under the Human Rights Act.

4. The Task Force makes the following major recommendations in the area of organization and Administration of the Human Rights Commission in order to carry out their responsibilities under the Human Rights Act.

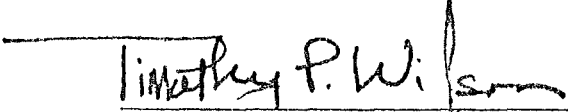
(a) There should be either three or five full time paid Commissioners.

(b) The Commission should operate under formal judicial procedure, allowing both complainant and respondent to present their positions, with opportunity to provide full information directly and openly.

(c) The Commissioners should have the power to make decisions which would be binding upon both parties.

The preceding recommendations would necessitate changes in the Administrative portion of the Human Rights Act. They should be studied carefully for a longer period of time than this Task Force was able to devote in order that the full effect could be considered. Major advantages of these changes could be consistency, clarity, and equity, and the possibility of early solutions in the carrying out of Human Rights Legislation. The possibility of consolidating all Human Rights responsibilities within a strengthened Human Rights Commission should also be explored.

The Task Force was fortunate in having Ms. Joyce Harmon, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, with us at our meetings. Many discussions were very candid therefore allowed her an opportunity to speak to the ideas that the other members had. We also had the opportunity to speak with the Compliance Officer and an Investigator from the Commission. They answered many questions the Task Force members had regarding the Commission's procedures. The information they gave us was very helpful in our preparation of this final report.

  
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Timothy P. Wilson

TPW/bjd