

February 11, 2016

2016 Leadership Summit makes policy direction front and center

Roundtable discussions center on economic growth, workforce needs, and energy and infrastructure



For the past 16 years, the Maine State Chamber's annual Leadership Summit has provided board members and business leaders an opportunity to discuss critical public policy issues with key public officials from both sides of the aisle, as well as with administrators and representatives of the executive branch. Again this year, the Chamber's board of directors and key business leaders gathered with legislative leaders and members of Governor Paul LePage's administration and cabinet on February 4-5 at Sunday River with the shared goal of finding ways to move Maine forward.

The Leadership Summit becomes

increasingly popular each year, and this year's was no exception. Approximately 110 participants gathered to discuss some of the challenges facing Maine and relevant legislation facing the second regular session of the 127th Legislature, as well as to identify common policy priorities, all in an effort to move our state ahead.

The Summit began with a reception attended by invitees as well as members of the legislature and leadership. Following presentations by Senate President Michael Thibodeau (R-Waldo) and Speaker of the House Mark Eves (D-North Berwick) after dinner, a panel of legislative leaders —

Continued on Page 4...

While Legislature grapples with tax conformity, time is of the essence

Business community needs predictability... Legislature needs to act now!

Maine taxpayers are in the process of filing their tax returns, and one question remains, "What is the Maine legislature going to do about tax conformity?" During the past couple of weeks, the debate on tax conformity has certainly heated up.

The issue that is facing the Legislature is whether Maine should adopt tax conformity for one year or more. Democrats want to see tax conformity adopted for one year (2015) only. Republicans would like to adopt tax conformity, making Section 179 permanent and increasing the limitation and extending the Maine Capital Investment Credit to 2019.

Background...

In December 2015, in a bi-partisan effort, Congress and President Barack Obama signed into law the Protecting American from Tax Hikes (PATH) act. The PATH act expanded the current Section 179 deduction limits to \$500,000 permanently and extended federal bonus depreciation through 2019. Congress and President Obama enacted this legislation in an effort to stimulate the nation's economy and to increase job creation.

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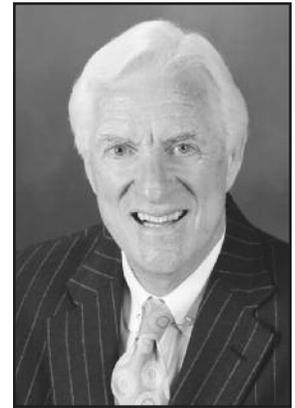
About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce:

Since 1889, the Maine State Chamber has been fighting to lower your cost of doing business. Through our Grassroots Action Network and OneVoice program, we work with a network of approximately 5,000 companies statewide who see the value in such a service and provide the financial support that keeps our access, advocacy, and assistance efforts going strong. As Maine's Chamber, we make sure that the business environment of the state continues to thrive. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce advocates on behalf of their interests before the legislature and regulatory agencies and through conferences, seminars, and affiliated programs.

A message from the president...

“Even during a short session, there’s value in the conversations...”

by Dana Connors



As you saw on page 1, we hosted our annual Leadership Summit last week, with many key legislative, administration, and business leaders in attendance. The comments and compliments we have been receiving since then have provided us with a positive feedback on many levels and from multiple perspectives. While the issues before us occasionally result in tension and dissent, that is a natural, healthy part of the public policy process. It is the ability of these leaders to sit around the table with each other and with business leaders and discuss issues in depth—even if there is disagreement—that demonstrates their desire to move Maine forward.

The true testament to the success of this flagship event is the direct and open dialogue that occurs there. With the over-arching theme of “Listen ~ Learn ~ Lead,” the 2016 Leadership Summit provided everyone at the table a chance for enlightening discussion—to ask questions and offer alternate perspectives, to gain answers and insight, and to interact on a very detailed and direct level.

While the concept may seem fundamental, taking time to have the conversation, and to engage in the dialogue, is very rewarding. In fact when I share the success of this program with my counterparts around the country, the reaction is usually disbelief. It’s another reason that Maine is a very special place.

Building relationships and engaging in open dialogue is critical to building a prosperous economy for employers and our employees. We thank all those who participated in and sponsored the 2016 Leadership Summit. Remember, “to lead is to listen, to learn, and to not focus on the problem, but seek out solutions and opportunity!” □

Tax Conformity... **(Continued from Page 1...)**

While the proposal before the Maine Legislature does adopt the Section 179 increase permanently, Maine usually decouples from the federal government and enacts its own version of bonus depreciation, called the Maine Capital Investment Credit. The proposal would extend this credit to 2019.

The business community strongly supports increasing the limitation perma-

nently on Section 179 and extending the Maine Capital Investment Credit to 2019. The credit would be equal to 9% for taxable corporations, 8% for individuals in 2015, and 7% for individuals in 2016. The total cost of implementing this tax conformity proposal is \$38 million.

Maine Capital Investment Credit applies to more small businesses...

Some lawmakers have claimed this credit is nothing more than a tax giveaway for large out of state businesses. The reality is, the Maine Capital Investment Credit

is an important piece of the tax conformity proposal that applies to more small- and medium-sized Maine businesses than it does to larger corporations. This credit applies to more than **4,000** Maine small- and medium-sized businesses that operate as pass-through entities, like limited liability corporations, s-corporations or partnerships. That's 4,000 Maine taxpayers who own companies and are trying to grow their business and create jobs in this state. The credit helps a business plan its investments and to purchase equipment it may not otherwise afford, as well as helps with cash flow issues that often keep small businesses afloat. On the flip side, the credit would *only* apply to about 300 larger businesses.

Some lawmakers favor focusing on small business rather than larger companies...

As a state, Maine should not draw a line in the sand and pick winners and losers amongst Maine businesses. We need to concentrate on keeping *all* businesses competitive, not discriminating based on size. Maine should support all businesses, the economy depends upon it. The discussion should *not* be about whether Maine should be supporting large versus small businesses – but businesses in general. The size of a company should be irrelevant. We need more businesses of *any* size to locate here, and Maine should welcome all who come. As a state, Maine needs to ensure that businesses *regardless of size* have the tools necessary to continue to create jobs and to invest and grow their businesses.

If the bonus depreciation provisions are not adopted, Maine companies will no doubt be placed at a competitive disadvantage with companies that operate in states with accelerated depreciation. Companies in other states would be able to deduct business expenses faster and be more competitive than their counterparts here. Maine needs to keep businesses competitive in this state and attract more investment.

We urge Legislators to adopt the permanent limitation increase for Section 179 and the Maine Capital Investment Credit through to 2019. This is absolutely imperative to keep Maine businesses competitive. For more information, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.com. □

ACTION ALERT!

Tax Conformity:

Business Community urged to call legislators TODAY and encourage them to "VOTE YES" to make permanent and to increase Section 179 business expensing deductions, as well as to extend the Maine Capital Investment Credit until 2019!

Congress and President Barack Obama have taken action to extend bonus depreciation and to increase Section 179 limitations in an effort to stimulate and grow the U.S. economy. Maine needs to do the same and follow the federal government's lead on this issue.

Making the Section 179 increase permanent and extending the Maine Capital Investment Credit allows businesses to plan and encourages Maine businesses to invest, create jobs, and to grow their businesses. Maine businesses deserve more than 12 months of predictability and these changes provides that. Contact your legislator today. To find your legislator, please visit <http://maineprosperity.com/lookup.asp?g=maine>.

Keep Maine Businesses Competitive!

Urge Your Legislator to VOTE YES to make permanent and to increase Section 179 business expensing deductions, as well as to extend the Maine Capital Investment Credit until 2019!

CONTACT YOUR SENATOR:

3 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0003
(207) 287-1540 or (800) 423-6900

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:

2 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400 or (800) 423-2900

Leadership Summit... (Continued from Page 1...)

Sen. Garret Mason (R-Androscoggin) Senate Majority Leader, Sen. Andre Cushing (R-Penobscot) Assistant Majority Leader, Rep. Jeff McCabe (D-Skowhegan) House Majority Leader; Rep. Sara Gideon (D-Freeport) Assistant Majority Leader, and, Rep. Eleanor Espling (R-New Gloucester) Assistant House Minority Leader — joined the Senate President and the House Speaker to discuss the Legislature's priorities in the coming months, and provided our board members and guests with their thoughts on a variety of policy issues, including the upcoming referendum questions, tax conformity, economic development efforts, immigration and workforce development issues.

Friday morning continued our longstanding tradition of roundtable breakout sessions. This year, following on the path set forth at last year's summit, instead of discussing a vast array of policy topics, each of the three sessions focused on three distinct areas: strengthening our business climate; education and workforce development needs now and moving forward; and, energy and infrastructure policies. Each of the three one-hour sessions resulted in thoughtful and meaningful dialogue between business leaders and policy makers that hopefully will help shape the discussions in the state capital this session as well as going forward.

The success of the 2016 Leadership Summit is centered on the highly-engaged participation of legislators, cabinet officials, and leadership. An impressive 19 legislators from key committees and five administrators from critical departments joined Friday's discussion, including:

- Sen. Michael Thibodeau (R-Waldo County), President of the Senate;
- Sen. Andre Cushing III (R-Penobscot County), Assistant Senate Majority Leader;
- Sen. Garrett Mason (R-Androscoggin County), Senate Majority Leader;
- Sen. Justin Alfond (D-Cumberland), Senate Minority Leader;

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Leadership Summit... **(Continued from Page 4...)**



- Sen. James Hamper (R-Oxford), Senate chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs;
- Sen. Roger Katz (R-Kennebec), member of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs;
- Sen. Brian Langley (R-Hancock), Senate chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;
- Sen. Kimberly Rosen (R-Hancock), Senate chair of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety;
- Sen. David Woodsome (R-York), Senate Chair Energy, Utilities and Technology;
- Rep. Jeff McCabe (D-Skowhegan), House Democratic Leader;
- Rep. Sara Gideon (D-Freeport), Assistant House Democratic Leader;
- Rep. Ellie Espling (R-New Gloucester), Assistant House Republican Leader;
- Rep. Martin Grohman (D-Biddeford), member of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology;
- Rep. Barry Hobbins (D-Saco), House chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary;
- Rep. Brian Hubbell (D-Bar Harbor), member of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;
- Rep. Andrew McLean (D-Gorham), House chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation;
- Rep. Wayne Parry (R-Arundel), member of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation;
- Rep. Nathan Wadsworth (R-Hiram), member of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology;
- Rep. Tom Winsor (R-Norway), Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs;
- Mr. David Bernhardt, commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation;

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Leadership Summit... (Continued from Page 5...)

- Ms. Kathleen Newman, deputy chief of staff in the Office of Governor Paul LePage;
- Ms. Jeanne Paquette, commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor;
- Mr. Richard Rosen, commissioner of Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services; and,
- Mr. Patrick Woodcock, director of the Governor's Energy Office.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to travel to Sunday River for our 2016 Leadership Summit and participate in the event. We especially wish to thank legislative leaders, administrators, legislators, and our board members for their participation. Without their willingness to engage in a constructive and frank dialogue, this event would not be the success it is each year.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude for the generosity of our sponsors:

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Purple Strategies New England: Informative, interactive, town-hall style forum discusses 2016 presidential elections



On Monday, January 25, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce - in conjunction with the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce and the University of Southern Maine - hosted an informative and interactive town hall style discussion political climate discussion heading into the 2016 presidential election primaries and caucuses at USM's Hannaford Hall in Portland.

Purple Strategies New England's Patrick Griffin (above left) and Jim Demers (above right) brought to Maine an uncanny ability to relate the political landscape to business leaders and a political analysis that was invaluable.

Purple Strategies New England partner Patrick Griffin is a former Republican media consultant. His clients have included former Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. Jim Demers, also a Purple Strategies New England partner, is a former member of the New Hampshire Legislature and a former Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress. He also served as New Hampshire co-chair of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. We can't wait to have them back! ☐

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Public Hearings

Public hearings are open to everyone. This public hearing schedule is subject to change. Questions may be directed to the Secretary of the Senate's Office at (207) 287-1540. For the most current schedule, please visit <http://legislature.maine.gov/ljo/committee-membership/9089/> or contact the committee clerk.

**Wednesday,
February 17, 2016**

**Environment and
Natural Resources**

10:00 a.m.;

Cross Building, Room 216

**LD 1578, An Act To Update
Maine's Solid Waste Management
Laws (Sponsor: Sen. Saviello of
Franklin) □**

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2016 State of the State letter focuses on five key themes

Governor sets priorities for welfare and income tax reforms, the cost of electricity, student debt and attracting youth, and fighting the drug crisis

EDITOR'S NOTE: Below is the text of Governor Paul LePage's State of the State address, as delivered on February 8, 2016. We are reprinting the letter below for your review and consideration.

Speaker Eves, Senate President Thibodeau, and Members of the 127th Legislature:

As you know, I have chosen to forego the pomp and circumstance of a live speech so we can spend our time and energy on what truly matters: getting work done for the Maine people.

The Legislature has already wasted so much time over the past year—and with Mainers dying every day from the drug crisis—now is not the time to let pageantry distract you from your important work.

Legislators claim they come to Augusta to work for the Maine people, but far too many have come to play political games that have nothing to do with the Maine people and everything to do with their next election.

For the past year, socialist politicians in Augusta have been dragging my Administration's employees before a kangaroo court and plotting meaningless impeachment proceedings. While your colleagues were engaged in these silly public relations stunts, Mainers were literally dying on the streets.

Socialists, career politicians and their allies in media have criticized my Administration every single day for the past five years, but the Maine people are tired of the games. They're not interested in sound bites and photo ops. They want to hear what we're doing to make our state prosper.

That's why I'm holding town hall meetings around the state until Election Day in November. The Maine people need to know that for five years we've been trying to convince the Legislature to move our state from poverty to prosperity. This is what our state deserves—the

Maine people deserve it.

We know our proposals and reforms will stimulate the economy. We've seen similar initiatives work all over the country. In the past 45 years, I've implemented similar reforms in many businesses, large and small, and they do work.

The Top 10 most prosperous states in the nation have embraced these common-sense policies. The Top 10 least prosperous states—including Maine—have absolutely refused them. It's not about good policy. It's about ideology.

First, it was liberal ideology. Now it's socialism. The steadfast adherence to ideology above all else, including prosperity for the Maine people, has prevented opportunities for our state to succeed and grow.

The current ideology is far out of the mainstream and has failed miserably in countries around the world. The efforts by Maine socialists to turn our state into Greece, Cuba, Venezuela or the former Soviet Union are moving us backwards at a rapid pace. Socialism is blockading our path to prosperity. It's time to put it aside and work toward prosperity for all Mainers.

I've talked to thousands of Maine people in the past five years. They want us to work to reduce their tax burden, reform welfare so it benefits the truly needy, lower electricity rates so employers can create jobs, find ways to keep our young people here and eradicate the drug crisis that is ravaging our state.

The Maine people know I'm in my office every day, working hard to keep them safe and to move this state from poverty to prosperity. Way too much effort in Augusta is spent taking property.

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State of the State...

(Continued from Page 8...)

ties off the local tax rolls, which only raises local property taxes.

If you stop the gamesmanship, we can work together to accomplish great things. We know what the problems are, and we have solutions for them. But we need to work together to get it done. If you join me in moving Maine forward, you can take all the credit and do the photo ops. I just want what's right for the Maine people.

Welfare Reform...

We have been working on common-sense welfare reform for five years, but liberal—and now socialist—politicians still refuse to finish the job. Despite their opposition, we have reigned in the state's formerly out-of-control Medicaid spending. No longer is there a budget-wrecking crisis every year because of runaway Medicaid spending. The Legislature and the media have purposely ignored just how significant this achievement has been to the state's budget.

We now adhere to federal law when providing TANF and SNAP benefits. No longer can you spend a lifetime on TANF, and no longer can you get food stamps without working, volunteering or going to school. However, we need to either pay the federal government \$29 million in fines or change our laws to comply with federal statutes. The days of ignoring federal law are over. Even President Obama has lost patience with the Maine socialists.

We put photos on EBT cards and cracked down on where you can use them. They no longer show up at drug busts. We now drug test welfare recipients who are suspected of or who have admitted to prior drug use. You use, you lose. If you need help, we will be there to assist you. But if you want to keep using, taxpayers are not going to pay for your out-of-control habit.

In 2015, the welfare fraud unit at DHHS sent 105 cases to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution, totaling \$1.2 million in theft of welfare benefits. The Maine people know welfare fraud is not anecdotal. It is real, and it is costing



File photo: State of the State 2015

hard-working Mainers millions of their tax dollars.

However, the Attorney General only prosecuted 36 cases. She is ignoring the desire of the Maine people to eliminate welfare fraud. Instead, she tries to run the state through legal machinations from her partisan position.

Despite our success, Maine has fallen from the Number 1 welfare state in the nation only to the Number 3 slot. We need to be in the middle of the pack, not in the top tier. There is much more work to be done, and we cannot do it without your help.

However, the Legislature has been resistant to enacting meaningful welfare reform. So we will continue to push to completely reform Maine's welfare system once and for all. We will not provide welfare benefits that go over and above those allowed by federal law.

The Maine people demand it. These common-sense reforms are:

- Able-bodied adults must seek work before qualifying for welfare benefits;
- No TANF spending on tobacco, liquor, gambling, lotteries, tattoos, bail, travel services or sending money to foreign nations using services like Western Union;
- Alternative aid limited to 60 months, like TANF is;

- No use of EBT cards at smoke shops;
- No General Assistance, TANF, SNAP and SSI for non-citizens;
- No broad exemptions for federal work requirements in TANF (*the domestic violence exemption will remain*);
- A waiver to eliminate junk food from SNAP;
- No TANF and SNAP for felons convicted of drug-trafficking; and,
- Drug testing for all welfare recipients, not just those suspected of or who admitted to prior drug use.

These reforms will free up resources for Maine to create a safety net for our most vulnerable: the mentally and physically disabled and, most importantly, our elderly who have worked so hard their whole lives and now need our help to live out their final years in safety and comfort. **The current wait list must be eliminated.**

At my town halls, I urge all Mainers to tell you to support these common-sense welfare reforms. And remember, elections have consequences. Make sure your rhetoric on welfare reform matches your voting record.

Lowering the Income Tax...

I've been saying it for five years:

Continued on Page 11...

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State of the State...

(Continued from Page 9...)

Maine's tax structure is outdated, it is holding us back, and it needs to be fixed. The solution is simple: just look at the most prosperous states in the nation and do what they are doing.

States with the most prosperity have the lowest income tax rates or no income tax, including Alaska, Florida, South Dakota and Texas—even our neighbor New Hampshire. This is not anecdotal; it's fact.

Rather than debating a minimum wage, I want to give a pay raise to all working Mainers: eliminating the income tax will put \$900 million back in the paychecks of Mainers. It's the biggest wage increase they can get.

Despite what the socialists—and the media—say, we aren't trying to eliminate the income tax all at once. We can do it over time. We can reduce Maine's individual tax rate to 4% over four years, from 2018 to 2021.

The income tax cut can be aligned with the natural growth of revenue for state government. We do not need to rely on the politicians' typical budget gimmicks or unrealistic revenue projections. We do not have to increase spending or grow the size of government.

Beginning in 2024, we can use the revenue from the new liquor contract we negotiated—which has already far exceeded expectations—to lower the individual income tax rate to 0% over time. We will also need a moderate adjustment to the sales tax.

We can export this moderate sales tax increase to the tens of millions of visitors who come to Maine every year. It's a very small price for them to pay to come enjoy all our wonderful state has to offer.

We also need to eliminate the death tax once and for all. It is driving away Maine's wealthiest job creators.

You all know some of these people. Many have told me they want to remain as Maine residents, but we tax them too much. Why should they leave behind an estate they worked to build over their lifetime, only to have it unfairly confiscated by state government?

So they go to Florida, become resi-

dents there and take their wealth with them. How does this help the Maine economy?

We must send the message that we appreciate them, we are thankful for the jobs they have created and we want them—and their assets—to stay in Maine.

High Electricity Prices are Costing Mainers Good Jobs...

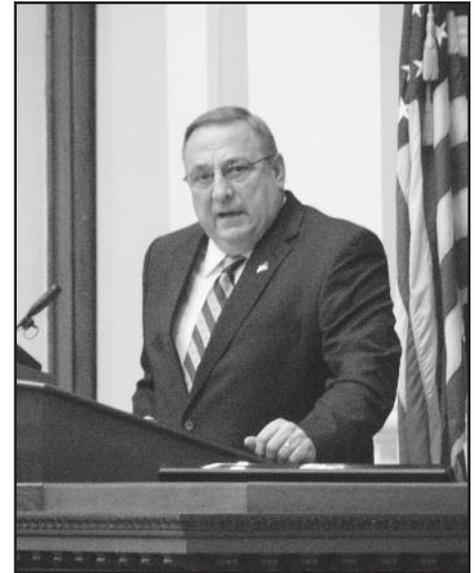
We've been saying it for five years: Maine's electricity prices are not competitive. My Administration has made progress to lower heating costs with modern heating systems, and lower oil prices are providing some relief. But the high cost of electricity in the manufacturing and industrial sectors continues to kill good jobs for Mainers.

We have dozens of letters from well-respected Maine companies telling us that high energy costs make it difficult—if not impossible—to do business here. Maine's electric rates are 12th highest in the country, and the Legislature is making it worse. Special interests are constantly lobbying for carve-outs and above-market contracts to benefit themselves. Incredibly, last year the Legislature thought it was a good idea to sign more long-term contracts for above-market rates.

Current market rates are at 4 to 5 cents per kilowatt on average. But the Legislature **forced** the PUC to sign long-term contracts for 20 years at prices ranging from 8.3 to 10 cents per kilowatt before distribution and transmission. Now we know the exact price of their failure to protect Mainers: \$38 million has been added to your costs for the above-market contracts.

Instead of artificially increasing electric bills, legislators should focus on lowering rates for the Maine people. Lower electricity rates would help attract employers to our state and lower the cost of living and working in our state. The Maine people deserve a break, not the wealthy special interests in Augusta, who profit off our hardworking middle class.

Socialists love to subsidize new wind and solar energy projects because they think it will save the earth, but that kind of expensive and inefficient energy benefits only a few wealthy investors, and our electrical generation is already one of the



File photo: State of the State 2015

cleanest in the country. Instead, let's support the existing Maine-based biomass infrastructure that is already in place to take advantage of our plentiful natural resource: wood.

The biomass industry creates good jobs for Mainers, ranging from loggers and truckers to mill workers and lumber yard crews. Biomass facilities are often the largest taxpayers in small towns, and biomass reduces our reliance on fossil fuels. Let's help our economy and all Mainers, rather than artificially limiting sources of inexpensive energy.

Meanwhile, my Administration continues to make progress working with other New England states to expand hydropower and natural gas into our region. Right now there is construction underway to expand our pipelines into New England, and clean and affordable hydropower is right next door in Quebec.

It's time to switch off expensive energy. We must plug into the affordable reserves of nearby natural gas and hydropower. We must be willing to transmit hydropower to the states south of us.

How many more Mainers must lose their jobs before the Legislature wakes up and takes action?

Reducing Student Debt. Attracting Youth...

We continue our focus on reducing taxes, lowering energy costs and attracting

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File photo: State of the State 2015

State of the State... **(Continued from Page 11...)**

companies that create good jobs. When successful, those businesses will need workers. We must make sure our young people can stay here to fill those jobs.

Student debt is crippling our young people. Some have so much debt, they cannot afford to buy homes and start families. Too many have moved out of state to find better-paying jobs so they can manage their debt. We need to keep them here.

We have worked with FAME so they can now consolidate or refinance student loans at very low interest rates. We would like to see FAME sell a \$10 million bond so they can issue no-interest student loans—the state can pick up the interest.

We need a commitment from Augusta politicians to help relieve student debt. Socialists want government to provide free education for everyone—and they will hike your taxes to pay for it. My plan would pay for itself and grow the economy.

We think the private sector should be a partner in reducing student debt and attracting young workers. We submitted a bill that offers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit to any business that pays off a student loan for an employee. Not-for-profit employees will be given the credit directly.

If a business pays off \$100,000 in student loans, it will get a \$100,000 credit on

its income tax. We need bold initiatives and immediate action to keep young Mainers here and attract other young people to our state. This is the only way to lower the median age of the Maine people.

Fighting the Drug Crisis...

We cannot wait any longer to find and arrest drug dealers. They are killing the very young people we need to live and work in Maine.

Heroin and other deadly drugs are raging in our state, and it is killing Mainers every week. You have seen the terrifying statistics from 2015:

- 231 people died from drug-related overdoses;
- 265 heroin-related arrests—plus the ripple effect of domestic violence assaults, burglaries and other crimes;
- 1,013 babies born drug addicted and/or affected; and,
- 56 meth lab incidents.

Why has the Legislature been so slow to act on this pandemic? If 231 Mainers died of food poisoning last year, the legislators would have immediately hired an army of food inspectors, passed laws for stricter penalties and somehow found millions in their budget to fund their initiatives, all the while patting themselves on the back for a job well done.

But with Mainers literally dropping dead on the streets, where is your outrage? The Legislature delayed for a year-and-a-half the hiring of just 10 MDEA agents—when we really need 20. The State Police are 45 positions short, mainly because their pay is so low. The same is true for all law enforcement officers in other state agencies.

Legislators found millions to adorn their “Christmas tree” with pet projects last July, but they only funded a Band-Aid approach to a crisis that is killing hundreds of our friends and neighbors. Either they are so intent on depriving the Administration of credit for actually fighting this crisis or they are so focused on their socialist ideology they are ignoring the reality surrounding them.

We absolutely agree Maine needs a multi-pronged approach to this crisis, involving law enforcement, treatment and

education. The Legislature is moving too slowly on all three fronts, so we are working on a comprehensive plan. It should be approved this session.

However, we can get more law enforcement agents on the street much more quickly to hunt down and arrest these dealers from out-of-state, highly organized and ruthless drug gangs who are using Maine as their street corner. We can disrupt the supply and make Maine the toughest state in nation on drug crimes with much stronger penalties.

We must send a strong message that Maine has zero tolerance for drugs. If a dealer sells the drug that kills a Mainer, we should treat it as a homicide. The penalty for dealing drugs should be decades behind bars. You won’t deal death in our state.

We need fewer sound bites on this deadly pandemic and much more action. The lives of your constituents quite literally depend on it. This plague is not contained by socioeconomic status—it affects every family in the state, including yours. Next week, it could be your brother or sister, son or daughter, cousin or friend.

Again, I am urging the Maine people to find out who their legislators are. If you want lower taxes, more welfare reform, reduced energy costs, affordable student debt and a get-tough approach to the drug crisis, Mainers must contact their elected officials and hold them accountable.

Politicians are supposed to represent the Maine people, not special interests, not lobbyists and not a foreign socialist ideology.

To the Maine people, I say this: If you want to improve our economy, if you truly want to prosper, then you have to change the culture in Augusta. Vote for those candidates who will work for you. Hold them accountable; demand their attention.

Finally, this is no longer about the State of the State. With a staggering \$20 trillion of debt, the state of our country is in crisis. The federal government is in danger of further eroding its credit due to the principal and interest payments required to service this massive, almost unimaginable, debt. We are approaching national insolvency. This is not the kind of country we envisioned for our children and grandchildren to live in. They deserve better—much better.

Now, let’s get to work. □

Several local / regional chambers welcome new executive directors



In the past year, several local/regional chamber executives have moved on or retired. They include the former Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce (now the Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber), the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce, the Boothbay Harbor Chamber of Commerce, the Old Orchard Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Freeport Chamber of Commerce. To provide our members an opportunity to get to know these new local/regional executive directors, we will be featuring a few of them each month in our *Impact* newsletter.

An affiliate of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, the Maine Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives provides a forum where chamber executives meet to share ideas, network with peers, and build partner-

ships with other chambers of commerce across Maine. For more information, please contact Amy Downing by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 104, or by emailing adowning@mainechamber.org, or visit <http://www.macce.biz/>.

Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce: Ross Cunningham...

Originally from Winchester, Massachusetts, Ross Cunningham joined the U.S. Navy in 1985 and was trained as an anti-submarine warfare operator aboard the P-3 Orion aircraft. Based in Brunswick, he deployed worldwide, during the height of the cold war, in an ongoing effort to maintain the locations of the Soviet Union's submarine fleet and support during operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Cunningham's stellar performance resulted in his selection into the Enlisted Commissioning Program, allowing him to attend the University of Maine in Orono and to graduate as an ensign in the Navy.

Once commissioned, Cunningham was

once again stationed in Brunswick as a naval flight officer aboard the P-3 Orion. Follow on deployments involved missions in support of the Kosovo Conflict and several deployments in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. During this time, Cunningham also obtained an MBA from the Southern New Hampshire University. In 2001, he and his wife Amy settled in Lisbon. Following his deployment schedule, Cunningham quickly got involved in local activities, serving on the Conservation Commission for two years and receiving an appointment to the Town Ethics Panel. Following an assignment as the assistant officer in charge of the Navy's Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) school, Lieutenant Commander Cunningham retired in June 2008. During his 22 years of service, LCDR Cunningham's was awarded the Combat Air Medal (3), Navy Commendation Medal (2) and Naval Achievement Medal (3), among others.

Following retirement, Ross

Continued on Page 14...

**MAINE
STATE
CHAMBER
of
COMMERCE**

Business Day at the Statehouse

Thurs., March 10, 2016 ♦ 8:00 a.m. to Noon
Statehouse Hall of Flags

The Maine State Chamber is hosting its seventh annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, March 10, 2016, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Hall of Flags (Statehouse, Second Floor).

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Linda Caprara, senior government relations specialist / director of grassroots advocacy, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org. With your participation, the "Voice of Maine Business" will resonate throughout Augusta!



Chamber Executives...
(Continued from Page 13...)

embarked on a second career, one in medical management. He worked as the practice manager for Brunswick Eye Care Associates and subsequently worked for Mid Coast Medical Group, managing both Women's Health Care and General Surgery at Parkview Hospital.

Following his passion for community service, Ross founded Positive Change Lisbon in 2010. This non-profit organization was created to combine the energy of business leaders, citizens and the town government in an effort to build a stronger community. Positive Change Lisbon quickly grew into a notable force in the community, responsible for a change in attitude and a renewed interest in community growth.

Building on his drive for economic and community development, Cunningham joined the Kennebec Valley (KV) Chamber of Commerce in January 2015 as its president and CEO. He currently resides in Lisbon Falls with his wife, Amy, and daughters, Alex and Abby. Ross' son Derek is serving as an EA-6 pilot in the United States Marine Corps.

Founded in 1932, the KV Chamber has been a key part of the business community and a driving force in the development of the Central Maine region. With more than 700 member businesses and organizations, the KV Chamber provides countless services to the community and their members. For more information on the KV Chamber, please visit www.augustamaine.com.

Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce: Tom Peaco...

Tom Peaco joined the Penobscot Bay (Pen-Bay) Regional Chamber of Commerce in May 2015 as its executive director. The Pen-Bay Chamber is the third largest in Maine, with close to 900 members. The chamber is the voice of business and tourism in the Camden/Rockland region, encompassing more than 20 communities within and surrounding Knox County.

Peaco has spent his career in the non-profit sector, most recently serving 18 years as executive director of Make-A-Wish Maine. More than 1,100 Maine children with life-threatening medical conditions were granted their greatest wish during his tenure. Peaco began his career with the Boy Scouts of America, leading scout-



Ross Cunningham
Kennebec Valley Chamber



Tom Peaco
Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber

ing programs and fundraising efforts in Maine and Vermont for nine years.

A native of New Gloucester and a graduate of Gray-New Gloucester High School and the University of Maine, Peaco lives in Rockland with his wife, Michelle, and their three sons. In the community, he serves as a coach and board member for the Oceanside Little

League, and is also an active member and past president of the Camden Rotary Club. Peaco also currently serves as the president of the Midcoast Chamber Council, an alliance of eight chambers of commerce from Brunswick to Belfast.

For more information about the Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce, please visit www.maine-dreamvacation.com. □



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“The Bottom Line” explores timely issues crucial to Maine’s economy

Unique college success program aims to improve state’s degree rate

Maine employers are affected every day by issues such as transportation, technology, education, energy, health care, environment, and taxation, just to name a few. That is why the Maine State Chamber launched its television show, *The Bottom Line*, in February 2013. *The Bottom Line* takes an in-depth look at a wide variety of business related issues, their impact on jobs here, and highlights positive aspects of Maine’s economy. Host Dana Connors is joined monthly by various experts to essentially “bottom line” the various facets of these and other complex issues that ultimately create jobs and growth in our state.

The Bottom Line airs three times per week on Time Warner’s public access station, channel 9 for TWC customers. You can watch it on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. and on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. It is also available on our homepage at www.mainechamber.org. Each episode of *The Bottom Line* is archived at www.mainechamber.org/bottomlinearchive.php.

This month on *The Bottom Line*, host Dana Connors discusses current broadband legislation and its role in our economy with Rep. Sara Gideon (D-Freeport), assistant majority leader in the Maine House of Representatives, and Ben Sanborn, executive director / counsel for the Telecommunications Association of Maine.



If you’d like to support this initiative, we have a special underwriter opportunity available. Each of the two annual \$2,500 underwriters will receive:

30-second Ad Spot:

Each of our two possible 30-second ads will run approximately 12-16 times per month (every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. and every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.). The underwriter is responsible for the production of the video.

Legislative Week Ahead:

Your logo and website link will be placed on our email broadcast, sent weekly during the legislative session (January through April 2016) to approximately 2,000 subscribers.

Show Highlight:

We welcome your participation as a show guest to highlight your positive economic story in one half-show segment during the year.

Other Mentions:

Annual underwriters will be listed in opening and closing credits on every show, as well as in our newsletter and social media.

For more information about *The Bottom Line*, please contact Melanie Baillargeon, director of communications, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 110, or by emailing melanieb@mainechamber.org. Underwriter inquiries can be sent to Melody Rousseau, sponsorship and advertising sales manager, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 102, or by emailing melodyr@mainechamber.org. □

According to experts, within the next few years, a majority of jobs in Maine will require post-secondary education. For the first time, Jobs for Maine’s Graduates (JMG) has teamed up with the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to provide students with the support they need to stay in school and earn a degree. Recently JMG held a press conference at the University of Southern Maine to formally announce the new *College Success Program*.

“We have to be innovative and student-focused to close the gap between our high school graduation and college degree attainment rates to keep Maine competitive in a global economy,” said James H. Page, chancellor of the University of Maine System. “Maine’s universities are proud to partner with Jobs for Maine’s Graduates and Maine’s Community Colleges on the College Success Program to improve services to students who come from backgrounds and places where college was too rarely—if ever—a viable consideration.”

JMG Specialists have been placed on campuses at the University of Southern Maine, the Southern Maine Community College, the University of Maine Augusta, the Kennebec Valley Community College, the University of Maine Machias, and the Washington County Community College. Through the College Success Program, JMG will work individually with JMG high school alumni, foster care youth, and others to ensure they stay in school and earn a degree.

“Maine’s community colleges are committed to helping more of our students stay on track and achieve a college credential,” said Dr. Janet Sortor, chief academic officer for the Maine Community College system. “The JMG initiative closely aligns with this work. The more we can all work together—K through 12 through college—to build clear pathways to success, the more our students and our state will benefit.”

Continued on Page 16...

Jobs for Maine's Graduates... (Continued from Page 15...)

JMG works with more than 5,500 students in grades 6-12. It has a 97% retention rate, and at least 90% of the students graduate within four years. This unique initiative will allow JMG to extend that success and the continuum of support through college. The Specialist assumes the roles of mentor and counselor, monitoring the students' progress including academic performance, and helps identify and address academic challenges, such as poor study habits, time management issues, or difficulty taking tests.

The College Success Program is a public-private partnership, funded by the State, as well as private foundations, including the John T. Gorman Foundation and the Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation. Tony Cipollone, president and CEO of the John T. Gorman Foundation, said, "Research tells us that young people who have faced barriers can succeed in college, but they require more than just financial assistance: they

need preparation that begins in high school, and support that extends well beyond their arrival on campus. That's why we at the John T. Gorman Foundation, along with many others from industry, government, and other sectors around the state, are proud to join together to expand JMG's program model to this statewide higher education bridging program, College Success."

JMG piloted its first college program last year at Thomas College in Waterville. Along with working with students on campus, two Specialists also work closely with JMG's high school programs, educating students about the benefits of a college degree.

Craig Larrabee, JMG's president and CEO, says, "Retention doesn't start on the first day of college. Because JMG is in high schools across the state, this partnership will provide Maine's colleges and universities a way to directly connect with these young people early on to engage them in their future and better prepare them for the college experience."

The College Success Program intends to serve 250 students per year.

One of those students is Justin Duchesne, a sophomore at Southern Maine Community College. "JMG changed my life in high school. It gave me the confidence to become a leader in my community, and the courage to enroll at Southern Maine Community College," Justin said. "I started out with a 3.0 GPA and was thrilled! But then last semester, a relative got sick and I was forced to leave school to take care of them. I knew there was a real chance I could be suspended. But my JMG Specialist went to the administration and advocated for me, and they let me stay in school! Now, I'm right on schedule to graduate."

JMG is a statewide, private nonprofit working with students who face barriers to education. JMG provides 5,500 students a year with the skills and experience they will need to succeed in high school, post-secondary education, and careers. JMG graduates become engaging members of their communities, productive adults in the workforce, and contributors to Maine's economy. For more information, please visit www.jmg.org. □

MEMIC President and CEO John Leonard with Katie Smith, 2014 scholarship recipient.

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A Brighter Future Through Education

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Visit memic.com by April 29, 2016 to apply.

MEMIC

Expanding Opportunity Maine: Making a great program even better



Attracting and retaining quality, skilled employees has been an ongoing challenge for Maine. You see news stories about it all the time. Concerns abound about the “graying” of Maine. Not only is our population aging, it is also shrinking as well. A recent report noted that for the first time since 1800, New Hampshire has more residents than Maine. The cause of the problem is twofold. There’s a natural decrease taking place—more people are dying in Maine than being born and not enough young people are choosing to stay in the state.

In order for Maine to grow and thrive, we need to find innovative ways to stem these trends. One program that has been working to do this is *Opportunity Maine*.

Created by a bi-partisan, grassroots coalition, the goal of the initiative is to promote Maine’s economic security through sustainable enhancement of the education and skills of its workforce. Focusing specifically on the rising cost of higher education and the rapidly growing burden of student debt, the Educational Opportunity Tax Credit (EOTC) program was enacted.

The EOTC is one of the boldest college affordability initiatives in the nation. Maine is the only state in the U.S. to offer an incentive of this type. The EOTC provides significant tax credits to Maine residents who have earned a college degree in Maine and continue to live and work in the state. The potential savings are substantial, as the benefit can add up to thousands in tax credits. Individuals

who earned a bachelor’s degree from a Maine college or university can be eligible for a maximum annual tax credit of more than \$4,000. And for those who earned an associate’s degree, the program can provide nearly \$800 in yearly state income tax credits.

Program expansions recently enacted will increase eligibility, making even more Mainers able to apply for the valuable tax credit. Changes to EOTC for tax year 2015 (which Mainers will file this April) include the elimination of the requirement that an individual work for an employer that has offices located in Maine. That means, as long as you live and work in Maine, where your employer is based no longer matters.

In addition, self-employed individuals can now claim the EOTC. Previously, those who were self-employed could only claim the tax credit through their business for student loan payments they made for their employees. That has changed. Now self-employed individuals can claim the tax credit for themselves, and may also be able to claim the EOTC as an employer as well.

Even more exciting expansions are slotted for the following year. For the 2016 tax year, (which will be filed in the spring of 2017) the EOTC will further expand to include eligibility for graduate degrees. In addition, tax credits on all qualified associate degrees will be considered refundable. Previously, only associate and bachelor’s degrees were eligible for EOTC and only STEM degrees were considered refundable tax credits.

**Recruiting
employees or interns?**

Thomas College Career Fair

**Wednesday, March 9, 2016
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Alfond Athletic Center,
Thomas College, Waterville**

Cost for table space and lunch is \$75 for profit and \$50 for non-profit or governmental agencies. For more information, please contact Diane Anderson, assistant director of career services, by emailing andersond@thomas.edu or by calling (207) 859-1464. Online registration and additional information is available at www.thomas.edu/careerfair. □

Perhaps the biggest change in the program for the 2016 tax year will be that degrees earned at non-Maine colleges or universities will become eligible as long as the individual lives and works in Maine. This is a huge advantage, as many students choose to go out of state for college, but would like to return to Maine after graduation. This expansion can act as a strong incentive for college graduates to start their career, family, and/or business here in Maine.

Innovative programs like Opportunity Maine offer a way to lure more young professionals to the state. Being able to receive substantial tax credits on student loan payments can be an extremely attractive perk for many. These expansions are a great step in the right direction to try to tackle Maine’s population issues and need for more economic development.

For more information on the EOTC and the eligibility details, visit www.opportunitymaine.org. □

Maine PUC releases solar report on eve of E2Tech forum...

Nearly 200 people gathered in Hallowell on Wed., February 3, 2016, to hear updates on Maine's solar policies, programs, and projects. The Maine Public Utilities Commission (Maine PUC) and the Maine Public Advocate have been holding stakeholder meetings with solar companies, electric utilities, and environmental advocates. They examined options for market-based distributed solar alternatives for net-energy-billing, a practice that allows electricity customers with their own generating system (e.g., solar, wind) to be billed on the basis of "net energy" during a billing period. The Maine PUC submitted the stakeholder group's findings to the legislature's Energy, Utilities and Technology committee, which will consider legislation based on the report. House Assistant Majority Leader Sara Gideon (D-Freeport) is working with some stakeholders on a bill to be introduced as early as mid-February. For a copy of the report and information on E2Tech's Forum, please visit <http://www.e2tech.org/event-2120070>.

Join us for a Winter Waterfront Networking Reception...

E2Tech invites Maine State Chamber members to join them for food, drinks, and networking at Pierce Atwood's historic headquarters on Merrill's Wharf (254 Commercial Street, Portland) on Wednesday, February 24, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Registration is \$10.00 for members, \$15.00 for non-members, and free for student members. Please visit <http://www.e2tech.org/event-2151899> to register.

This newly renovated, circa 1840 building, is truly unique and sits on the Portland waterfront. The Environmental & Energy Law Society (EELS) is co-hosting this winter networking event to introduce attendees to legal and business professionals who work in these fields, including representatives from the Office of the Maine Attorney General (public sector), the Conservation Law Foundation (non-profit sector), and Pierce Atwood (private sector).

Continued on Page 19...

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February is National Heart Health Month

As February is national heart health month it's a great time to review the warning signs of a heart attack stroke, and cardiac arrest.

Heart Attack Warning Signs...

- **Chest discomfort:** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body:** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath:** This symptom may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** Additional symptoms may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Stroke Warning Signs — Spot a Stroke F.A.S.T...

- **Face drooping:** Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile.
- **Arm weakness:** Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech difficulty:** Is speech slurred, are they unable to speak, or are they hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "the sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?
- **Time to call 9-1-1:** If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get them to the hospital immediately.

Cardiac Arrest Warning Signs...

- **Sudden loss of responsiveness:** No response to tapping on shoulders.
- **No normal breathing:** The victim does not take a normal breath when

you tilt the head up and check for at least five seconds.

Heart attack and stroke are life-and-death emergencies — every second counts. If you see or have any of the listed symptoms, immediately call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number. Not all these signs occur in every heart attack or stroke. Sometimes they go away and return. If some occur, get help *fast!* Today heart attack and stroke victims can benefit from new medications and treatments unavailable to patients in years past. For example, clot-busting drugs can stop some heart attacks and strokes in progress, reducing disability and saving lives. But to be effective, these drugs must be given relatively quickly after heart attack or stroke symptoms first appear. So again, don't delay — get help right away!

When employees feel good, they tend to perform better. That's why most Chamber BlueOptions' plans come with employee discounts on health products and services, as well as an online health and fitness program. Just contact your Anthem-appointed insurance producer for more information, or go to the Chamber's BlueOptions web page (www.mainechamber.org/blueoptions) to find a producer.

For more information on the Chamber BlueOptions health plan, please contact Joyce LaRoche, executive director of the Maine State Chamber Purchasing Alliance, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 113, or by emailing jlaroche@mainechamber.org, or Amy Downing, program coordinator, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 104 or by emailing adowning@mainechamber.org. □

*Resources provided by The American Heart Association (www.heart.org) This information is intended for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your physician for advice about changes that may affect your health.

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E2Tech News...
(Continued from Page 18...)

Spring 2016 Events...

E2Tech is pleased to announce its spring Forum schedule. Sponsorship information is available by visiting www.e2tech.org/sponsorship. By sponsoring early, you can maximize exposure for your company or organization.

- Thursday, March 24: *Scenic Impacts of Development*—This forum takes a look at state and local policies, practices, and methodologies to evaluate the visual impacts associated with wind, road, building, and other types of development projects.
- Thursday, April 14: *Endangered Species & Wildlife Protection*—Innovative ways to manage and protect wildlife (including northern long-eared bats, the American eel, Atlantic salmon, and others) in development projects.
- Thursday, May 19: *The Role of Science in Public Policy*—When taxpayer dollars are at stake, should the scientific research process be under more intense scrutiny in setting public policy? Should politics be allowed to stifle, or at least shape, scientific consensus? Is the role of science in public policy paramount in decision-making?
- Thursday, June 9: *Sustainability in Maine's Tourism Industry*—Where the sheets aren't the only things that are clean!

Need Grant Writing Support?

E2Tech is now offering grant application preparation support to Maine entrepreneurs seeking start-up and R&D funding. Funding is available to help support grant writing, editing, budget preparation, and project scheduling for applications to the Maine Technology Institute and for federal SBIR/STTR applications. Other similar applications may also be eligible for assistance. Companies will be required to provide a 1:1 match and grant amounts are dependent upon the type of application being prepared.

For more information on any of the above initiatives, please contact Jeff Marks by calling (207) 956-1970 or emailing jeffmarks@e2tech.org. □

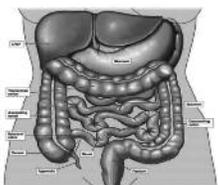
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Legislative Strictly Social

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Tuesday, March 8, 2016 ♦ 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Senator Inn & Spa (Western Avenue, Augusta)

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The Maine State Chamber invites you to its **FREE Legislative Strictly Social** networking reception. Our annual Legislative Strictly Social is an ideal way for you, the Maine business leader, to interact with legislators, business associates, new and prospective Maine State Chamber members, and government representatives in a relaxed setting. **Registration information and directions are available from our homepage at www.mainechamber.org.**

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