

January 26, 2017

Next Generation Science Standards are a key component to providing students with practical job skills

Public hearings on tax provisions in Governor's biennial budget begin

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following testimony was delivered by Ben Gilman, Senior Government Affairs Specialist for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, in support of LD 49, An Act To Improve Science And Engineering Education For Maine's Students, at a public hearing held on Wednesday, January 25, 2017, before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. We have reprinted it here for your review.*

Chairman Langley, Chairman Kornfield, distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee: I am Ben Gilman, Senior Government Affairs Specialist at the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and a member of the business organization ReadyNation. I am pleased to be with you today to speak in support for the proposal to make certain changes and improvements in Maine education standards.

I am not an education expert, but I am here as a representative of the business community – who are, after all, the largest consumer of Maine's educational system outputs – Mainers who finish public school and then seek college or career training, or both, to enable them to enter into our workforce – hopefully in a career they choose.

We know that Maine currently has a skills gap. According to a ReadyNation report, if current education and labor market trends continue, Maine will face a deficit of at least 15,000 high-skilled workers to fill the jobs of the future. We

also know that 66 percent of job openings this decade (between 2010 and 2020) require post-secondary education. Positions in STEM are growing in Maine, and 86 percent of these jobs require post-secondary education. Yet only 57 percent of working age adult in Maine have that level of education. Maine businesses tell us every day that they have high-wage jobs with good benefits that they cannot fill because of the lack of qualified workers.

Maine needs an education system that provides rich, relevant, and core academic curricula that prepare students for education and careers beyond high school, while also providing students with practical job skills, hands-on experience, and connections to local employers – the Next Generation Science Standards are part of that.

The bottom line is: the future of Maine's economy depends upon the caliber of our workforce. We believe this bill takes a step in the right direction and will equip our students for success in both post-secondary education and their future careers.

For more information, please contact Ben Gilman by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing bgilman@mainechamber.org. □

During the week of February 6-10, the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs will hold a series of public hearings on the tax provisions in Governor Paul LePage's proposed biennial budget for fiscal years 2018-2019. The Governor released his biennial budget two weeks ago, calling for a 1.63% increase from the previous budget for fiscal years 2016-2017.

The budget does contain comprehensive changes to Maine's tax laws and a number of new proposals. The Governor seeks to reduce the top income tax rate and put it back to 7.15%. As you may remember the "Stand up for Students" referendum passed by voters this fall resulted in an increase in the state's top income rate of 10.15% on the top income earners making more than \$200,000 per year. The Governor and a significant number of lawmakers are very concerned about the potential impact the increased income tax rate will have on Maine's economy and small businesses.

Among other things, the budget would attempt the following:

- Eliminate and transition property eligible for the Business Equipment Tax Reimbursement Program (BETR) as of April 1, 2018, into the Business

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MAINE STATE CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE

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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.

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/lto/committee-membership/9089/> or contact the committee clerk.

Thursday, February 2, 2017

Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development 2:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 208

LD 67, An Act To Improve Insurance Coverage for First Responders Answering a Call to Duty (Rep. Devin of Newcastle)

Monday, February 6, 2017

Environment and Natural Resources 1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 216

LD 103, An Act To Prohibit the Use of Certain Disposable Food Service Containers (Sponsor: Rep. Zeigler of Montville) □

Legislative Strictly Social

This Networking Reception
is brought to you by:

MAINE
STATE
CHAMBER
of
COMMERCE

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 ♦ 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
The Senator Inn & Spa (Western Avenue, Augusta)

COMPLIMENTARY HORS D'OEUVRES & CASH BAR

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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If you are interested in sponsoring this event, please contact Melody Rousseau for more information by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 102, or by emailing melodyr@mainechamber.org.

Employers looking to hire should attend upcoming career fairs

The **Career Center at the University of Maine** is hosting its annual Career Fair in February. The event will be held in the **New Balance Recreation Center** on the **University of Maine campus** on **Wednesday, February 1, 2017**, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. More than 140 employers and more than 850 students attended the 2016 UMaine Career Fair, and we expect to meet or exceed those numbers in 2017.

The UMaine Career Fair brings employers to campus to meet face-to-face with students of all majors and all classes (first year through graduate students) to educate them about careers. If you have internships, summer jobs, or full-time jobs to fill, this is your opportunity to begin the hiring process on the spot. As a follow-up, you are welcome to contact the Career Center to reserve an interview room and conduct interviews either the day after the Fair or at a later date.

To register for our UMaine Career Fair,

- 1) Visit <http://www.umaine.edu/career/upcoming-events/career-fair> and click on "Employers may now register for the Career Fair".
- 2) Click on "As An Employer"
- 3) Under New Participants - click on "Proceed to Registration Form" and complete form.
- 4) Once you have completed and submitted the registration form you will receive an email confirming that your registration has been received.
- 5) The registration fee is \$350 until January 16, 2017; \$400 after January 16, 2017. Deadline for registrations is January 16, 2017.

Please feel free to contact Kate Axelsen Foster, Assistant Director/Employer Relations (207/581-1353; kate.axelsenfoster@maine.edu) if you would like to learn about the University of Maine's Career Fair in greater detail. We hope to see you in Orono at our February 1, 2017 UMaine Career Fair!

The University of Maine, founded in 1865, is the state's land-grant university and the flagship institution in the University of Maine System. It is one of New England's premier universities, attracting students from across the U.S. and more than 60 countries. Students are offered 88 bachelor's degree programs, 70 master's degree programs, 30 doctoral programs, and one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious honors programs. For more information about the University of Maine visit www.umaine.edu.

A second career fair will be held in February, The **Husson University's Business and General Career Fair** is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 22, 2017**, from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** in the **Richard Dyke Center for Family Business** on the university's Bangor campus. All students from Husson's Business programs (Accounting, Marketing, Healthcare Administration, Finance, IT), Science and Humanities (Psychology, Sciences, Health Care Studies, Liberal Arts) and the New England School of Communications (Video, Audio, Web, Marketing) will be encouraged to attend this career fair.

Employers are encouraged to promote full-time, internship, and part-time openings to our students. There is registration fee of \$100.00 for profit organizations and \$50.00 for non-profit organizations. **Please save the date or register by visiting** <http://bit.ly/2eX82XE>. If you cannot attend the fair and want to post jobs or internships with us you can do so at: www.collegecentral.com/husson. □

Biennial Budget...

(Continued from Page 1...)

Equipment Tax Exemption (BETE) program at 25% per year until fully transitioned in 2021;

- Disqualify, as of April 1, 2018, property located at a retail facility or used in retail sales activity first put into service on or before April 1, 2018 from BETR or BETE;
- Restrict the Maine Resident Homestead Property Tax Exemption to resident persons 65 or older, beginning tax years on or after April 1, 2017;
- Increase sales tax rate on lodging from 9% to 10%;
- Expand sales tax base to include taxation of amusements and recreation; household services, such as interior decorating, landscaping, locksmithing, etc.; personal services, such as hair salons, nail salons, dating and escort services; event planning services; personal delivery services; personal property services such as dry cleaning, vehicle cleaning, furniture cleaning, installation, repair and maintenance services, pre-paid calling service; and, rental of living quarters in hotel, rooming house, trailer or camp;
- Eliminate the estate tax for descendants filing on or after January 1, 2018;
- Reduce the top income tax rate from 10.15% to 7.15% beginning for tax years 2018 and 2019;
- Reduce the top corporate income tax rate from 8.93% to 8.33%; and,
- Eliminate the Board of Property Tax Appeals beginning October 1, 2017. All reconsideration decisions by Maine Revenue Services could only be appealed to the Superior Court.

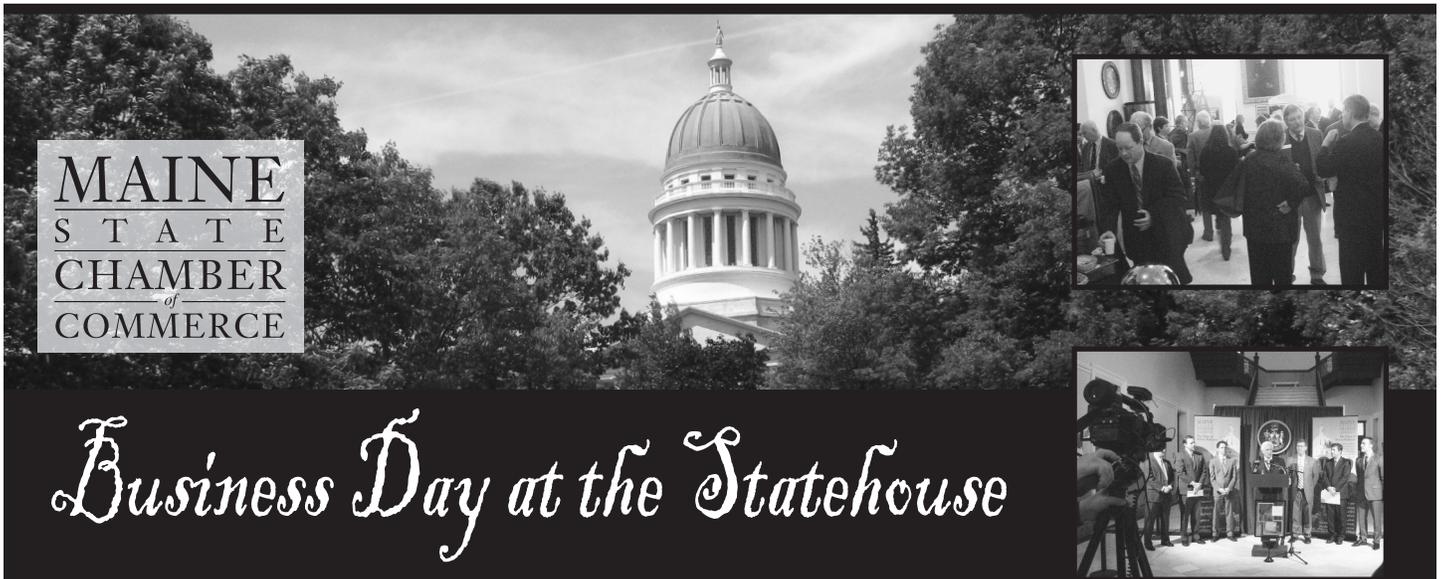
If you have any questions about the budget, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org. □

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Thursday, May 11 ♦ 8:00 a.m. to Noon ♦ Statehouse Hall of Flags

The Maine State Chamber is hosting its annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, May 17, 2017, 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!

