

January 11, 2018

## Looking ahead to the Second Session —

### *An unusual set up marks the beginning of the Second Session*

When the Second Session of the 128th Legislature began its work in the first week in January, legislators arrived in one of the more unusual postures in recent memory. With a total number of bills awaiting them pegged at just under 500 titles, one might think it means a packed three and a half months. And they will be busy, but breaking down those 500 bill titles shows that much of the work they will undertake has already had some discussion – and debate.

When the legislature adjourned its first regular session in August 2017, it “carried over” into the second session a total of 319 bills from all joint standing committees. This isn’t an unusually high number of carry-overs, but combine it with only 93 new bills accepted by Legislative Council and an estimated 40+ bills submitted by the LePage administration, the total number of bills climbs to just less than 500 for the session.

Most of the carry-over bills have had some form of public hearing already. However, the joint standing committees of jurisdiction could hold new public hearings on those titles or choose not to. If they jump right into committee work sessions, those carry over bills could be disposed of quickly, and early in the session. This would give the legislature more time to deal with the limited number of new titles – and other issues that are certain to take up their time – namely funding Medicaid expansion and the implementation of Maine’s recreational marijuana law.

The Maine State Chamber advocacy team closely followed the progress of Legislative Council, evenly divided between the five Republican and five Democratic members of leadership in the House and Senate. Any new bills considered during the Second, or emergency, session of the Maine Legislature, must be affirmatively approved by a majority of the council. Forty-one pages, totaling more than 300 title requests, were submitted in September for consideration by the council. After the final appeals process was completed in November, 93 new bills remained.

In reviewing carry-over and new titles, the Maine State Chamber will be following a number of issues important to our members. These include policy issues like “ban the box” legislation, education and workforce development, internet privacy, taxation and tax incentive bills, unemployment insurance, and paid FMLA legislation.

In addition to those issues, the legislature will continue to be pressed by citizen-initiated referendum laws passed both this *and last* November. In 2016, Mainer’s approved legalizing marijuana for all citizens, not just for medical purposes. To implement this new law, legislative leadership established a special select committee to craft a workable statute for our state. After months of work, the full legislature narrowly approved their final product – only to have Governor Paul LePage veto the bill on the last day of session in August. Despite support from the business community and

**Continued on Page 4...**

## Tax Committee holds work session on bill to limit Tax Increment Financing to certain industries

On Tuesday, January 9, the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation held a work session on **LD 1565**, *An Act to Ensure the Effectiveness of Tax Increment Financing*. The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Karl Ward, submitted the bill on behalf of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The bill would have inserted a new definition of “qualified business activity” as business activity related to manufacturing, financial services and targeted technologies. Originally, the bill would have required 80% of the area within a development district be designated by an entity engaged in a “qualified business activity,” therefore potentially limiting TIFs to those three industries.

Maine State Chamber staff opposed the bill last session, and it was subsequently carried over. This session, the department submitted an amendment to the bill striking the language limiting TIFs to the three industries. Instead, the amendment would establish criteria and notice requirements related to credit enhancement agreements (CEA) that occur outside the normal TIF process, i.e. when CEA’s are not originally included in TIFs but rather are added at a later date.

The Maine State Chamber will continue to monitor this bill. The next work session is scheduled for Thursday, January 18. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing [lcaprara@mainechamber.org](mailto:lcaprara@mainechamber.org). □

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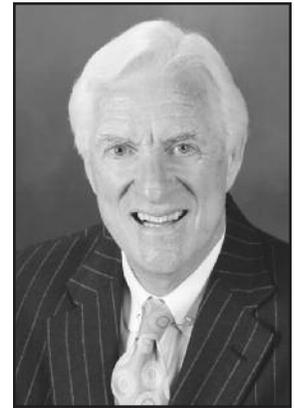
#### **About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce:**

*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...

## **“Second Session won’t be short on complex issues...”**

by Dana Connors



The Second Session of any legislature here in Maine is traditionally the time to complete any “carried-over” bills from the First Session, as well as to decide the fate of any “emergency” or new legislation. As we predicted at the end of last year, it appears we may not be done with some of the very same topics dealt with in the First Session.

Legislators will once again revisit the legalization of recreational marijuana, education and workforce challenges, infrastructure issues, energy policy, our tax incentive programs, and even the minimum wage. There is no shortage of work in the next four month as they grapple with more than 300 “carry over” bills from last session, nearly 100 new titles approved by legislative council, and several pieces of legislation submitted by the LePage administration (see page 1).

Approximately 500 bill titles is an average workload for the Second Session. However, in that mix are some additional weighty topics, specifically changes to citizen’s initiative and referendum process requirements, a bond for higher education, the legislative workforce task force, broadband and transportation needs, and how to fund the recently approved Medicaid expansion program. In other words, while 500 bills seems manageable in four months’ time, the complexity of these issues represented in that mix of bills means it’s no cake walk for lawmakers between January and adjournment in April. To top it all off, 2018 is an election year, with candidates for both the Legislature and the Blaine House campaigning earnestly.

This is an interesting time in Maine politics, with widespread implications for our economy and our citizenry. As always, I can assure you that our team will be there to ensure that the interest of our members, and Maine’s business community as a whole, is well-represented at the Statehouse and beyond. □

# Tax Committee tables property tax valuation bill; amendment offered

## Maine State Chamber supported bill to improve valuation and appeals process for large industrial facilities

The Joint Standing Committee on Taxation recently held a work session on a carry-over bill, **LD 1479**, *An Act to Modernize and Improve Maine's Property Tax System*. Sponsored by Rep. Steve Stanley (D-Medway), the bill was tabled until next week, allowing all parties to review a proposed amendment submitted by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

Last session, Maine Chamber lobbyist Linda Caprara testified in support of LD 1479, which would improve Maine's property tax valuation and appeals process by preventing over-valuation of manufacturing and industrial property. The bill as submitted proposed to change the appeals process to make it more fair and reasonable. The bill would have:

- Required Maine Revenue Services' property tax division to value property worth more than \$10 million;
- Limited the number of information requests and the number of appeals a taxpayer *must go* through from 5 to 3 in order to appeal their property tax valuations;
- Given the taxpayer the option to bypass the State Board of Property Tax Appeals altogether and appeal directly to Superior Court; and finally,
- Required that a business or industry

representative with a taxation, finance, or valuation background be added to the State Board of Property Tax Appeals.

A working group of stakeholders met during the summer and developed an amendment to the bill. Many of the original provisions above did not make it into the amendment currently before the committee. The one exception was the provision to appoint a business representative to the Board.

As currently drafted, the amended version will do several things. It will establish a task force to look at restructuring and improving the efficiency of the Board. The amendment would also establish a list of persons with whom the State Tax assessor can share proprietary information and would make it a class E crime for anyone who knowingly violates the confidentiality of the information. It would also establish a mediation available to a taxpayer and assessor prior to an appeal going before the state board of property tax appeals.

The next work session is scheduled for Thursday, January 18 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 127 of the Statehouse. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing [lcaprara@mainechamber.org](mailto:lcaprara@mainechamber.org). □

## 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.

### Tuesday, January 16, 2018

#### Taxation

#### 1:00 p.m.; State House, Room 127

**LD 1722**, An Act To Encourage Computer Data Center Development by Providing a Sales Tax Refund or Exemption (Rep. Stanley of Medway)  
**LD 1734**, An Act To Clarify the Sales Tax Exemption for Vehicles Used in Interstate or Foreign Commerce (Pres. Thibodeau of Waldo)

### Monday, January 22, 2018

#### Taxation

#### 1:00 p.m.; State House, Room 127

**LD 1723**, An Act To Expand Job Opportunities for People Working in Maine (Rep. Herbig of Belfast)  
**LD 1744**, An Act To Create the Hire American Tax Credit for Businesses That Hire Residents of the United States (Sen. Jackson of Aroostook)  
**LD 1758**, An Act To Strengthen Maine Families with Children by Changing the Income Tax Laws (Rep. Fredette of Newport)

### Wednesday, January 24, 2018

#### Health and Human Services

#### 9:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 209

**LD 1612**, An Act To Support Maine Families through Universal Family Care (Rep. Gattine of Westbrook)

#### State and Local Government

#### 9:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 214

**LD 1764**, An Act To Streamline Advocacy for Maine Small Businesses by Relocating the Bureau of the Special Advocate within the Department of the Secretary of State to the Department of Economic and Community Development (Rep. Stetkis of Canaan) □

## Session Preview...

(Continued from Page 1...)

other stakeholders who worked on the bill, the veto was easily sustained. Therefore, it was back to the drawing board on the issue upon legislators' return. Unfortunately, time will not be on their side. The existing moratorium on the original bill ratified by the voters at the ballot box more than a year ago is scheduled to run out on February 1, 2018. The Maine State Chamber followed the work of the joint select committee closely, and will once again make this issue a policy priority, as the committee and the full legislature consider yet another attempt to find consensus among stakeholders on this issue.

In addition to this referendum related issue, lawmakers will also contend with how, or if, to fix Maine's rack choice voting law, also ratified a year ago. Despite an unofficial, and unanimous, ruling from Maine's Supreme Court that the bill would likely be unconstitutional if implemented, supporters and opponents of the provisions have been unable to come to a mutual resolution. There remains a carry-over vehicle to address the issue, but it is unclear whether common ground can be found.

Certainly, the funding of the recently-approved Medicaid expansion referendum may result in the most conflict of the session, perhaps even spilling over into other policy areas. Ratified by voters after years of being blocked in the Statehouse, Democrats and Republicans appear divided on how to proceed. Governor LePage has made his administration's position clear on funding – no new taxes, no rainy-day monies will be used to fund the millions necessary for provide the state share need to procure the federal matching dollars. Many Republican lawmakers stand solidly with him; Democratic legislators have indicated it is their duty to implement to people's will and are calling for action.

In reality, given the political make-up of the legislature, without fairly broad agreement on how to proceed, the likelihood that expansion is funded during this session is slim. The political implications for the upcoming session, and how that might affect other policy debates, remain unclear.

As we move into the second week of the new session, more than 125 bills have been printed, some are legislator-initiated;

**Continued on Page 5...**



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## Task Force on Maine's 21st Century Economy finalizes report, makes recommendations for targeted investments

In March 2017, the Legislature voted to approve a joint order presented by Sen. Nate Libby (D-Androscoggin) to create a new task force of elected officials and experts in the fields of education and business, charged with addressing Maine's workforce challenges. Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber, was appointed to the 16-member task force.

The Task Force on Maine's 21st Century Economy and Workforce was established as a way for the Legislature to work with the state's education community, businesses, workforce experts, and policy experts to develop and implement strategies to strengthen the state's economy, improve business climate, and make strategic investments in Maine's workforce. According to the order, the task force must submit a report to the Legislature by March 1, 2018. The final report includes its findings, recommendations and suggested legislation that will be considered during the Second Session of the 128th Legislature.

The task force met six times and had a number of presentations throughout the fall and summer, including presentations from Maine Department of Labor (DOL), Consulting Economist, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems (EMHS), Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), University of New England (UNE), Education Commission of the States, Maine Development Foundation (MDF), Aroostook County Action Program, Educate Maine, Live and Work in Maine, Maine Community College System, University of Maine System, John T. Gorman Foundation, Coastal Enterprises Inc., and Adult Education Programs.

The task force has finalized its final report and has made recommendations for targeted, focused investments in places where workforce barriers were identified. The goal was to have recommendations to help alleviate priority workforce short-

ages. During the work of the task force, it became evident that the health care field, specifically nursing, was the best place to focus its efforts. Additionally, the task force has recommended ways to improve the state's attraction, retention and training of Maine's workforce, also primarily in nursing. The task force did note in recommendation seven that there is more work to be done to explore other measures to improve the state's business climate. Other industries include hospitality, retail, professional services and government industries. Finally, the task force recommends that its work continue, either through an extension of the task force or through a similarly themed replacement.

The task force developed the following list of recommendations:

- 1 Provide an additional \$650,000 in ongoing funding, and \$200,000 in one-time funding in Fiscal Year 2018-2019, to the Maine Community College System to hire nursing faculty, expand nursing classes, and establish a nursing simulator facility;
- 2 Provide funding for the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program in order to increase the number of nursing faculty in nursing education programs in the state;
- 3 Increase accessibility to the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program through collaboration between the Maine Community College System and the Maine DOL to help facilitate the enrollment eligible community college students in the program;
- 4 Gather additional information from the Maine DOL regarding how the Maine Apprenticeship Program may be better used to enhance workforce training for the health care sector and

*Continued on Page 7...*

### Meetings, Receptions, Conferences, Banquets and more!



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### **Session Preview...**

*(Continued from Page 4...)*

some from the administration. A quick review of those titles shows that, once again, we will consider how to proceed with tax incentives; whether or not to slow the minimum wage increases approved in the fall of 2016; and, how to best tackle a comprehensive workforce investment strategy – all of which are important for our state.

Despite the many “what ifs” of the impending session, each new seating of the legislature tends to bring with it a sense of aspiration and hope. There are numerous policy challenges for legislators, and those who follow their work, like the Chamber and business community. Even in this upcoming election year, lawmakers have the opportunity to accomplish good work for our businesses and our citizens. The Maine State Chamber looks forward to working with each of them during the coming months.

For additional information or questions, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing [pgore@mainechamber.org](mailto:pgore@mainechamber.org). □

**Maine's workforce initiative, MaineSpark, adopts Lumina Foundation's national goal that 60% of the nation's workforce will have a credential of value by 2025**

States nationwide are addressing the various workforce challenges by setting postsecondary educational attainment goals, identifying strategies, and building coalitions of business leaders, education professionals and policy leaders to support solving the problem. Postsecondary attainment may include professional certificates, trade credentials, technical certifications, and college degrees. The commonality between them is that the training or education pathway ends up being connected to a job. The Lumina Foundation has established a national goal that by 2025 60% of the nation's workforce will have a credential of value. Maine's workforce initiative known as *MaineSpark* has adopted the same goal.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is a steering committee member of *MaineSpark*, represented on the committee by Megan Sanborn. Maine's statewide workforce initiative has made a 10-year commitment to growing Maine's credentialed workforce. *MaineSpark* is comprised of Maine's most influential education and business leaders to work together to ensure that Maine's workforce is productive and competitive. *MaineSpark* organizations connect people with the education, training, jobs, programs and resources needed to thrive in Maine's robust and changing economy.

It's no secret that Maine's population is aging and will begin to shrink in size. Maine's economy and trade industries continue to prosper, but there is a gap in the skills needed in Maine, and that gap will only widen if something isn't done to prevent it from doing so. To meet the demands of the Maine's economy, 60% of that larger workforce would need a credential of value in addition to a high school diploma. This would be an



**JMG celebrates 25th anniversary**



JMG is excited to be ringing in a very special New Year. The statewide, private nonprofit is celebrating its 25th anniversary! Since 1993, JMG has helped more than 40,000 Maine students graduate from high school connected to a pathway toward continued education, a meaningful career, and productive adulthood.

JMG wants to thank an amazing network of Maine businesses, schools, and community partners who have spent the last quarter of a century working together to ensure all Maine students have the skills and supports they need to reach their potential.

JMG's President and CEO, Craig Larrabee says, "These partners, from LLBean and Unum, to Bangor Savings and Bank of America, have played a critical role in the success of our 40,000 alumni, and are committed to investing in the next 40,000. We are grateful to them for the time they spend with our students, in and out of the classroom; for their financial generosity; and, their eagerness to advocate for all Maine youth." □

increase of 158,000 skilled workers above today's numbers. By working together, *MaineSpark*'s team will seek to serve Mainers who are aspiring to gain access to the skills, knowledge and information that is needed to obtain the jobs and career pathways of their choosing.

There are four tracks to *MaineSpark*, each offering and supporting programs and services for Mainers at all stages of

their lives to reach and pursue their education and career goals. *MaineSpark* and its members are dedicated to making sure Maine reaches the goal that 60% of those in the workforce will hold education or workforce credentials by the year 2025. For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing [msanborn@mainechamber.org](mailto:msanborn@mainechamber.org). □

## Digest of New Legislation

Maine Chamber staff have studied each of these recently printed bills to assess potential impact on business trends. If you have concerns regarding any bill, please communicate those concerns to a member of our governmental services staff at (207) 623-4568.

### **BOND ISSUES...**

**LD 47, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Fund Equipment for Career and Technical Education Centers.** (Rep. Fecteau, D-Biddeford) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$40,000,000, would be used to provide funds to make capital improvements to and purchase equipment for career and technical education centers for high school students.

**LD 376, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for a New Engineering Design and Education Center at the University of Maine.** (Sen. Diamond, D-Windham) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* This bond would provide funds, in the amount of \$80,000,000, that would be used for the construction of an engineering design and education center at the University of Maine in Orono.

**LD 1330, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Facilitate Innovative Approaches to Regional School Facilities and To Establish the Maine Innovative Regional School Facilities Finance Program.** (Rep. Ginzler, R-Bridgton) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* The funds provided by the bond issue in Part A, in the amount of \$20,000,000, would be used to provide funds for the development of multidistrict, consolidated and integrated prekindergarten through 16 school facilities. Part B establishes the Maine Innovative Regional School Facilities Finance Program to promote efficient capital financing activities for innovative regional school facilities projects. It also establishes the Innovative Regional School Facilities Revolving Fund to support local efforts related to the program.

**LD 1331, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Recapitalize the School Revolving Renovation Fund.** (Rep. Ginzler, R-Bridgton) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$20,000,000, would be used to recapitalize the School Revolving Renovation Fund for the purpose of providing funds to public schools for renovation and capital repairs.

**LD 1562, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Capitalize a Career and Technical Revolving Equipment and**

**Renovation Fund.** (Sen. Langley, R-Hancock) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* The funds provided by the bond issue in Part A, in the amount of \$10,000,000, will be used to capitalize a career and technical revolving equipment and renovation fund to purchase equipment for and make capital improvements to state career and technical education centers and regions. Part B establishes the Maine Career and Technical Education Finance Program to promote efficient capital financing activities for the equipment for and renovation and repair of career and technical education facilities. It also establishes the Career and Technical Education Revolving Fund to support local efforts related to the program.

**LD 1614, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Fund the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Loan Program.** (Sen. Volk, R-Cumberland, Governor's Bill) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* This bond would provide \$10,000,000, to be used by the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Loan Program within the Finance Authority of Maine to provide loans in amounts up to \$7,500 per year for a maximum of 5 years to selected students in this State pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in the fields of science, computer science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

### **BUSINESS REGULATION...**

**LD 1068, An Act To Require That State-funded Buildings Be Constructed with Wood Products.** (Rep. Campbell, D-Orrington) *Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government.* This bill requires a person that engages in the construction or repair of public buildings or works to use wood products, including cross-laminated timber, for structural components to the extent that suitable wood products are feasible for use, competitively priced and permitted under state or local building codes.

**LD 1764, An Act To Streamline Advocacy for Maine Small Businesses by Relocating the Bureau of the Special Advocate within the Department of the Secretary of State to the Department of Economic and Community Development.** (Rep. Stetkis, R-Canaan, on

**Continued on Page 10...**

## 21st Century Task Force... (Continued from Page 5...)

support LD 781, *An Act To Support the Trades through a Tax Credit for Apprenticeship Programs;*

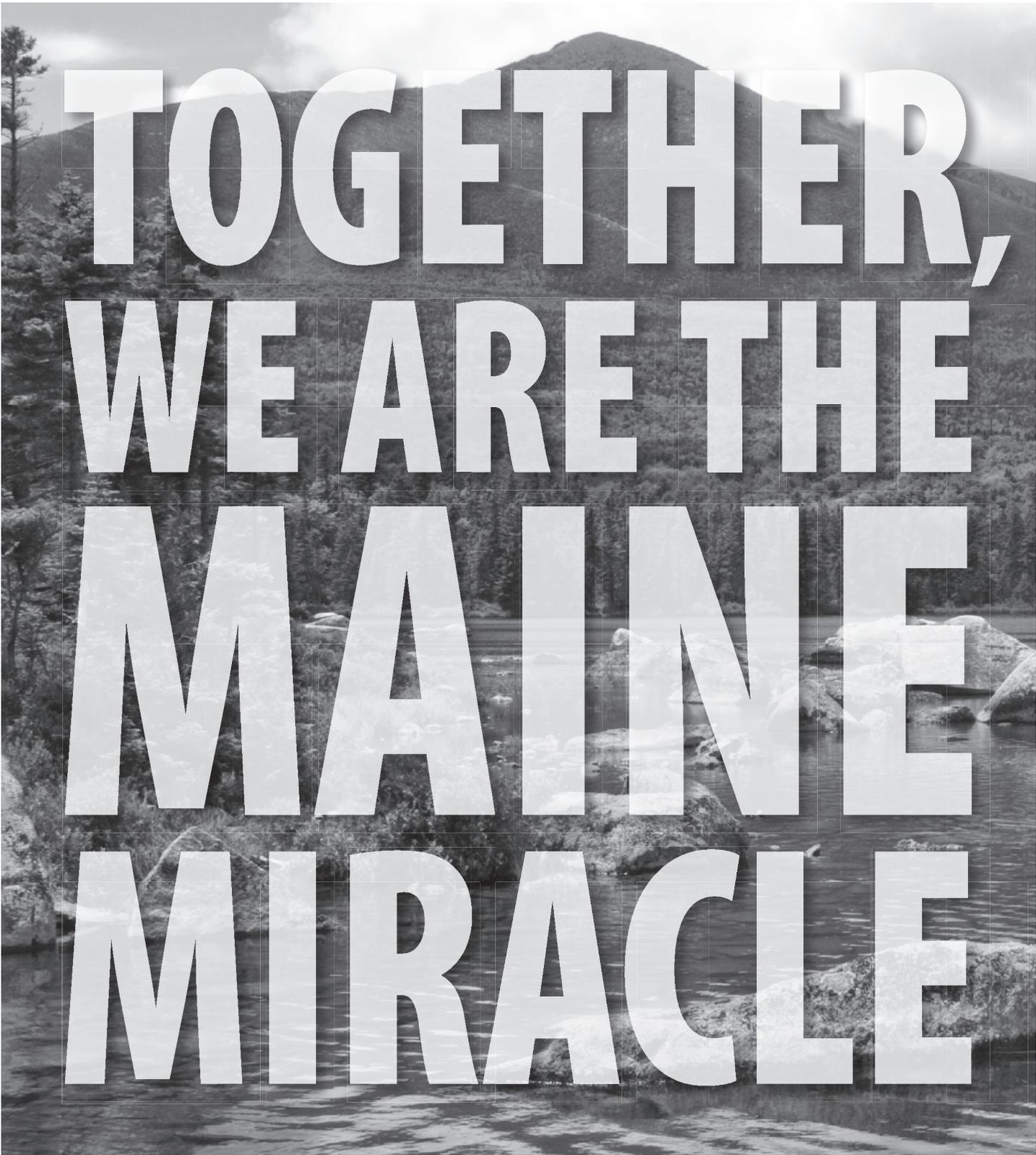
- 5 Support LD 1792, *An Act To Attract, Education and Retain New Mainers To Strengthen the Workforce,* to facilitate integration of immigrants into the workforce;
- 6 Accept funding available to Maine under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); and,
- 7 Extend the work of the task force, at minimum, until the end of 2018.

For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing [msanborn@mainechamber.org](mailto:msanborn@mainechamber.org). □

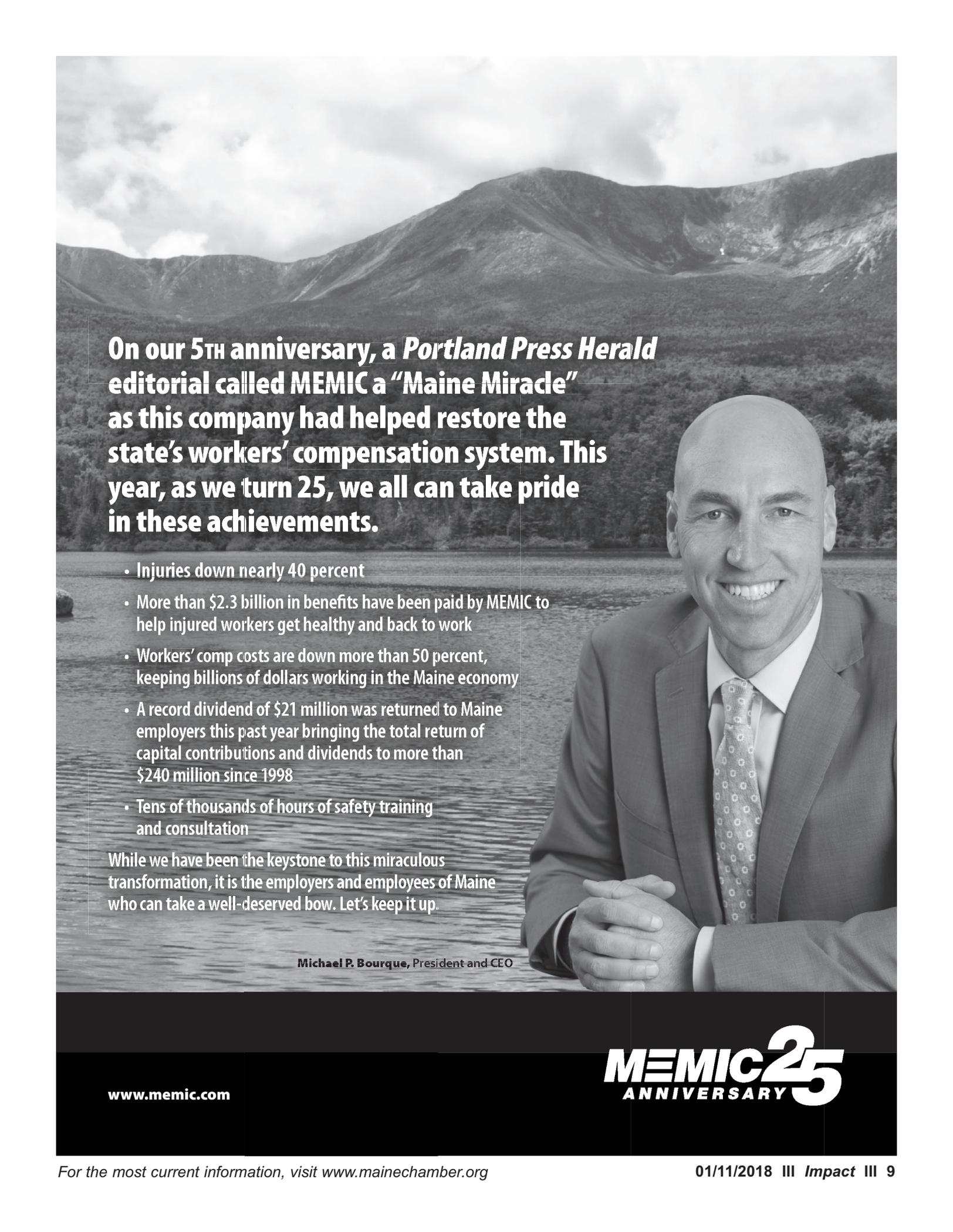
# Legislative Week Ahead

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## Digest of Legislation... (Continued from Page 7...)

behalf of the Maine DECD) *Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government*". This bill relocates the Bureau of the Special Advocate from the Department of the Secretary of State to the Department of Economic and Community Development.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT...

**LD 1338, An Act To Create and Sustain Jobs through Development of Cooperatives and Employee-owned Businesses.** (Rep. Grohman, D-Biddeford) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. This bill supports employee-owned businesses and cooperatives in the following ways.

1. It excludes from Maine income tax the amount of gain recognized by a business owner in transferring the business to an employee stock ownership plan, eligible worker-owned cooperative, consumer cooperative or affordable housing cooperative.
2. It excludes from Maine income tax interest from loans that finance transfers of ownership from a business to an employee stock ownership plan, eligible worker-owned cooperative, consumer cooperative or affordable housing cooperative.

### EDUCATION...

**LD 1666, An Act To Ensure the Successful Implementation of Proficiency-based Diplomas by Extending the Timeline for Phasing in Their Implementation.** (Rep. Kornfield, D-Bangor) *Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*. This bill delays by one year the timeline for the implementation of proficiency-based diplomas.

**LD 1689, An Act To Repeal Certain Provisions Regarding the System Administration Allocation Affecting Maine School Districts in the 2018-2019 Biennial Budget.** (Sen. Jackson, D-Aroostook) *Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*. Current law requires that, beginning in fiscal year 2018-19, a portion of the system administration allocation must be allocated to school administrative units that have established regionalized administrative services. This bill retains the portion of the law that establishes the system administration allocation at \$135 per pupil for fiscal year 2017-18 and repeals provisions that increase for future fiscal years the per-pupil amount and restrict allocation of portions of the funds

to school administrative units that have established regionalized administrative services.

**LD 1697, An Act To Establish Alternative Pathways to the Completion of Secondary School Mathematics Requirements.** (Rep. Kornfield, D-Bangor) *Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*. Concept draft. This bill proposes to establish alternative pathways to the successful completion of certain secondary school mathematics requirements.

**LD 1733, An Act Concerning Locations for Career and Technical Education Regions and Centers.** (Se. Langley, R-Hancock) *Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*. This bill strikes the provisions in current law that define the organizational makeup of career and technical education centers and regions and instead authorizes the Department of Education to adopt rules that define the organizational makeup of career and technical education centers and regions. The bill clarifies that a satellite program may be affiliated with a region.

**LD 1736, An Act To Broaden Educational Opportunities for Members of the Maine National Guard.** (Pres. Thibodeau, R-Waldo) *Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs*. This bill broadens the tuition benefit program that is available to members of the Maine National Guard who attend a state postsecondary education institution to provide a tuition benefit for members who attend a private nonprofit postsecondary education institution in the State. The bill limits the tuition benefit at private nonprofit postsecondary education institutions to the tuition at the Maine Maritime Academy during the prior academic year.

**LD 1749, An Act To Shorten the Residency Requirements for In-state Tuition.** (Sen. Miramant, D-Knox) *Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*. This bill provides that the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System and Maine Maritime Academy may not require a student to have been a resident of this State for longer than one year to be eligible for in-state tuition.

### ENERGY, UTILITIES, AND TECHNOLOGY...

**LD 131, An Act to Protect the Biomass Industry.** (Sen. Saviello, R-Wilton) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill is a concept draft which proposes to amend the laws pertaining to biomass facilities in order to help the biomass industry succeed.

**LD 140, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support Entrepreneurial Activity, Attract Business**

**and Enhance Demographic In-migration by Investing in High-speed Broadband Infrastructure and To Amend the Law Governing the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund.** (Rep. Higgins, R-Dover-Foxcroft) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill authorizes a General Fund bond issue, in the amount of \$10,000,000, to be allocated to the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund and distributed by the ConnectME Authority in a series of grants, to expand high-speed broadband Internet infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas throughout the State of Maine.

**LD 257, An Act To Enable Municipalities Working with Utilities To Establish Microgrids.** (Rep. Devin, D-Newcastle) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill is a concept draft. It proposes to establish measures to allow municipalities, working cooperatively with electrical utilities, to create microgrids, which are electricity distribution systems consisting of distributed energy sources, including demand management, storage and generation and loads capable of operating in parallel with, or independently from, the main power grid.

**LD 260, An Act To Create the Maine Energy Office.** (Rep. Fredette, R-Newport) *Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources*. This bill:

1. Renames the Governor's Energy Office the Maine Energy Office. It repeals the language in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 2 that establishes the office and establishes it instead in Title 35-A, expands the headnote for Title 35-A and places the office under the control and supervision of a commissioner, rather than a director;
2. Establishes in the Maine Energy Office a position of deputy commissioner, to be appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate; and
3. Specifies that an amount equal to \$300,000 from the Efficiency Maine Trust must be transferred annually to the Maine Energy Office.

**LD 423, An Act To Extend Internet Availability in Rural Maine. Emergency** (Rep. Alley, D-Beals) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill provides one-time funding to extend for 2 years a program that provides mobile wireless hot spot devices to libraries in Washington County.

**LD 532, An Act To Remove the 100-megawatt Limit on Hydroelectric Generators under the Renewable Resources Laws.** (Rep.

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## Digest of Legislation... (Continued from Page 10...)

O'Connor, R-Berwick) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill removes the 100-megawatt maximum capacity limit for a hydroelectric generator that meets all state and federal fish passage requirements applicable to generators to qualify as a renewable capacity resource and for a hydroelectric generator to qualify as a renewable resource for the purpose of meeting the State's renewable resource portfolio requirement.

**LD 822, An Act To Ensure Fairness among Large Consumers of Natural Gas.** (Sen. Dion, D-Cumberland) *Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources*. This bill extends the existing ineligibility for participation in and the exemption from assessment for natural gas conservation programs to large-volume customers that do not purchase their natural gas from a Maine gas utility. Large-volume customers are defined as those purchasing at least 1,000,000 cubic feet of natural gas per year.

**LD 897, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Encourage Efficient Biomass Thermal and Power Projects in Maine.** (Sen. Woodsome, R-York) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$25,000,000, will be used to construct steam piping from existing stand-alone biomass generators to adjacent manufacturing facilities, construct biomass combined heat and power generation boilers for sawmill manufacturing facilities and convert fossil fuel boilers in public buildings and commercial facilities to biomass boilers.

**LD 953, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support the Biomass Industry.** (Sen. Jackson, D-Aroostook) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$20,000,000, will be used to provide support for the biomass industry in this State through the establishment of a revolving loan fund for capital investment in biomass generators or similar facilities. The fund is administered by the Public Utilities Commission.

**LD 964, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Upgrade Municipal Culverts at Stream Crossings.** (Rep. Fredette, R-Newport) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$10,000,000, will be used for a competitive grant program that matches local funding for the upgrade of municipal culverts at stream crossings in order to enhance and

restore rivers, streams and fish and wildlife habitats and to allow communities to better prepare for extreme storms and floods.

**LD 1224, An Act To Allow for Greater Energy Competition in Maine by Amending the Law Governing Electric Generation or Generation-related Assets by Affiliates.** (Sen. Dion, R-Cumberland) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill directs the Public Utilities Commission to develop clear standards and protections to be imposed on investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities to prevent them from providing preferential treatment to their generation affiliates in Maine.

This bill requires the commission to adopt major substantive rules to protect ratepayers and establish standards of conduct that govern the relationship between an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility and a generation affiliate. It requires that standards of conduct adopted by commission rule ensure at a minimum that a generation affiliate is not given preference over non-affiliated competitive generators; costs of the generation affiliate are not recovered from ratepayers; employees of an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility are physically separate from and not shared with those of a generation affiliate; and the accounts and records of an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility and a generation affiliate are separate.

This bill defines "generation affiliate" as an affiliated interest that owns, has a financial interest in or controls generation or generation-related assets.

This bill defines "financial interest" as any voting or nonvoting equity interest, partnership interest, whether limited or general, trust interest or joint venture in an entity and specifies that a financial interest is not created between an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility and a generation affiliate solely by virtue of their relationship with a common parent company.

This bill establishes penalties for violations of rules adopted pursuant to this bill, and provides that the commission may require an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility to divest from its generation affiliate as a result of any violations of the rules.

**LD 1373, An Act To Protect and Expand Access to Solar Power in Maine.** (Rep. Berry, D-Bowdoinham) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill amends the laws governing net energy billing. It prohibits a charge to a customer that elects to use net energy billing. It provides specific provisions related to net energy billing including:

1. It provides that customers using net energy billing receive bill credits netted

against delivery and supply charges on a one-to-one basis;

2. It provides that unused bill credits accumulate on a 12-month rolling basis;
3. It limits the installed capacity of an eligible facility to 2 megawatts in the territory of an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility and to 100 kilowatts in the territory of a consumer-owned transmission and distribution utility, except that the consumer-owned transmission and distribution utility may elect to allow an eligible facility with installed capacity up to 2 megawatts;
4. It allows an eligible facility with shared ownership or 3rd-party ownership to be eligible for net energy billing and prohibits the Public Utilities Commission from limiting the number of participants in a shared ownership project, but allows the commission to set a minimum share size; and
5. It requires a comprehensive review of ratepayer benefits and costs from net energy billing when any investor-owned transmission and distribution utility in the State enters into net energy billing agreements for a total generating capacity equal to 5% of the annual peak demand and again for every additional 3% of the utility's annual peak demand thereafter.

This bill also establishes a solar energy rebate program to be administered by the Efficiency Maine Trust. The program is to be funded through an assessment collected by the Public Utilities Commission from transmission and distribution utilities. Available funds are to be distributed in the following manner: 40% to eligible commercial customers, 20% to low-income or moderate-income residents and 40% to other eligible residents. This bill requires the trust to adopt routine technical rules to administer the program and requires the trust to submit an annual report to the Legislature that describes the actions of the trust related to the rebate program.

**LD 1399, An Act To Encourage Broadband Coverage in Rural Maine.** (Sen. Bellows, D-Kennebec) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy*. This bill repeals the provisions of law establishing and governing the ConnectME Authority and establishes the Maine Broadband Initiative as a nonprofit corporation with public and charitable purposes to encourage, promote, stimulate, invest in and support universal high-speed broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the State. The initiative is governed by a board of directors. The bill establishes the Maine Broadband Initiative Fund, which is funded by assessments on communications service providers

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## **Digest of Legislation...** **(Continued from Page 11...)**

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and tax assessments on qualified telecommunications equipment of telecommunications businesses. The bill provides for a transition from the ConnectME Authority to the new Maine Broadband Initiative.

**LD 1444, An Act Regarding Large-scale Community Solar Procurement.** (Sen. Woodsome, R-York) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy.* This bill directs the Public Utilities Commission to enter into long-term contracts with a duration of 20 years for the procurement of 120 megawatts of large-scale community solar distributed generation resources by 2022.

The bill designates a standard buyer, which the bill specifies is the investor-owned transmission and distribution utility in its service territory. The bill allows the commission to designate another entity as the standard buyer if the commission determines it is in the best interest of ratepayers to do so. The purpose of the standard buyer is to purchase the output of large-scale community solar distributed generation resources, aggregate the portfolio of distributed generation resources procured and sell or use the output of these resources in a manner that maximizes the value of this portfolio of resources to all ratepayers.

The bill directs the commission to conduct an initial competitive solicitation for 30 megawatts of output of large-scale community solar distributed generation by March 1, 2018. The bill directs the commission and standard buyer to develop a contract prior to a solicitation that will ensure that projects proceed to commercial operation on a reasonable timeline and commits all parties to commercially reasonable behavior.

The bill gives the commission authority to establish requirements for bidder eligibility and standards to ensure competition in the bidding process. The bill also specifies that if the solicitation is determined competitive the commission must select one or more winning bids and direct the standard buyer to negotiate and enter into a contract with the winning bidder or bidders. If the commission concludes the solicitation is not competitive, no bidders may be selected and the capacity available in that solicitation must be deferred to a subsequent solicitation. The bill requires the commission to select bids that maximize the benefits or minimize the costs to all ratepayers.

The bill requires after the first solicitation that the highest bid rate awarded a contract is the standard solar rate. For each sub-

sequent procurement for 30 megawatts of large-scale community solar distributed generation resources, the commission must establish a declining block rate by reducing the rate awarded in the previous procurement by up to 3%. Bidders in subsequent procurement must submit both a standard bid rate and a discounted bid rate. The bill specifies that if the total bids received in the aggregate is for less than 30 megawatts in subsequent solicitations, contracts will be awarded to all bidders at the applicable declining block rate; however, if the total bids received in the aggregate is for more than 30 megawatts, preference will be given to those bidders with the lowest discounted bid rate and contracts must be awarded to all selected bidders at the lowest qualified discounted bid rate. The bill requires that if there are multiple bids at the same discounted bid rate, preference will be given to the project that was submitted first, as determined by the time stamp showing when the bid was received by the commission.

The bill specifies that the bill credit allocated to a subscriber to a particular large-scale community solar distributed generation resource must be based on each subscriber's percentage interest of the total production of the large-scale community solar distributed generation resource for the previous month. The bill requires the project sponsor to provide to the transmission and distribution utility, on a monthly basis, the information required to calculate the bill credit to be provided to each subscriber. The bill includes provisions on how payments to a subscriber must be credited against the subscriber's monthly electricity bill.

The bill requires the Public Utilities Commission to adopt routine technical rules regarding the procurement of large-scale community solar distributed generation resources by January 1, 2018.

**LD 1472, An Act To Lower the Costs of Broadband Service by Coordinating the Installation of Broadband Infrastructure.** (Rep. McLean, D-Gorham) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy.* This bill requires public entities constructing or causing to be constructed certain construction projects to install or cause to be installed broadband conduit as part of the construction project. Construction projects covered include projects to construct new or replace existing water or sewer lines in the right-of-way of a highway or public road; to construct a new highway or public road; or to construct or relocate an additional lane or shoulder for an existing highway or public road. The bill authorizes public entities to lease the installed broadband conduit to broadband providers to install fiber-optic or other cables that support broadband and wireless facilities for broadband service.

The bill directs the ConnectME Authority, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation, to provide technical and educational assistance and requires the ConnectME Authority to maintain a map of broadband conduit installation in the State.

**LD 1487, An Act To Control Electricity Transmission Costs through the Development of Nontransmission Alternatives.** (Sen. Dion, D-Cumberland) *Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy.* This bill changes the requirement regarding the development, implementation, operation and management of nontransmission alternatives for proposed transmission lines and proposed transmission projects. This bill requires that a smart grid coordinator appointed by the Public Utilities Commission develop a nontransmission alternative to a proposed transmission line or proposed transmission project.

The bill provides that a smart grid coordinator must be an entity incorporated in the State; may not be a transmission and distribution utility located in the State or an affiliate of a transmission and distribution utility located in the State; and must have a demonstrated record of developing, operating and managing nontransmission alternatives.

**LD 1686, An Act To Amend the Laws Regarding Distributed Energy Generation and To Eliminate Gross Metering.** (Sen. Saviello, R-Franklin) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill requires a net energy billing customer that applies for a net energy billing arrangement after April 30, 2018 but before May 1, 2019 to receive 90% of the excess energy generation from an eligible facility to be applied against the customer's transmission and distribution bill, a customer that applies for a net energy billing arrangement after April 30, 2019 but before May 1, 2020 to receive 80% of the excess energy generation from an eligible facility to be applied against the customer's transmission and distribution bill and a customer that applies for a net energy billing arrangement after April 30, 2020 but before May 1, 2021 to receive 70% of the excess energy generation from an eligible facility to be applied against the customer's transmission and distribution bill. It requires that in each 12-month period after April 30, 2021, the percentage of an eligible customer's excess energy generation that applies to that customer's transmission and distribution bill be reduced by no more than 10% and that any reduction applies only to customers that apply for a net energy billing arrangement in that 12-month period. It specifies that an eligible customer that applies for a net energy billing arrangement before May 1, 2018 may continue with the net energy billing arrangement

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until April 30, 2033 and that an eligible customer that applies for a net energy billing arrangement after April 30, 2018 may continue with that net energy billing arrangement until April 30th of the calendar year that is 15 years from the year in which the customer applied for the net energy billing arrangement.

This bill prohibits a transmission and distribution utility from requiring a customer to meter the gross output of an eligible facility in order to participate in net energy billing. It limits to 50 the number of eligible customers that may participate in a single shared interest in an eligible facility or the number of meters associated with a single shared interest, except in the service territory of a transmission and distribution utility located in an area administered by the independent system administrator for northern Maine. It requires the Public Utilities Commission to amend its current net energy billing rules before January 1, 2019 to be consistent with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 3209-A.

This bill also requires the Public Utilities Commission to submit a report by January 1, 2020 that includes recommendations on how to transition from net energy billing to time-of-use rates, market-based rates or other rate design options. In its report, the commission must include information regarding an analysis of costs and benefits of net energy billing as well as how those costs and benefits compare to any recommendations the commission makes in this report.

**LD 1690, An Act To Facilitate Wireless Broadband Deployment in Maine and Modify the Process for Issuing Utility Facility Location Permits.** (Rep. Wadsworth, R-Hiram) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill changes the process for siting small cell facilities in order to facilitate wireless broadband deployment, including:

1. Through modifications to the process for issuing utility facility location permits, including small cell facility location permits;
2. Through the establishment of standards governing local land use ordinances applicable to the siting of small cell facilities; and
3. Through the establishment of standards governing the collocation of small cell facilities on poles owned by the State, an agency, a county, a municipality or a district.

**LD 1699, An Act To Revise the Renewable Portfolio Standard Laws To Allow Certain Hydropower Facilities To Qualify as New Renewable Capacity Resources.** (Rep. Rykerson, D-Kittery) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill allows a hydropower facility licensed after January 1, 2018 with a licensed capacity of no more than 30 megawatts that is interconnected with an electric distribution system located in Maine to qualify as a new renewable capacity resource for purposes of meeting renewable energy portfolio standard requirements.

**LD 1700, An Act To Protect Maine Residents and Businesses from Rising Electricity Costs.** (Rep. Berry, D-Bowdoinham) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208.

This bill proposes to establish a task force to examine the cost of the delivery of electricity to homes and businesses in this State and the factors that may cause this cost to rise, including, but not limited to, requests by electric utilities for rate increases, the recovery of costs incurred by electric utilities for recent storm restoration efforts and the possibility that ratepayers in this State may be required to pay a portion of the cost for new transmission lines to meet the demand for power in Massachusetts.

The task force would include among its members representatives of consumers, producers, electric utilities, the Governor's Energy Office, the Public Utilities Commission and the Office of the Public Advocate and Legislators. The task force would report its findings, including a proactive and comprehensive approach to protect residents and businesses in this State from rising electricity costs, to the Governor and the Legislature.

**LD 1702, An Act To Allow Certain Hydropower Facilities To Sell Electricity Directly to Rural Manufacturing and Industrial Sites.** (Rep. Stanley, D-Medway) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill allows the owner of certain hydropower facilities to offer for sale to the owner or tenant of a rural manufacturing or industrial site electricity generated by those hydropower facilities that is not under contract to be sold to another entity.

**LD 1729, An Act Regarding Compensation by Large Transmission and Distribution Utilities.** (Sen. Keim, R-Oxford) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill establishes requirements relating to so-called electric service drops constructed by customers of large electric transmission and distribution utilities. The bill requires a utility to reimburse a customer for

an aboveground or underground customer-constructed service drop at the customer's request, but limits the price to be paid to the cost the utility would have expended to construct an aboveground service drop.

**LD 1741, Resolve, Establishing the Commission To Study the Economic, Environmental and Energy Benefits of Energy Storage to the Maine Electricity Industry.** (Emergency (Senate President Thibodeau, R-Waldo)) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This resolve establishes the Commission To Study the Economic, Environmental and Energy Benefits of Energy Storage to the Maine Electricity Industry.

**LD 1745, An Act Regarding a Biomass-generated Energy Purchase and Sale Agreement and Payments to Contractors.** (Sen. Jackson, D-Aroostook) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.* This bill contains legislative findings regarding the failure of Stored Solar, LLC to achieve in-state economic benefits and to continually operate its biomass resource facilities at least at 50% capacity except for planned and forced outages as required by law and contract.

This bill prohibits the Public Utilities Commission from providing any funds from the cost recovery fund to pay the above-market costs for energy supplied from the biomass resources of Stored Solar, LLC pursuant to a contract entered into between Central Maine Power Company and Stored Solar, LLC. It requires the commission to distribute funds from the cost recovery fund that are designated for Stored Solar, LLC to contractors that have not received payment for services provided to Stored Solar, LLC to run its biomass resource facilities in Jonesboro and West Enfield. It requires the commission to direct a transmission and distribution utility to enter into a contract for no more than 40 megawatts of biomass resources with a biomass facility that serves the ISO-NE region and that was the next-highest conforming bid after Stored Solar, LLC in a competitive solicitation issued by the Public Utilities Commission on June 17, 2016. It requires the above-market costs of the contract to be paid from any funds remaining in the cost recovery fund after payments are made to contractors and subject to meeting contract terms.

This bill requires the Public Utilities Commission to request that the Attorney General investigate Stored Solar, LLC and institute any proceedings against Stored Solar, LLC to recover from Stored Solar, LLC an amount equal to the amount of those funds distributed to contractors by the commission pursuant to this legislation. It specifies that any

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money recovered by the Attorney General must be transferred to the Maine Budget Stabilization Fund established under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 1532.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL...**

**LD 399, An Act To Revise Maine's Environmental Laws.** (Rep. Tucker, D-Brunswick) *Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources*. This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208. This bill proposes to revise laws governing environmental protection.

**LD 1298, An Act To Update Maine's Water Quality Standards.** (Rep. Harlow, D-Portland) *Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources*. This bill updates Maine's water quality standards by aligning state law with the federal Clean Water Act regarding pesticide application to control invasive plants and mosquito-borne disease and authorizing the Department of Environmental Protection to use an alternative low-flow requirement when assessing the impact of nutrients on water quality, contingent upon the department's adopting nutrient rules.

**LD 1657, An Act To Update the Allowance Budget for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.** (Rep. Tucker, D-Brunswick) *Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources*. This bill establishes for each year from 2021 to 2030 the amount of allowances the State can auction as a participant in the regional greenhouse gas initiative. It also establishes the adjustments for banked allowances that must be made to the base annual carbon dioxide emissions budgets for 2021 to 2025.

**LD 1674, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 502: Direct Watersheds of Lakes Most at Risk from New Development, Urban Impaired Streams, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection. Emergency** (Rep. Tucker, D-Brunswick) *Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources*. This resolve provides for legislative review of portions of Chapter 502: Direct Watersheds of Lakes Most at Risk from New Development, Urban Impaired Streams, a major substantive rule of the Department of Environmental Protection.

### **HEALTH CARE...**

**LD 386, An Act To Establish Universal Health Care for Maine.** (Sen. Gratwick, D-

Penobscot) *Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*. A concept draft, this bill proposes to establish a single-payor, universal health care system in the State. Portions of the system will be based on the single-payor system in place in Vermont and the single-payor proposals submitted previously in Maine and Colorado. The single-payor system proposed in this bill will also be responsive to any changes made on the federal level to the federal Affordable Care Act.

**LD 470, An Act To Strengthen Maine's Hospitals and Increase Access to Health Care.** (Rep. Devin, D-Newcastle) *Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*. A concept draft, this bill, which would be contingent upon approval by the voters of the State at referendum, proposes to enact measures designed to increase access to health care for citizens of the State and strengthen Maine's hospitals.

**LD 1032, An Act To Ensure Protection and Health Insurance of Patients.** (Sen. Gratwick, D-Penobscot) *Joint Standing Committee on Insurance and Financial Services*. A concept draft, this bill proposes to enact measures designed to ensure the protection and health insurance of patients.

### **INSURANCE...**

**LD 1279, An Act To Ensure Patient Protections in the Health Insurance Laws.** (Sen. Jackson, D-Aroostook) *Joint Standing Committee on Insurance and Financial Services*. This bill allows children 26 years of age and younger to remain on their parents' health insurance policy. It clarifies that carriers offering individual or group health plans may not establish lifetime or annual limits on the dollar value of benefits. It clarifies that individual, group and blanket health plans may not impose a preexisting condition exclusion on any enrollee.

**LD 1417, An Act To Require Insurance Coverage for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Lyme Disease.** (Rep. Fredette, R-Newport) *Joint Standing Committee on Insurance and Financial Services*. A mandate, this bill requires a carrier offering or renewing a health plan in the State to provide coverage to diagnose and treat Lyme disease.

### **LABOR...**

**LD 1202, An Act To Clear a Path to Employment.** (Sen. Volk, R-Cumberland) *Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*. This bill establishes an automatic process for an individual who has been convicted of a Class C, Class D or Class E crime to have the records of that conviction sealed if the crime does not involve domestic

violence or sexual assault; the individual has not been convicted of any other crime in this State or another jurisdiction; and at least 7 years have passed since the date of conviction. The bill provides for a reduction in the 7-year waiting period for the sealing of records of an eligible criminal conviction if a convicted individual files a motion with the court demonstrating that the individual obtained a high school diploma or postsecondary certificate or degree after the date of conviction. The bill prohibits the use of sealed criminal conviction information by all employers that are not criminal justice agencies. The bill also authorizes individuals whose conviction records have been sealed to respond to inquiries, other than inquiries from a criminal justice agency, as if the sealed conviction and underlying crime had never occurred.

**LD 1308, Resolve, To Expedite the Processing of Applications for Certification under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.** (Re. Talbot Ross, D-Portland) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development*. This resolve directs the Department of Labor to establish a new permanent position in the Bureau of Employment Services to expedite the processing of employer applications for certification required for the federal work opportunity tax credit under Section 51 of the United States Internal Revenue Code. The amendment also requires the Department of Labor to submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development with information concerning applications submitted by employers in 2017, including information on the extent of any backlog in application processing, by February 1, 2018.

**LD 1345, An Act To Provide Alternative Repayment Methods to Employees Overcompensated through an Employer Error.** (Rep. Doore, D-Augusta) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development*. This bill is a concept draft that proposes to establish an alternative method for an employee to pay back an employer for overcompensation of the employee due to the employer's error that is less of a hardship on the employee than the present requirements of law, which allow an employer to deduct up to 10% of an employee's wages to pay back the overcompensation of the employee.

**LD 1566, An Act To Enact the Maine Fair Chance Employment Act.** (Rep. Talbot Ross, D-Portland) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development*. This bill enacts the Maine Fair Chance Employment Act and adds restrictions to the use of criminal history information in

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the context of employment decisions by private employers and the State and its political subdivisions and of licensing decisions by licensing agencies. It prohibits an employer from asking an applicant for employment to disclose information concerning the applicant's criminal history, or considering such information, until after the applicant has received a conditional offer of employment. It restricts the way a private employer, or the State and its political subdivisions, may use criminal history information in the course of making employment decisions and adds similar restrictions to the existing restrictions applicable to licensing agencies' consideration of criminal history information. It also makes certain criminal history information in the possession of the State and its political subdivisions confidential and makes all criminal background check information obtained by the State in connection with an employment decision confidential.

**LD 1587, An Act To Provide Economic Security to Maine Families through the Creation of a Paid Family Medical Leave System.** (Rep. Herbig, D-Belfast) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development.* This bill creates a paid family medical leave program, patterned after the unpaid family medical leave program existing in current law but requiring a contribution from an eligible employee, or a self-employed person on a voluntary basis, of no more than 0.5% of the employee's or self-employed person's wages or earnings. The program requires employers to deduct the contributions from employee paychecks and for the employers and self-employed persons to submit contributions to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, which is charged with administering the program. The program pays benefits of up to 66% of an employee's wages or self-employed person's earnings capped at the same maximum amount as unemployment benefits for leave taken by the employee or self-employed person for various family-related medical issues. This bill makes participation optional for employers that employ fewer than 15 employees. This bill also directs the Department of Labor to develop an implementation plan dealing with staffing, technology, start-up expense, rule-making and scheduling to begin the program on its effective date of October 1, 2019.

**LD 1768, An Act To Reduce Impairment on the Job and Improve Workplace Safety by Amending the Laws Governing Employment**

*Practices Concerning Substance Use Testing.* (Sen. Volk, R-Cumberland on behalf of the Maine Dept. of Labor) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development.* This bill makes changes to the laws governing employment practices concerning substance abuse testing in order to streamline the process for workplace drug testing, enable more accurate testing procedures.

**LD 1769, An Act To Conform the Laws Regarding a Salaried Employee Who Is Exempt from Overtime and Minimum Wage Requirements to Federal Law.** (Sen. Volk, R-Cumberland on behalf of the Maine Dept. of Labor) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development.* This bill amends the description of a salaried employee for the laws governing limits on mandatory overtime and the definition of "employee" in the laws governing minimum wages to conform with the federal guidelines established by the United States Department of Labor under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. It sets the minimum salary at the threshold established by the United States Department of Labor under that Act. It eliminates the requirement that the salary threshold be tied to the state minimum wage.

**LD 1770, An Act To Revise Laws Regarding Unemployment That Were Amended or Affected by Recently Enacted Legislation.** (Sen. Volk, R-Cumberland on behalf of the Maine Dept. of Labor) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development.* This bill changes the laws governing how benefits paid to an eligible individual under the Employment Security Law are charged against the experience rating record of the individual's previous employers and applies these changes beginning January 1, 2020. The biennial budget also changed this law and applied the changes beginning January 1, 2018. The bill also provides that until January 1, 2020 the experience rating record of the most recent subject employer may not be charged with benefits paid to an eligible individual whose work record with that employer totaled 5 consecutive weeks or less.

This bill also provides that certain decisions made by the Commissioner of Labor are subject to review by the Department of Labor, Division of Administrative Hearings, rather than by the Maine Unemployment Insurance Commission.

### MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION...

**LD 387, An Act To Provide for Oversight of Maine's Recreational Marijuana Laws.** (Sen. Gratwick, D-Penobscot) *Joint Select*

*Committee on Marijuana Legalization Implementation.* This bill directs the Statewide Coordinating Council for Public Health to serve in an advisory capacity on public health matters related to retail marijuana to the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry acting as chief administrative officer of the state licensing authority for the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, testing and sale of retail marijuana.

**LD 667, An Act To Repeal the Legalization of Recreational Marijuana.** (Rep. Cyrway, R-Kennebec) *Joint Select Committee on Marijuana Legalization Implementation.* This bill repeals the Marijuana Legalization Act, which allows the commercial cultivation, sale, purchase, manufacture, possession and use of marijuana and marijuana products and the personal cultivation, possession and use of marijuana and marijuana products, and the tax that is imposed on the sale of marijuana and marijuana products, if approved by the voters at a referendum held in November 2018. The bill also amends related provisions of law.

**LD 1719, An Act To Implement a Regulatory Structure for Adult Use Marijuana. Emergency** (Rep. Pierce, D-Falmouth) *Joint Select Committee on Marijuana Legalization Implementation.* This bill, which is an emergency bill, facilitates the development and administration of a regulated marketplace in the State for adult use marijuana and the regulation of the personal use of marijuana and the home cultivation of marijuana for personal adult use pursuant to the Marijuana Legalization Act, as approved by the voters at referendum in November 2016.

### MINIMUM WAGE...

**LD 1757, An Act To Protect Maine's Economy by Slowing the Rate at Which the State's Minimum Wage Will Increase and Establishing a Training and Youth Wage.** (Rep. Stetkis, R-Canaan on behalf of the Maine Dept. of Labor) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development.* This bill affects the minimum wage by:

- Reducing the minimum wage from \$10 per hour to \$9.50 per hour beginning June 1, 2018;
- Reducing the amount by which the minimum hourly wage rates are scheduled to increase annually on January 1st from 2019 to 2021 from \$1 per year to 50 cents per year, and decreasing from \$12 to \$11 the minimum hourly wage rate required to be paid in 2021;
- Eliminating the cost-of-living adjustment to the minimum wage; and

**Continued on Page 17...**

## Digest of Legislation...

(Continued from Page 16...)

- Establishing a training minimum wage for employees 18 years of age or older and under 20 years of age for the first 90 days of employment and a youth minimum wage for employees under 18 years of age.

### REFERENDUM PROCESS REFORM...

**LD 31, RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Require That Signatures on a Direct Initiative of Legislation Come from Each Congressional District.** (Rep. Espling, R-New Gloucester) *Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs*. This resolution proposes to amend the Constitution of Maine to require that the signatures on a petition to directly initiate legislation be of voters from each of the State's 2 congressional districts and that the number of signatures from each congressional district be not less than 10% of the total vote for Governor cast in that congressional district in the previous gubernatorial election. This resolution provides that, if the required votes are cast in favor of the proposed amendment to the Constitution, the proposed amendment becomes part of the Constitution on March 1, 2018 instead of on the date of the Governor's proclamation.

### TAXATION...

**LD 520, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Increase Rural Maine's Access to Broadband Internet Service.** (Rep. Berry, D-Bowdoinham) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$100,000,000, will be used for the provision of broadband Internet service in unserved and underserved areas through ConnectME Authority or successor organization partnerships with private, municipal and nongovernmental service providers.

**LD 546, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support Biological Research in Maine.** (Sen. Jackson, D-Aroostook) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$5,000,000, will be used to provide funds for the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory through the Maine Technology Institute to expand infrastructure and stimulate biotechnology job growth and economic activity.

**LD 781, An Act to Support the Trades Through a Tax Credit for Apprenticeship**

*Program.* (Rep. Herbig, D-Belfast) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. The bill would provide an income tax credit of \$2500 to employers with apprenticeship programs approved by the Department of Labor.

**LD 1212, An Act to Amend the Definition of Eligible Equipment for the Purposes of the Business Equipment Tax Reimbursement Program.** (Sen. Katz, R-Kennebec) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. This bill changes the statutory location of the tax exemption for personal property occupied or used solely for its own purposes by an incorporated benevolent and charitable organization that is exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Code and the primary purpose of which is the operation of a hospital licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services, a health maintenance organization or a blood bank. This bill moves the exemption from the statutes regarding exemption of real and personal property, since the exemption no longer applies to real property, to the definition of "eligible business equipment" for the purposes of defining personal property that is exempt from property tax under the business equipment tax exemption, or "BETE," program.

**LD 1283, An Act to Modernize the Mining Excise Tax.** (Sen. Saviello, R-Franklin) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208. This bill proposes to update the mining tax laws to reflect current terminology and practice and to impose a new rate of tax on mining activities

**LD 1317, An Act to Encourage Family Friendly Businesses Through a Tax Credit for Child Care.** (Rep. Herbig, D-Belfast) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. The bill would revive the tax credit for employer assisted day care which expired in 2015, and would change the amount of the credit to the lesser of 50% of the employers income tax liability and 75% of the costs incurred by the employer in providing day care services for children of employees of the taxpayer.

**LD 1479, An Act to Modernize and Improve the Maine's Property Tax System.** (Rep. Stanley, D-Medway) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. The bill amends the property tax laws to 1) require Maine Revenue Services to value all property in access of \$10 million; 2) allows taxpayers to appeal an assessor's decision directly to Superior Court on non residential property valued at more than \$1 million; 3) limits to 30 documents an assessor may require a taxpayer to submit when seeking an abatement; and 4) requires that the business person serving on the State Board of Property Tax Appeals have a background in finance, taxation or valuation matters.

**LD 1565, An Act to Ensure the Effectiveness of Tax Increment Financing.** (Rep. Ward, R-Dedham) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. The bill would amend the criteria for adopting a development program as part of a development district by requiring that 80% of the district is designated for development by an entity engaged in manufacturing, finance or targeted technologies.

### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE...

**LD 700, An Act To Give Flexibility to Employees and Employers for Temporary Layoffs.** (Rep. Parry, R-Arundel) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development*. This bill creates an exemption from the eligibility requirements for unemployment benefits dealing with work search for an individual otherwise eligible for unemployment benefits when that individual has been temporarily laid off with a definite recall date of not more than 12 weeks from the date of the individual's temporary layoff.

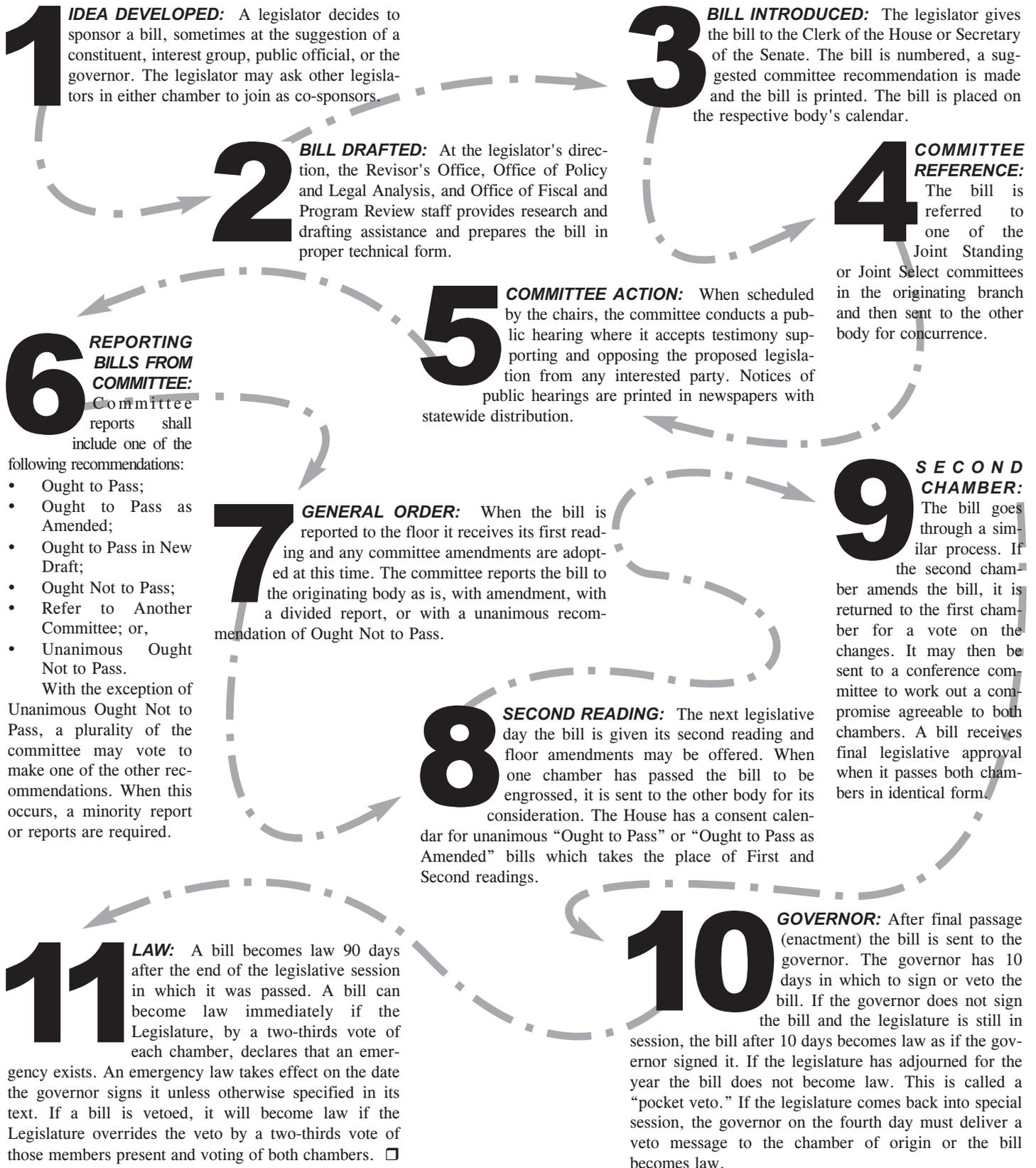
### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT...

**LD 669, An Act To Address the Unmet Workforce Needs of Employers and To Improve the Economic Future of Workers.** (Sen. Katz, R-Kennebec) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development*. A concept draft, this bill proposes to enact a comprehensive package of proposals designed to address the unmet workforce needs of employers and to improve the economic future of workers.

**LD 1698, An Act To Promote Innovation and Growth in Maine's Traditional Industries.** (Rep. Herbig, D-Belfast) *Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*. Concept draft. This bill proposes to promote innovation and growth in Maine's traditional industries.

**LD 1718, An Act To Empower Maine's Rural Economy and Workforce.** (Rep. Herbig, D-Belfast) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development*. Concept draft. This bill proposes to empower Maine's rural economy and workforce.

**LD 1723, An Act To Expand Job Opportunities for People Working in Maine.** (Rep. Herbig, D-Belfast) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*. Concept Draft. This bill proposes to expand job opportunities for people working in this State. □



# It's Time for Solutions: Addressing Suicide in the Workplace —

By Jenna Mehnert, MSW and Nicole Foster, JD

There is a preventable public health crisis that costs the Maine economy \$236,906,256 a year. This crisis is suicide, and it is responsible for the loss of hundreds of middle-aged men in Maine. Our communities lose a Mainer to suicide every 1.5 days, and men die by suicide four times more often than women. Maine often leads New England in our suicide rate of middle-age men.

In 2012, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention conducted a study surrounding 17 states, including several that surround the state of Maine and/or have a similar population demographic. The findings should alarm every employer in the state of Maine. The analysis showed that workers in the farming, fishing and forestry occupational group had the highest rate of suicide, 84.5 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by workers in construction and extraction at 53.3 per 100,000. The third occupational group on this list was installation, maintenance and repair at 47.9 per 100,000. When only men were evaluated the number for the occupational group of fishing, farming and forestry jumped to 90.5 per 100,000. Men in management followed very closely behind these numbers.

Workforce is a critical issue to all Maine employers—large and small. It is hard to recruit and retain skilled talent and with suicide as the 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Maine, every employer should be concerned. The financial impact suicide has on employers is very real and quite devastating. The top ten employers in Maine employ approximately 55,500 people.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, one suicide cost \$1,287,534 in medical and work loss.<sup>3</sup> Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in Maine in the age group 35-54, which covers a substantial portion of the Maine workforce.<sup>4</sup> Eighty percent of all deaths by suicide in Maine are men, which means that male suicides alone cost the state of Maine an average of \$236,906,256 per year in medical and

work loss. These are numbers that employers CANNOT afford to ignore.

Suicide is such a stigmatized topic that most people don't talk about it, and misperceptions and myths easily grow. While it is an uncomfortable topic for many people, research has demonstrated that conversations and education are key tools in preventing suicide. Around the nation, there is a great deal of work focused on preventing youth and veteran suicide. However, what appears to be the harder conversation is around the mental health needs of our dads, husbands, brothers and uncles and how we prevent them from taking their own lives. Men in Maine are rugged, tough and independent; so, it appears the lack of resources that resonate with this unique population, robs families of their provider and their protector often without any answers, and leaving behind generations of heartbreak. It is also important to note that losing a friend, family member or hero increases an individual's risk of dying by suicide. Reducing suicide means that saving one life, in fact, saves many lives.

Employers don't only feel the financial impact of the loss of an employee who dies by suicide. That loss affects every family member and close friend, including co-workers who are left behind. This also equates to lost wages, lost productivity, lost financial stability which impacts the economy as a whole, and medical expenses as family members go through the grieving process. Increased medical expenses can lead to increased insurance premiums for employers. It is estimated that when those losses are also figured in, suicide costs society \$56.9 billion a year.<sup>5</sup> This is a crisis that employers can no longer continue to ignore, and must address with their employees.

Suicide is preventable if employees receive the support they need and resources are available to meet a person's unique needs. NAMI Maine is convening a working group of interested parties including individuals connected to the

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Maine State Chamber, Maine Medical Association and the Sportsman Alliance to identify strategies that could provide the support needed to reduce the current suicide rate for middle-aged men in Maine. If you are interested in being part of this group, please contact Jenna Mehnert, NAMI Maine's executive director, by emailing [Jenna@namimaine.org](mailto:Jenna@namimaine.org).

NAMI Maine provides education, support and advocacy statewide to individuals and entities impacted by mental health issues. If you are interested in holding a mental health literacy or suicide prevention training for your entity, please contact NAMI Maine's Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Nicole Foster, by emailing [Nicole@namimaine.org](mailto:Nicole@namimaine.org). □

#### Sources:

- 1 *MMWR/July 1, 2016/Vol. 65/No. 25*
- 2 *Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce, Research and Information*
- 3 [https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading\\_causes\\_death.html](https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading_causes_death.html)
- 4 [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- 5 [https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading\\_causes\\_death.html](https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading_causes_death.html)

## 2018 Calendar of Events

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Cyber Security / Internet Privacy  
7:30 to 9:00 a.m.  
Bangor Savings Bank, Augusta

Thurs.-Fri., February 1-2, 2018

Leadership Summit  
Sunday River, Newry  
(Board event | space limited | by invitation only)

February 28, 2018

Legislative Strictly Social  
& Networking Reception  
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
The Senator Inn & Spa, Augusta

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Business Day at the State House  
8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
Hall of Flags, Augusta

April / May 2018 (TBD)

Washington D.C. Fly-in  
(Board event | space limited | by invitation only)

May / June 2018

Regional Breakfast Meetings  
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.  
Portland Region;  
Lewiston / Auburn Region;  
Bangor Region; Northern Maine  
Region

June 2018

Issues & Answers: Gubernatorial  
Candidate Forum, Location TBD

Friday, September 7, 2018

23rd Annual Scramble for Scholars  
Golf Tournament  
Samoset Resort, Rockport

Wed., October 17, 2018

2018 Annual Dinner and  
Televised Gubernatorial Debate  
with WCSH-6 and WLBS-2;  
Augusta Civic Center

Monday, November 26, 2018

Board Orientation and  
Appreciation Dinner  
Harraseeket Inn, Freeport  
(Board event | space limited | by invitation only)

## REGISTER TODAY!

### What Next?

## The Status of Health Care Reform:

*Are we at the crisis point with the ACA, and  
what is the future of health insurance in 2018?*

**Monday, January 22 ♦ 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
**Bangor Savings Bank, 5 Senator Way, Augusta**

After two failed attempts to eliminate and re-write the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the now seven-year-old law remains essentially untouched from a statutory perspective. However, the Trump Administration has begun implementing a series of rule changes that will have a significant effect on the implementation and effectiveness of the law. As a result, much is in flux. Will Congress come to consensus on how to address our health care dilemma? Will they agree to “fix” many of the recognized flaws in the ACA? Will lawmakers agree to a new law to replace the ACA? Or will the issue remain gridlocked?

Join us for a morning forum that explores this critical issue for Maine businesses on Tuesday, December 12, at Bangor Savings Bank in Augusta, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. This will be an informative presentation on the status of the national health care reform law heading into 2018.

**New this year!** We have invited the health policy experts from Maine’s congressional delegation’s offices to get a national policy perspective. **Sarah Khasawinah** from the office of Sen. Susan Collins, **Marge Kilkelly** from the office of Sen. Angus King, and **Bethany K. Beausang** from the office of Rep. Chellie Pingree will participate in our first-hour panel discussion. It is our hope that the panel helps attendees understand where we stand now with respect to the ACA, and what may or may not happen in the next Congress regarding national health policy. Our panel of experts will

be moderated by **Katie Mahoney**, executive director of health policy with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Following our federal policy discussion, a Maine-based panel of stakeholders will react to the federal discussion, as well as discuss what options Maine might consider in the next 12 months with respect to our health care system, and what it all means for Maine businesses. Our panel includes **Eric Cioppa**, superintendent of the Maine Bureau of Insurance; **Dan Corcoran**, president of Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Maine; **Al Swallow**, executive vice president and treasurer of MaineHealth; and, **Eric Jermyn**, president of Cross Employee Benefits for Cross Insurance.

Following our reaction panel, forum attendees will have the chance to ask both groups questions about the morning’s presentations and discussions.

This issue is at center stage in Washington, D.C., and across the country. This program will provide businesses with valuable insight as employers make critical decisions for themselves and for their employees. You won’t want to miss this informative and timely presentation on the status of the national health care reform law, and what you as a business in Maine need to know as we head into 2018.

This is a **free event**, but **seating is limited**; **pre-registration is a must** and available online at [www.mainechamber.org/calendar.php](http://www.mainechamber.org/calendar.php) For more information or if you have any questions, please email [jlaroche@mainechamber.org](mailto:jlaroche@mainechamber.org). □



**FEDERAL POLICY DISCUSSION**

*Counterclockwise from top left are*

**Moderator: Katie Mahoney**  
*Executive Director of Health Policy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce;*

**Bethany K. Beausang**  
*Office of U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree;*

**Sarah Khasawinah, PhD, MHS**  
*U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, Office of U.S. Senator Susan Collins; and,*

**Marge Kilkelly**  
*Office of U.S. Senator Angus King.*



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**MAINE STAKEHOLDERS PANEL**

*Counterclockwise from top left are*



**Eric A. Cioppa**  
*Superintendent, Maine Bureau of Insurance*

**Kristine Ossenfort**  
*Senior Director, Government Relations, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Maine*

**Eric Jermyn**  
*President, Cross Employee Benefits, Cross Insurance*

**Al Swallow**  
*Executive Vice President and Treasurer, MaineHealth*



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# WORKPLACE WELLNESS

## HEALTHY EMPLOYEES MAKE CENTS!

## Diabetes & Children

Years ago, diabetes in children was a rarity. Children were most likely to get type 1 diabetes. In fact, it was called juvenile diabetes. But today, type 2 diabetes is affecting too many children in our country. About 208,000 young people in the U.S. under age 20 had diabetes in 2012.<sup>1</sup> The single biggest cause for this: extra weight. Currently, one in every three children is overweight. Once a child gets too heavy, he or she is twice as likely to get diabetes.<sup>2</sup>

Children with type 2 diabetes are at a higher risk for serious health complications, including blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, or loss of toes, feet or legs.

How can you stop your child from becoming part of this epidemic?

- Encourage children to eat healthy foods. With the right guidance and consistency, they'll consider fruits "sweets" instead of candy.
- Prepare healthy meals. A healthy breakfast will help your child stay focused and active. If you send a lunch with your child, pack a meal that contains whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Replace high-fat foods with low-fat options, such as low-fat turkey, reduced-fat cheese and skim milk. Include healthy snacks, such as fruit, nuts or easy to eat veggies, like baby carrots.
- If your child buys meals at school, look at the cafeteria menus together to help them make healthy choices. Many schools post their menus online, or you can request this information from school workers.
- Make sure your child is active. They should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Limit screen time (TV, video games, and the Internet) to 1 to 2 hours a day. This will set the ground rules for a healthier lifestyle.
- Be a role model for fitness. Encourage your child by being active together — doing such things as walking the dog, riding bicycles or playing basketball — and you will get the health benefits too.
- Be a role model for prevention. Children need support from a healthy parent or guardian. So stay active, eat right and make diabetes prevention part of your own health plan.

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.php](http://www.mainechamber.org/blueoptions.php)) 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](mailto:jlaroche@mainechamber.org). □

*\*Resources provided by Anthem.com/Time Well Spent*

Sources:

- 1 [http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-communication-programs/ndep/living-with-diabetes/youth-teens/diabetes-children-adolescents/Documents/overview-of-diabetes-children-508\\_2014.pdf](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-communication-programs/ndep/living-with-diabetes/youth-teens/diabetes-children-adolescents/Documents/overview-of-diabetes-children-508_2014.pdf)
- 2 <http://www.cdc.gov/features/diabetesinschool/>

## Work and Recovery: Employing Individuals with Mental Illness

Employment rates are inexcusably low and getting worse for people living with mental illness. Nationally, employment rates declined from 23 percent in 2003 to 17.8 percent in 2012. In 2014, only 23 percent of Mainers with mental illness were actively employed. Negative stereotypes of mental illness are rampant in the workplace. Many people find that disclosing their mental illness has a chilling effect on hiring and career advancement even though workplace accommodations for mental illness are low cost and easy to implement. Studies show that most adults with mental illness want to work and approximately six out of 10 can succeed with appropriate supports. Improving economic conditions and lowering unemployment create a unique opportunity to break through barriers that have too long prevented people with mental illness from going to work.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness' Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) recently received funding to address just this issue. NAMI Maine intends to assist in the employment of those with mental health diagnoses by partnering with the Clubhouses in Augusta and Waterville to identify and support new potential employers. Clubhouses are an international, evidence-based center model that offer individuals living with a mental illness skill development, a supportive community, and opportunities to achieve meaningful employment. Their supportive employ-

ment model has a demonstrated track record of success in finding employment for people with mental illness. The challenge is finding employers willing to hire a person transitioning into the workforce.

Developing more employment locations requires connections between this potential workforce and area business owners. Historically, some employers have not understood mental health challenges or had the awareness of resources to help support employees with a mental health diagnosis. This project aims to educate businesses on the resources and tools that are available to allow them to train, hire, supervise, and retain those employees living with mental health challenges.

This is where business owners can help. NAMI Maine is seeking the assistance of employers who have experience working with Clubhouses, or are interested in tapping into this often-forgotten population. There are a few ways in which you can become involved. First, we are searching for individuals who are interested in participating on a *Project Advisory Committee*, which will guide this process and assist in the development of a toolkit and resource guide specific to employing individuals transitioning into the workforce who have a mental illness. Rather than developing a standard one-size-fits-all training and simply trying to get employers to participate, we will work to customize training and technical assistance as a partner for each individual employer

who expresses a desire to hire individuals with a mental health challenge.

Next, we are looking for Augusta-area businesses that would be willing to host a *Mental Health First Aid* (MHFA) training to educate themselves and their employees on these issues. MHFA is an international, evidenced-based education course that leads to three-year national certification through the National Council for Behavioral Health. Based on the Red Cross First Aid model, the purpose of this program is to decrease stigma and increase an individual's understanding of mental health conditions. This course was designed specifically to significantly increase an individual's understanding of the appropriate interventions related to a mental health crisis and the effective responses to individuals struggling with mental health conditions.

Attendees of a Mental Health First Aid course learn risk factors and ways to identify specific mental health conditions including common conditions such as anxiety, depression and substance use disorder. Not only will you leave the course better able to identify when someone has developed a mental health condition, but you will also be empowered with very practical strategies on how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

If you own or are employed at a business in the Augusta area and would like more information, or want to get involved in this project, please contact Sarah Ross by emailing [sross@namimaine.org](mailto:sross@namimaine.org). □

### **About the Maine Business Leadership Network...**

Applying these tips and exploring these resources will leave people with disabilities better prepared and informed to navigate the workforce, and employers with a more dedicated, qualified, and diverse workforce. If you have questions or concerns that you feel might be holding you back from hiring someone with a disability, we want to help! Please contact the Maine Business Leadership Network (MEBLN), and we'll put you in contact with another business that has overcome similar concerns.

The Maine Business Leadership Network is an affiliate of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. It is a statewide, employer-driven program designed for business leaders to promote hiring practices that enable qualified people with disabilities to enter and succeed in the workplace. For more information about the MEBLN or how your business can get involved, please visit [www.mainebln.org](http://www.mainebln.org) or contact Joyce LaRoche by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 113, or by emailing [jlroche@mainechamber.org](mailto:jlroche@mainechamber.org). □

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## ***Internet Data Privacy and Net Neutrality:***

***What Does Internet Data Mean for Maine Businesses and Maine Consumers?***

***Thursday, January 18 | 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. | Bangor Savings Bank, 5 Senator Way, Augusta***

With legislative action at the federal and state levels under considered this year, learn more about what this issue means for the Maine business community. This is a free event but seating is limited so pre-registration is a must. To register or for more information, please visit [www.MaineChamber.org](http://www.MaineChamber.org). □