

March 1, 2018

## **Marijuana Legalization Implementation committee approves marijuana bill**

**Even with a 16-1 vote, the issue remains in doubt**

After nearly two years of work, the Joint Select Committee on Marijuana Legalization Implementation (MLI) has passed out their final extensive rewrite of the Marijuana Legalization Act for the entire legislature's consideration. The bill, **LD 1719, *An Act to Implement a Regulatory Structure for Adult Use Marijuana***, represents months of work, discussion and debate on how best to implement legalized recreational marijuana in Maine.

Sponsored by Rep. Teresa Pierce (D-Falmouth), the bill is the committee's attempt to create a workable framework for the licensing, sale, taxation, distribution, enforcement and use of recreational marijuana in the face of the poorly-drafted MLA that was narrowly approved by referendum in 2016. This is the second time the committee has attempted to address the issue through its work. In 2016, the committee's first try resulted in **LD 1650, *An Act To Amend the Marijuana Legalization Act***. While passing in both bodies of the legislature, LD 1650 was vetoed by Governor Paul LePage, and his veto was sustained. Therefore, during the summer and fall of 2017, the committee went back to the drawing board, resulting in the proposal of LD 1719.

In its initial work on the MLA back in January 2017, the committee implemented a moratorium on the MLA. One of the first bills passed by the 128th Legislature

was LD 88, which stayed the law until February 1, 2018. The intent was to give the MLI committee the needed time to work with stakeholders to develop a more workable MLA. After the defeat of LD 1650, the committee began its work anew, working hard to meet the February 1 deadline, but acknowledging that the moratorium may need to be extended to the end of the session. This point would turn out to be extremely important for employers, and a source of ongoing concern absent the passage of LD 1719.

Much of LD 1719 is taken up by the rules, regulations and policies that will integrate the legalization of recreational marijuana in Maine law and practice. As such, unless your company has a direct stake in the sale of marijuana in our state, you may not be interested. However, the committee made an important change in the MLA that should be of concern to every employer in the state – one that is strongly supported by the Maine State Chamber.

In its work both in 2017 and again this year, Peter Gore, vice president of government relations for the Maine State Chamber, indicated to the MLI committee that the existing language in the MLA provided little, if any, guidance to Maine employers when it came to marijuana in the workplace. Gore also acknowledged that the MLA contained language that prevented an employer from discriminating,

***Continued on Page 4...***

## **Administration outlines tax conformity proposal before Appropriations and Taxation committees**

On Thursday, March 1, Commissioner Alec Porteous of the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) briefed both the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and on Taxation regarding the Governor's Conformity and Family Tax Relief Act (CFTR). The bill has not been printed yet, but will represent the Governor's position on how Maine should conform to the federal tax changes recently enacted by U.S. Congress and signed by the President. Historically, Maine often conforms to the federal tax changes to take advantage of filing benefits and to eliminate any administrative burden of keeping two sets of books.

On December 22, 2017, the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) became law representing the first major tax reform overhaul at the federal level since 1986. According to estimates, DAFS has pegged the impact of the federal TCJA as very substantial for Mainers. In 2019, the implementation of the new law will result in a \$1 billion tax cut for the state, with \$500 million going to individuals; \$200 million for pass through entities such as LLCs, partnerships and S-Corps; and, \$300 million for C-corps. Conforming to the federal TCJA

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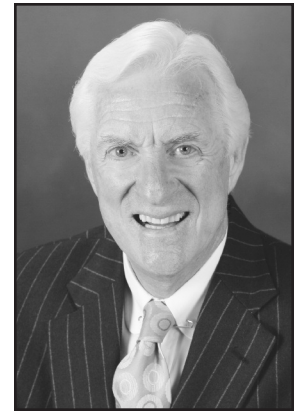
#### **About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce:**

*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...**

## **"Halfway done with much left to do..."**

*by Dana Connors*



Well, it is already March – a time for warmer days, the snow to hopefully start to melt, and the grass to eventually turn from brown to green. It also means that the 128th Maine Legislature is approximately halfway through its shorter second session. There seem to be mixed reports on just how much progress has happened and what's left to tackle as the finish line looms on the horizon.

Some committees have already finished their work, while others have work left to do. Time is winding down, and there remain a number of important policy issues of interest to the business community left to debate. Among those issues left to decide are: whether or not to slow (not roll back) the rate of minimum wage increases over time in our state; reforming the referendum process to better represent the entire population of the state; continuing important tax incentives such as the Pine Tree Zone program and the Shipbuilding tax credit; implementing marijuana legalization standards for the sale of recreational marijuana in Maine; state tax conformity with the recent federal tax changes; and, developing a bond package, to name a few. These are some weighty issues, and in the remaining days, addressing them will take time and energy. We are confident this legislature is up to the task.

A lot can happen in the next eight weeks, and the Maine State Chamber will be there every step of the way. Our team remains dedicated to advocating for outcomes that keeps Maine competitive, that improves the state's business climate, and that increases consumer confidence. □

## Maine's insurance superintendent approves 12% average decrease in workers' compensation loss costs

On February 20, Superintendent Eric Cioppa (pictured below) announced approval of the National Council on Compensation Insurance, Inc.'s (NCCI) 2018 loss costs for Maine, filed earlier this year, which proposed an average loss cost decrease of 12%. The new NCCI loss costs go into effect for new and renewing policies as of April 1, 2018.

"Maine employers' efforts to improve workplace safety, return injured workers to their jobs in a timely manner, and control medical costs continues to pay off," Cioppa stated. "This most recent decrease should result in lower workers' compensation premiums on average across all industry groups."

The Superintendent noted that recently filed NCCI loss costs represent a cumulative decrease of 59.5% since the 1992 work-



ers' compensation reform, and that if all insurers fully adopt the decrease, Maine businesses could save an estimated \$27 million in the year following implementation.

Loss costs are based on previous and projected losses and benefit payments. NCCI is the advisory rating organization for insurance companies that offer workers' compensation coverage in Maine. NCCI-approved loss costs are available to insurers to reference when filing their workers' compensation rates with the Bureau of Insurance.

The 12% decrease is an average loss costs change, which ranges from -10.4% to -15.1% depending on the industry group. This is an average decrease so some individual businesses will experience increases while the majority will experience decreases. The loss cost decrease is also only a recommended decrease, and it is up to the individual insurers to decide whether to accept the proposed change in loss costs.

Maine has a competitive market for workers' compensation insurance and each insurer sets its own rate level. Insurers may modify the NCCI loss costs and must select their own expense and profit factor in setting rates.

The Bureau of Insurance is part of the Maine Department of Professional and Financial Regulation, which encourages sound ethical business practices through regulation of insurers, financial institutions, creditors, investment providers, and numerous professions and occupations for the purpose of protecting the citizens of Maine.

Consumers with questions about insurance matters can obtain information and assistance from the Bureau by visiting the agency's website ([www.maine.gov/insurance](http://www.maine.gov/insurance)), calling toll-free (in Maine) 1-800-300-5000 or TTY Maine Relay 711, or e-mailing [Insurance.PFR@maine.gov](mailto:Insurance.PFR@maine.gov). □

## OPEGA reports to Taxation committee on design of newly-enacted headquarters expansion bill

On Thursday, March 1, Beth Ashcroft, director of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA), briefed the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation on OPEGA's assessment of the design of the newly-enacted Major Business Headquarters Expansion Program into Public Law, c. 297.

The headquarters bill – **LD 1639, *An Act to Promote Major Business Headquarters Expansions in Maine, Promote the Commercialization of Research and Development in Maine and Create Jobs*** – provides a qualifying business with a refundable tax credit equal to 2% of the business's qualified investment up to 20 years. A business must create at least 800 new jobs in the first 10 years and maintain those jobs throughout the life of the credit. The legislation required OPEGA to assess the design of the program and report back to the Taxation Committee.

Ms. Ashcroft reported that OPEGA found that the goals of the program should be further clarified. Among other suggestions, OPEGA mentioned the committee may wish to provide further definition of the term "high quality jobs; limit the program to a certain type of headquarters facilities; require participants to use Maine businesses and vendors; and/or, establish outcomes or targets with which to measure performance.

The Maine State Chamber is in the process of analyzing this report and will provide further comment in a future edition of *Impact*. 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). □

## Workplace Marijuana Education Initiative

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We are excited to announce a new free program that is being offered to Maine employers as they grapple with the challenge of marijuana use by their employees. The law firm, Brann & Isaacson, working in partnership with business groups, including the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Retail Association of Maine, will offer Maine employers guidance on managing marijuana in the workplace. Services include:

- ◆ Telephone consultations;
- ◆ Access to sample drug policies;
- ◆ Workshops across the state; and,
- ◆ Bulletins on new development.

If you want more information about tricky topics such as drug-testing for marijuana, dealing with an impaired employee, understanding the differences between employee use of medical versus recreational marijuana, this initiative will offer you legal resources and education.

For information about this program, please contact Peter Lowe by calling (207) 786-3566 or by emailing [plowe@brannlaw.com](mailto:plowe@brannlaw.com). You may also want to visit Peter's webpage at [brannlaw.com](http://brannlaw.com). □

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### Marijuana Legalization... (Continued from Page 1...)

for hiring purposes, against someone who used recreational marijuana. This particular point was of significant concern to the Maine State Chamber and employers in general. As a general rule, the Maine State Chamber and employers oppose the creation of a new protected class for purposes of employment. The idea of creating a protected class of *marijuana users* seemed unreasonable and preposterous to businesses. No other group – drinkers of alcohol, for example – enjoy such protections when it comes to hiring.

The MLI committee – in LD 1650 and again in LD 1719 – agreed with the employer community, and removed the protected class status of marijuana users from the law, as well as explicitly stating the employers are entitled to a drug free workplace, and able to take action when an employee is at work impaired.

Problems arose in mid-January 2018, when the House, specifically a number of House Republicans, refused to go along with legislation to extend the moratorium on the existing MLA – despite strong support and urging from the business community, and the Maine State Chamber specifically. The moratorium extension received strong backing from the Maine State Senate; nonetheless, House Republican leadership and a sufficient number of that caucus refused to give the MLI committee the time it needed to finish its work before the poorly-drafted MLA became law. The MLA, as enacted by the voters, became law on February 1, 2018.

As such, the part of the law that provided protected class status to marijuana users also became law. The result: employers who conduct pre-employment drug testing may not use any positive tests for marijuana as a reason NOT to hire a prospective job applicant, except *perhaps* in certain safety sensitive positions. Obviously, for safety reasons, this development is extremely troubling for busi-

ness across the state. Employers want the ability to do all they can to ensure a safe worksite, and that includes preventing an impaired worker from injuring themselves or a fellow worker. The use of pre-hire drug testing is one way to help ensure this goal. At this moment, at least when it comes to marijuana use, that tool is not readily available to businesses in Maine.

The passage of LD 1719 can change that. If LD 1719 becomes law, it eliminates the existing and unnecessary protected class of marijuana users and would allow employers to reinstate a comprehensive pre-hire drug testing program that would help improve workplace safety. The Maine State Chamber will be supporting the passage of LD 1719, and urging legislators from both parties to support the bill, and also to overturn a veto if necessary.

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 DOE seeks public comment for science standards

As part of the scheduled periodic review of the Maine Learning Results (MLR), the Maine Department of Education is seeking public comments regarding the current science standards.

The science standards are based on the National Research Council's 1996 National Science Education Standards and include both processes (ways scientists investigate and communicate about the natural world) and bodies of knowledge (concepts, principles, facts, theories). Technology includes the design process and the study of technological tools and their effects on society. The standards are broken into grade spans (pK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-diploma) and the five MLR standards for Science and Technology are organized as follows:

- ♦ A – major themes that unify science and technology ideas, e.g. systems, models, constancy and change, scale;
- ♦ B – skills and traits of scientific inquiry and technological design;
- ♦ C – history and nature of science and the impacts on society;
- ♦ D – earth, space and physical sci-

ence; and,

- ♦ E – life science.

The standards review process opens with public comments and public hearings prior to the convening of writing teams that will review and revise the science standards. Last week's public hearings, which were also live-streamed, were intended to give anyone the opportunity to weigh-in on the direction of future science standards in Maine. The department will also be conducting a review of the social studies standards.

**Anyone unable to attend those public hearings may send written comments by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 16, 2018.** Written comments may be emailed to [sis.doe@maine.gov](mailto:sis.doe@maine.gov) with the subject "Science Standards Review" or mailed to Maine Department of Education, attn: Paul Hambleton, 23 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333.

For further information about the standards review process contact Beth Lambert at [Beth.Lambert@maine.gov](mailto:Beth.Lambert@maine.gov). □

## State seeks public comments on Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act modifications in the unified plan

**Comments will be accepted from February 28 through March 7, 2018**

On February 28, the Maine Department of Labor and the State Workforce Development Board posted the 2018 modifications to the workforce development state plan for public comment.

The plan modification is a requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)-federal legislation that directs each state's workforce system to develop regional, service-delivery strategies with its Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation programs and replaces the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The premise of the plan is that the success of Maine's economy will ultimately be determined by the strength and quality of its workforce and the ability of employers to fill their need for skilled labor. It outlines the steps needed to address the state's workforce needs and identifies tasks and duties of each agency and core partner.

The State Workforce Development Board is seeking public comments for the plan. The plan is available at [http://www.maine.gov/swb/2018\\_modification/index.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/swb/2018_modification/index.shtml).

Comments will be accepted from February 28 through March 7, 2018, at [swb.DOL@maine.gov](mailto:swb.DOL@maine.gov), using the public comment form available through the link above or by mail to State Workforce Board,

*Continued on Page 7...*

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## Work Sessions

This work session schedule is subject to change. For the most current schedule, please visit <http://legislature.maine.gov/ljo/committee-membership/9089/> or contact the committee clerk.

**Tuesday, March 6, 2018**

### Judiciary

**1:00 p.m.; State House, Room 438**

**LD 1695**, An Act To Clarify Educational Placement and Notification in Regard to Parental Rights and Responsibilities (Rep. Herbig of Belfast)

### Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development

**1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 208**

**LD 1654** (Work Session), An Act To Protect Economic Competitiveness in Maine by Extending the End Date for Pine Tree Development Zone Benefits (Sen. Jackson of Aroostook)

**LD 1768** (Work Session), 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 of Cumberland) □



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## Tax Conformity...

*(Continued from Page 1...)*

would benefit Maine in several areas.

So, what are the major provisions in the CFTR? On the individual side, the CFTR would not conform to the repeal of the personal exemption as proposed in the TCJA – it would result in a massive \$233 million tax increase for Mainers – but rather it would replicate the personal exemptions under current Maine law through a combination of enacting a zero tax bracket that would apply to the first \$4,150 of an individual's tax filers earnings and \$8,300 for a married couple filing jointly. The CFTR would also create a child and dependent tax credit of \$500.

The CFTR would conform Maine's tax laws to the new domestic business tax provisions in the federal TCJA. Three of the largest provisions deal with bonus depreciation, the treatment of net operating losses (NOLs), and interest expensing. CFTR proposes to conform to the

federal law and allow businesses to fully depreciate the entire value of newly-acquired assets new or used upon purchase (\$38.3 million savings to businesses in current biennium and \$40 million in the coming biennium). The CFTR would adopt the federal provisions allowing businesses to carry forward NOLs indefinitely rather than the current 20-year limit. However, the utilization of a NOL in any given year would be limited to 80% of taxable income, rather than the current 100% (\$8 million cost to businesses in current biennium and \$14.5 million cost to businesses in coming biennium). The third major provision deals with the amount of interest a business can expense from taxable earnings. The federal TCJA limits the interest expense deduction to 30% of income, rather than the current 100% (\$16.2 million cost to businesses in current biennium and 28.5 million cost to businesses in coming biennium). The bill proposes to reduce the corporate tax rate from the current 8.93% to 8.33% in an effort to mitigate any

potential tax increase on Maine business.

On the corporate side, the federal TCJA contains international reforms that transition the U.S. from operating under a territorial corporate tax system to a worldwide system with a "deeming" provision. The "deeming provision" calls for a one-time tax levied on untaxed foreign assets held abroad at 15% for cash and cash equivalents and 8% for non-cash assets acquired after 1986. Taxes would be paid when these assets are "repatriated" back to the U.S. If Maine conforms to this provision, it is estimated Maine would receive about \$31 million in revenue. There are a number of other international provisions Maine could conform to, but Maine Revenue Services was not ready to discuss this in detail as the agency is still reviewing the impacts.

The bill itself has not yet been printed, and we expect at some point there will be a public hearing on the CFTR. 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). □

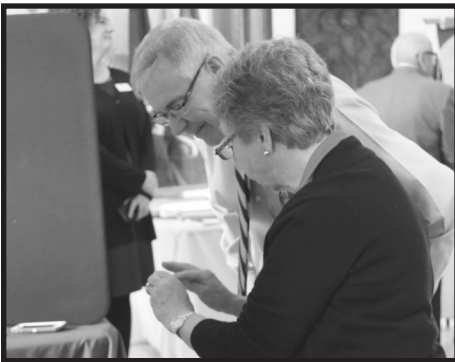


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It's our  
10th Year!

## Business Day at the Statehouse

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



The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is hosting its 10th annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, March 8, 2018, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Hall of Flags (Statehouse, Second Floor).

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



### Thank you to the sponsors of 2018 Business Day at the Statehouse:

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## Workforce Innovation Act... (Continued from Page 5...)

Attn: WIOA Unified Plan, 54 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333. Comments sent through traditional mail must be postmarked by March 6, 2018. Comments received after March 6, without an earlier postmark date will not be accepted.

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law by the president on July 22, 2014. The federal legislation reauthorized the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. In Maine, WIOA core partners represent roughly \$55 million in federal, state and other funding. Maine Department of Labor is an equal opportunity provider. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. □

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On Wed., February 28, the Maine State Chamber held its annual **Legislative Strictly Social** networking reception, in conjunction with the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce. Our annual Legislative Strictly Social is an ideal way for members of the Maine State Chamber and local and regional chambers to interact with legislators, business associates, and government representatives. The “standing room only” event was held at the Senator Inn & Spa in Augusta.

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## **An Untapped Talent Pool: The Opportunity in Employing People with Disabilities in Maine**



Ever wonder why in many states, like Maine, unemployment rates hover at or below the national rate of 4 percent but employers still struggle to fill the more than 6 million open jobs across the country?

The answer is an increasing need for a highly skilled workforce, one that meets the needs of businesses and workers, to help drive economic growth.

Many governors are working to ensure that education and training programs prepare people for in-demand jobs, but they are also looking to engage people who often experience high rates of unemployment despite being able to—and interested in—work.

One such talent pool: people with disabilities.

Last month, in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), proclamations that stressed the importance of improving access to training and employment for people with disabilities were issued by governors of 26 states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Several also launched or expanded new initiatives in recognition of this issue's importance. Governor Larry Hogan of Maryland, for example, established a new position for an accessibility coordinator within state government, and Oregon Governor Kate Brown supported special activities across the state, including career networking events and job fairs.

***Continued on Page 12...***



Roughly 1 in 5 American adults, or around 53 million, live with some type of disability, and their employment prospects post-recession have been grim. Today the unemployment rate for people without disabilities is 3.9 percent; it's nearly double—7.5 percent—for people with disabilities. Labor force participation among working-age people with disabilities is just 21.2 percent, which is less than a third the rate of participation among people without disabilities. Also, twice as many Americans with disabilities fall below the poverty line than those without disabilities. But this often is not by choice—at least two thirds of people with disabilities are striving to work, whether they are already working and want more hours or are unemployed but want a job.

For those who do find employment, often their prospects are limited and their potential often unfulfilled. Job opportunities vary widely by state. Some states with the highest employment rates for people with disabilities rely on segregated, disability-only work settings such as sheltered workshops, where workers earn almost three times less and are less happy at work than those who work in integrated, competitive environments.

People with disabilities are twice as likely to work part-time, often in service occupations that do not pay as well as professional occupations. A worker with a disability who has a high school diploma earns \$6,505 less per year than his or her peers; though the gap widens as their education level increases, people with disabilities are also less likely to attain a college degree.

These problems are expensive. Pay disparities result in \$6.5 billion per year in forgone state tax revenue (\$25 billion at the federal level), while supporting unemployed working-age people with disabilities costs states at least \$71 billion a year (\$350 billion in federal dollars). In contrast, supported employment—when a person with disabilities receives assistance obtaining and maintaining employment in a competitive, multiple-ability work setting—yields a \$1.21 return to taxpayers for every public dollar spent.

*Continued on Page 14...*

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# MAINE STATE CHAMBER of COMMERCE Washington, D.C. FLY-IN 2018



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*We are excited about this year's Washington D.C. Fly-In Program, and we know you will be too.* In order to touch on a number of federal issues that impact our member businesses, we are working with the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to provide a **Federal Issue Briefing** session.

As a cornerstone piece of our program, we are scheduling appointments with our Maine Congressional Delegation, as well as their key staffers — allowing you the ability to share your business concerns, discuss challenges and solutions. We continue to find ourselves in the middle of important issues in Washington that have a significant impact on our members, ie healthcare, energy, taxes, regulations, etc. We take pride in putting together this unique opportunity available for Maine State Chamber of Commerce members. We hope you are able to join us for this unique opportunity.

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Event registration is \$750 per attendee. Please register by Thursday, March 15, 2018. Attendees are responsible for all travel arrangements. There is an overnight room block available at the George Hotel for a special room rate of \$379 per night plus applicable taxes. Hotel reservations must be made directly to the George Hotel by Monday, March 12, by calling (800) 546-7866. Please indicate that you are a member of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce's group.

**Register today!**

Don't miss this event that delivers unique federal access and advocacy. For more information or to confirm your attendance, please contact Joyce LaRoche, vice president of member services and program development, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 113, or by emailing [jlaroche@mainechamber.org](mailto:jlaroche@mainechamber.org). □



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# WORKPLACE WELLNESS

**HEALTHY EMPLOYEES MAKE CENTS!**

## 30 Days to a Healthier You: A Daily Checklist of Wellness Tips

Most of us hear the term *wellness* and assume that it's something beyond our reach. Or perhaps we think that wellness is only for advanced yogis, holistic doctors, or wellness practitioners, but not us — not everyday people just working the daily grind and living busy lives. But this is where we make the mistake. Wellness is nothing more than small daily choices that lead up to lifelong, very big changes — that's it. Anyone can achieve wellness whether that means you're a stay-at-home mom or a full-time working adult, maybe even juggling two jobs just to get by. You don't have to have a lot of money, time, or even kitchen skills because all of us have access to wellness if we choose to. It simply starts with one choice after another.

We found this well-planned 30-day checklist at One Green Planet (<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/lifestyle/thirty-days-to-a-healthier-you-a-daily-checklist-of-wellness-tips>) and will be sharing them in one-week excerpts for the next few months. This checklist makes recommendations for kitchen tips, activity tips, mind and mood tips, and lifestyle tips, which will have you well on your way to a healthier and happier you in just a month. These tips are simple, doable for everyone, affordable, and absolutely life-altering when all combined.

No one becomes healthy by wishing, making excuses, or deeming themselves unworthy. Here's how to choose wellness one day at a time:

### Week One: Kitchen Tips

#### 1 **Eat Berries With Breakfast**

Berries are an incredible food, rich in nutrients for our brain, our digestion, and they're disease-preventative. They're also a fresh source of produce and keep us fuller than processed cereals with dried fruits. Add 1/2 cup of your choice frozen or fresh berries to either a smoothie, oatmeal, or just have some with some unsweetened coconut yogurt and a little chia or flax seeds. Berries are also a great source of vitamin C to kickstart your immune system.

#### 2 **Eat One Green Food Per Day**

Eating one green vegetable per day or one leafy green is a great way to get yourself healthier in the kitchen without much thought. It can be a cup of broccoli

at dinner or spinach snuck into a smoothie. A cup of green beans at dinner or some leafy kale tossed with chopped sweet potato and some simple seasonings. Anything counts, just make sure it's green, natural, and from the earth. These foods provide us with more nutrition than any food out there. They alkalize our bodies, promote mental wellness, and protect us from major forms of disease.

#### 3 **Drink a Glass of Water When You Wake Up**

A new health practice that many observe, drinking water is essential to hydrating your body first thing in the day after a night long fast. It helps wake you up and is an excellent way to flush out your body first thing to keep you regular, a key part of staying healthy. Remember, your body contains (and needs) more

*Continued on Page 15...*

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## Maine BLN... (Continued from Page 12...)

Many employers have found that employing people with disabilities is not as challenging or expensive as they may have assumed. For example, a DuPont employee performance survey found, when graded on the same scale as regularly-abled employees, 90 percent of workers with disabilities receive performance ratings of “average” or “above average.” Other research has found similarly strong on-the-job performance by workers with disabilities. And most don’t need special accommodations. Fifty-seven percent of accommodations for workers with disabilities cost nothing, and most typically cost around \$500. Some companies even see improved productivity when they are more inclusive of people with disabilities: Walgreens saw a 120 percent productivity jump at a distribution center once it was made universally accessible, where more than 50 percent of the

employees have a disability.

As our working population continues to age, the percentage among us living and working with a disability is expected to double in the next two decades.

To support and expand these efforts, governors, through the National Governors Association, recently joined the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) project. SEED is a collaborative of state-level organizations that work together to help get laws on the books that facilitate increased employment for people with disabilities.

Former Delaware Gov. Jack Markell led on this issue when, in 2012 as chair of the National Governors Association (NGA), he chose to focus on how his colleagues could help spur employment of people with disabilities.

The National Governors Association continues to examine challenges states face in encouraging, supporting and increasing employment among people with disabilities. NGA will work with SEED to provide educational webinars

and a policy workshop for governors’ staff and leaders in the states.

As Gov. Markell’s initiative illustrated, a better bottom line can be achieved for all when policies are in place that allow for opportunities for all workers. □

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

The above research and data, coupled with national best practices, fuels our efforts in Maine. 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.

If you have questions about hiring someone with a disability, we are here to help! 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 [jlaroche@mainechamber.org](mailto:jlaroche@mainechamber.org). □

*Credit: Rachael Stephens is a senior policy analyst with the National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices, Economic Opportunity Division.*



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## Workplace Wellness... (Continued from Page 13...)

water than most of us realize. Be sure you're giving it enough, starting first thing — even before the coffee!

### 4 Enjoy Plain Coffee and Tea

Coffee and tea are two of the most amazing sources of antioxidants in our diet, so long as they're sustainably (preferably) organically sourced, so they're produced without pesticides. These two beverages boost mental health, liver health, and promote a healthy heart. The key is to leave out the sugar and milk, which takes away most all their benefits. Coffee is even being studied most recently for its healthy effects on the longevity and cancer prevention, while tea has been a long-standing healing remedy for years. Enjoy 1-2 cups of either in the morning, and even again in the afternoon before 3 p.m. if they're caffeinated.

### 5 Cook Your Own Meals

Cooking at home does two things: It puts you in touch with the food that you're using to keep you well and it keeps you away from restaurant options that someone else prepared for you, probably using ingredients that aren't the best for you (excess oil, salt, sugar, etc.). Leave out the middleman and cook more at home, even if that means preparing simple meals such as soup, a protein and veggie, a macro-bowl or salad, or even some smoothies with oatmeal for a fun breakfast for dinner option. Cooking your own meals is one of the best things to do for life long health, so see all of our food tips here to try all kinds of hacks in the kitchen.

### 6 Use Herbs Instead of All the Salt

Instead of shaking salt on all your food, try using herbs to flavor them instead. For breakfast, use cinnamon, cardamom and ginger for a sweet and spicy flavor. For lunch, use Italian seasonings, sage, black pepper, and/or cayenne and turmeric. For dinner, try

some garam masala, pepper, oregano, basil, and thyme. Mix these up however you like, but use them more often; they're some of the best ingredients that provide antioxidants, mood-boosting benefits, and even anti-cancer benefits. They also reduce blood pressure levels, unlike excess salt that can lead to hypertension (chronically high blood pressure).

### 7 Ditch the Sugary Food

Sugary foods are not part of a healthy diet, mostly because they're processed, void of nutrients, and can be addicting. Instead of choosing something with sugar, have an apple, some berries, a banana, an orange, or just enjoy sweet veggies like carrots instead. Your body will learn to love the taste of fresh vegetables and fruits when you give it a chance. Sugar ages your skin, messes with your digestion, makes you moody, tired, and doesn't satisfy your appetite. Ditch it; you'll feel much better in no time!

And there you go friends, a month's worth of wellness tips you can practice to be a healthier, happier you in just 30 days. You can try one tip per day, or optimally, build on each day as the month goes by. You won't believe how different these can make you feel when practiced on a regular basis.

Remember, wellness is merely a gift you choose to give yourself that begins with one simple choice after another. Start your wellness journey today!

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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). □



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