

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION
12th Legislative Day
Tuesday, February 13, 2018

The House met according to adjournment and was called to order by the Speaker.

Prayer by Pastor Izzie Radford-Nash, Mexico Congregational Church, UCC.

National Anthem by Elaine Michaud, Mexico.

Pledge of Allegiance.

At this point, a message came from the Senate borne by Senator MASON, of Androscoggin, of that Body, proposing a Joint Convention of both branches of the Legislature to be held in the Hall of the House at 6:45 in the evening for the purpose of extending to His Excellency, Governor Paul R. LePage, an invitation to attend the Joint Convention and to make such communication as pleases him.

Thereupon the House voted to concur in the proposal for a Joint Convention to be held at 6:45 in the evening and the Speaker appointed Representative HERBIG of Belfast to convey this message to the Senate.

Doctor of the day, Sue Woods, M.D., South Portland.

The Journal of Thursday, February 8, 2018 was read and approved.

SENATE PAPERS
Non-Concurrent Matter

Resolve, Directing the Secretary of State To Study the Revised Uniform Law on Notarial Acts

(H.P. 1171) (L.D. 1691)

Majority (8) **OUGHT TO PASS** Report of the Committee on **JUDICIARY READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Resolve **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED** in the House on February 1, 2018.

Came from the Senate with the Minority (5) **OUGHT NOT TO PASS** Report of the Committee on **JUDICIARY READ** and **ACCEPTED** in **NON-CONCURRENCE**.

The House voted to **INSIST**.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Following Communication: (H.C. 435)

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0001

January 23, 2018

Honorable Sara Gideon

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable Michael D. Thibodeau

President of the Senate

3 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Speaker Gideon and President Thibodeau:

I thank you for the invitation to deliver the State of the State address at a Joint Session of the 128th Maine Legislature on Tuesday, February 13, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.

Please know that I accept your invitation and look forward to seeing you at that time.

Sincerely,

S/Paul R. LePage

Governor

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 436)

STATE OF MAINE
CLERK'S OFFICE
2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

February 13, 2018

Honorable Sara Gideon

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Speaker Gideon:

Pursuant to Joint Rule 310, the following Joint Standing Committees have voted unanimously to report the following bills out "Ought Not to Pass:"

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

L.D. 951

An Act To Adopt the Uniform Act on Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking

L.D. 1389

An Act To Disburse Funds to the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission

L.D. 1672

An Act To Waive the Fee for Attendance at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy for Former Military Police Officers

Education and Cultural Affairs

L.D. 228

An Act To Amend the Mathematics Requirements for High School Graduation

Energy, Utilities and Technology

L.D. 1702

An Act To Allow Certain Hydropower Facilities To Sell Electricity Directly to Rural Manufacturing and Industrial Sites

Transportation

L.D. 1754

Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation To Prioritize and Increase the Funding for Rural Roads

Sincerely,

S/Robert B. Hunt

Clerk of House

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.**

Subsequently, Representative HERBIG of Belfast reported that she had delivered the message with which she was charged.

PETITIONS, BILLS AND RESOLVES REQUIRING REFERENCE

Bill "An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Provide for Student Loan Debt Relief"

(H.P. 1276) (L.D. 1834)

Sponsored by Representative GROHMAN of Biddeford. (GOVERNOR'S BILL)

Committee on **APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act To Transfer Funds within the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 1277) (L.D. 1835)

Sponsored by Representative DUCHESNE of Hudson. (GOVERNOR'S BILL)

Cosponsored by Senator CYRWAY of Kennebec and Representative: NADEAU of Winslow.

Bill "An Act To Exempt from Hunter Safety Courses Certain Veterans and Persons Who Have Completed Firearms Safety Courses"

(H.P. 1278) (L.D. 1836)

Sponsored by Representative STANLEY of Medway. (GOVERNOR'S BILL)

Cosponsored by Senator BRAKEY of Androscoggin.

Committee on **INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

SPECIAL SENTIMENT CALENDAR

In accordance with House Rule 519 and Joint Rule 213, the following items:

Recognizing:

Phyllis McDonough, of Portland, a teacher at Hall-Dale Middle School, for her more than 50 years of teaching. We extend to Ms. McDonough our appreciation for her service to the youth of the State;

(HLS 889)

Presented by Representative GRANT of Gardiner.

Cosponsored by Senator CHIPMAN of Cumberland, Senator DION of Cumberland, Representative HARLOW of Portland, Representative FARNSWORTH of Portland, Representative MOONEN of Portland, Representative SYLVESTER of Portland, Representative TALBOT ROSS of Portland, Representative JORGENSEN of Portland, Representative COLLINGS of Portland, Representative SANBORN of Portland.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative GRANT of Gardiner, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

On motion of the same Representative, **TABLED** pending **PASSAGE** and later today assigned.

Recognizing:

the Town of Mexico, which is celebrating its Bicentennial. Earlier called Holmanstown after the first owner of the land, Colonel Jonathan Holman, the town was first settled by Isaac Gleason, Stephen Barnard, Sam Knapp, Thomas Eustis, Joseph Eustis, Benjamin Edmund and Zebediah Mitchell. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts established the Town of Mexico on February 13, 1818. One account holds that the town was named in honor of the country of Mexico as it fought for its independence from Spain. The town is situated in what has been described as the best farming valley in the State and has had a variety of industries and businesses through the years. We extend to the citizens of the Town of Mexico our congratulations on this anniversary;

(HLS 891)

Presented by Representative MADIGAN of Rumford.

Cosponsored by Senator KEIM of Oxford, Representative PICKETT of Dixfield.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative MADIGAN of Rumford, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

The **SPEAKER**: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Rumford, Representative Madigan.

Representative **MADIGAN**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. It's my pleasure to recognize the 200th birthday of the Town of Mexico today. That makes them two years older than the State of Maine. Mexico, when it was formed initially, was called Holmanstown, which included all the land which now encompasses the Town of Mexico and the Town of Dixfield. I had the honor of being able to serve Mexico for 12 years as its town manager, and I just recently retired a year ago to be a part of this body. Today we have members of the bicentennial committee, we have the town manager, one of the selectmen, who have worked very hard to have this day be Mexico Day. And, Mexico was named because of the compassion that the citizens of Mexico had for the plight of the Mexican people in their revolution to free themselves from Spanish rule. Having served there for so long, I can assure you that, even today, Mexico citizens are still very compassionate and excellent citizens, and I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Mexico, and I really want to welcome the people who are here today to celebrate this 200th anniversary. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The **SPEAKER**: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Dixfield, Representative Pickett.

Representative **PICKETT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, my rural district is comprised of five towns. As I am sure you know, I am very proud of them all. But I rise this morning to give special recognition to my neighbors and friends from one of these towns: The Town of Mexico, which is a small town in Oxford County. The population was 2,681 at the 2010 census, and it's about the same today. The original land was once part of Holmanstown Plantation, a large land grant authorized by the Massachusetts General Court in 1789 to Colonel Jonathan Holman of Sutton, Massachusetts, and others. In 1803, Dixfield was set off from this land grant and incorporated as a separate town. In 1894, George W. Ridlon, the president of the Rumford Falls Brick Company, founded a settlement in the eastern part of the area, called Ridlonville. He erected 30 cottages and the Hotel Ridlon. The Plantation's remaining portion, which had been first settled by Isaac Gleason, was incorporated on February 13, 1818 as yet another town. The name of the town was inspired by the local folks expressing sympathy for the country of Mexico's 11-year fight for

independence from Spain. It developed over the years as a farming community, and became known as Mexico Corners. Today, I'm very proud to welcome some of the current town officials and citizens of our northern Oxford Town of Mexico to our chamber, and I ask my fellow members in a few moments to rise with me and welcome them to the gallery to help celebrate this, the day of their 200th birthday, of this very proud Maine town. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **PASSED** and sent for concurrence.

Recognizing:

S. L. Wadsworth and Son, Inc., of Eastport, the nation's oldest ship chandlery, which is celebrating its 200th Anniversary of doing business. Founded in 1818 by Samuel B. Wadsworth, the ship chandlery survived fire and storms to be operated today by the 6th generation of the Wadsworth family. We extend to everyone at S. L. Wadsworth and Son, Inc., our congratulations on this anniversary;

(HLS 892)

Presented by Representative TUELL of East Machias.

Cosponsored by Senator MAKER of Washington.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative TUELL of East Machias, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from East Machias, Representative Tuell.

Representative TUELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to rise briefly to draw everyone's attention to this unique occurrence. Several weeks ago, while I was down here milling about the halls on a Friday, waiting for a member of the other body to drive me back to Washington County, I happened across a gentleman who we both had seen in another committee. He and I talked a few minutes, and the conversation led into his family business. And he said, "Did you know our family has owned this business in Eastport for 200 years this year?" And I confess, I honestly didn't know the details of that, but when Scott Brown was telling me about the story, and how his family's company has survived generations, has survived fires, floods, economic adversity, two world wars, was founded at a time when we -- back before Maine even became a state. I thought that was quite a unique story, so I said let's -- I immediately ran back across the way here and put in a sentiment for that very occurrence, because I think, so many times, and this day in particular, when Washington County is in the news for all the wrong reasons, we can't help but celebrate some Washington County people who are in the news for the right reasons: for their perseverance and their spirit and their ability to endure at a time when so much of business has become supersized. This little country business tucked away on the coast of Maine, way up in Eastport, next to the Canadian border, has done some special things. They -- one of the business owners, Chris Brown, has been involved in our -- in Eastport's Pirate Festival, which has exploded over the last eight or ten, 12 years since its organization. They're community-minded, they're a local business, they've always been there, and I hope they can be there for generations to come, and that future Legislatures will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of S.L. Wadsworth and Son. So, I would extend my deepest congratulations to the S.L. Wadsworth team, the entire family, and the community of Eastport. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **PASSED** and sent for concurrence.

In Memory of:

Eda Phyllis Tripp, of Minot, a longtime public servant. Ms. Tripp served Minot as a selectman from 1999 to 2017 and was director of General Assistance. She oversaw the care boxes distributed at Thanksgiving and Christmas for 18 years. She served as chairman of the Board of Assessors, served on the Minot school board for 2 years and was election clerk for over 38 years, and she performed many other duties for the community. She was a surviving member of the 1846 Minot Center Congregational Church and worked to maintain the historic church. She was a founding member of the Minot Historical Society, serving as secretary for 8 years, and was a member of the Pine Tree State Holstein Association, serving as secretary and treasurer for 22 years. She was active in the Center Minot Grange #266, the Androscoggin Pomona Grange #1 and the West Minot Grange #42. Ms. Tripp will be long remembered and sadly missed by her family and friends and those whose lives she touched;

(HLS 893)

Presented by Representative SHEATS of Auburn.

Cosponsored by Senator BRAKEY of Androscoggin, Representative TIMBERLAKE of Turner.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative SHEATS of Auburn, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Auburn, Representative Sheats.

Representative SHEATS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, and friends and family of Eda gathered here today in the gallery, I was fortunate to get to know Eda over the last four years. It seemed that everywhere I turned in Minot, Eda was there, usually in charge: greeting guests at the Grange on Maple Syrup Sunday, and again for Strawberry Fest; at the Veteran's Day event; the voting booth and selectman meetings at the town office; the town meeting; Minot Community Days; and so many other events. But I got to know Eda best from her work on the Minot Historical Society. We shared an appreciation for old homes and their history. The few times I ran into Eda in Auburn, it was at the Home Depot. We joked that both of us felt more comfortable and happier in a hardware store than a jewelry store, and we agreed we could easily spend more money at the hardware store, too. I pass Eda's home on my way home each time I visit Minot. Where it sits, it is a beautiful and prominent reminder of a beautiful and prominent woman. Eda will be missed.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **ADOPTED** and sent for concurrence.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

Divided Reports

Majority Report of the Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** reporting **Ought Not to Pass** on Bill "An Act To Create the Fund for Municipalities To Improve Pedestrian Safety" (S.P. 199) (L.D. 584)

Signed:

Senators:

COLLINS of York
ROSEN of Hancock

Representatives:

McLEAN of Gorham
GILLWAY of Searsport
GRANT of Gardiner
PARRY of Arundel
PERKINS of Oakland

Minority Report of the same Committee reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-350)** on same Bill.

Signed:

Senator:

MIRAMANT of Knox

Representatives:

AUSTIN of Skowhegan
BRYANT of Windham
SCHNECK of Bangor
SHEATS of Auburn

Came from the Senate with the Majority **OUGHT NOT TO PASS Report READ and ACCEPTED.**

READ.

On motion of Representative HERBIG of Belfast, **TABLED** pending **ACCEPTANCE** of either Report and later today assigned.

Majority Report of the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-586)** on Bill "An Act To Provide Funding for the Maine Bicentennial Commission" (H.P. 1176) (L.D. 1696)

Signed:

Senators:

LANGLEY of Hancock
MAKER of Washington
MILLETT of Cumberland

Representatives:

KORNFIELD of Bangor
DAUGHTRY of Brunswick
FARNSWORTH of Portland
FULLER of Lewiston
McCREA of Fort Fairfield
PIERCE of Falmouth

Minority Report of the same Committee reporting **Ought Not to Pass** on same Bill.

Signed:

Representatives:

GINZLER of Bridgton
SAMPSON of Alfred
STEWART of Presque Isle
TURNER of Burlington

READ.

Representative KORNFIELD of Bangor moved that the House **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended Report.**

Representative FREDETTE of Newport **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended Report.**

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The **SPEAKER:** A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 483

YEA - Ackley, Alley, Austin B, Babbidge, Bailey, Bates, Battle, Beebe-Center, Berry, Bickford, Blume, Brooks, Bryant, Campbell, Cardone, Casas, Chapman, Collings, Cooper, Corey, Daughtry, DeChant, Denno, Devin, Doore, Duchesne, Dunphy, Farnsworth, Fay, Fecteau, Frey, Fuller, Gattine, Golden, Grant, Grignon, Grohman, Hamann, Handy, Harlow, Herbig, Hickman, Higgins, Hilliard, Hogan, Hubbell, Hymanson, Jorgensen, Kornfield, Kumiega, Lawrence, Longstaff, Luchini, Madigan C, Madigan J, Martin J, Martin R, Mastraccio, McCrea, McCreight, Melaragno, Monaghan, Moonen, Nadeau, O'Neil, Parker, Perry, Pierce T, Reckitt, Riley, Rykerson, Sanborn, Schneck, Sheats, Spear, Stanley, Stearns, Sylvester, Talbot Ross, Tepler, Terry, Tipping, Tucker, Tuell, Warren, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Austin S, Black, Bradstreet, Chace, Craig, Dillingham, Espling, Farrin, Foley, Fredette, Gerrish, Ginzler, Guerin, Hanington, Hanley, Harrington, Harvell, Hawke, Head, Herrick, Johansen, Kinney J, Kinney M, Lockman, Lyford, Malaby, Marean, Mason, McElwee, O'Connor, Ordway, Parry, Picchiotti, Pickett, Pierce J, Pouliot, Prescott, Reed, Sampson, Sanderson, Seavey, Sherman, Simmons, Sirocki, Stetkis, Stewart, Strom, Sutton, Timberlake, Vachon, Wadsworth, Wallace, Ward, White, Winsor, Wood.

ABSENT - Cebra, Gillway, Haggan, McLean, Perkins, Skolfield, Theriault, Turner.

Yes, 87; No, 56; Absent, 8; Excused, 0.

87 having voted in the affirmative and 56 voted in the negative, with 8 being absent, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended Report was ACCEPTED.**

The Bill was **READ ONCE. Committee Amendment "A" (H-586) was READ** by the Clerk and **ADOPTED.**

Under suspension of the rules the Bill was given its **SECOND READING WITHOUT REFERENCE** to the Committee on **Bills in the Second Reading.**

Under further suspension of the rules the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-586)** and sent for concurrence.

CONSENT CALENDAR

First Day

In accordance with House Rule 519, the following item appeared on the Consent Calendar for the First Day:

(H.P. 1205) (L.D. 1725) Bill "An Act To Ensure Stability for Certain Holders of Liquor Licenses" Committee on **VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-585)**

Under suspension of the rules, Second Day Consent Calendar notification was given.

There being no objection, the House Paper was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended** and sent for concurrence.

ENACTORS

Acts

An Act To Update the Allowance Budget for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

(H.P. 1142) (L.D. 1657)
(C. "A" H-575)

An Act To Create The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital Registration Plate

(S.P. 621) (L.D. 1685)
(C. "A" S-348)

An Act To Clarify the Law Governing the Separation of a Class A Restaurant and an Off-premises Retail Licensee Located on the Same Premises

(H.P. 1173) (L.D. 1693)

An Act To Rename the Coast of Maine Wildlife Management Area as the Alan E. Hutchinson Wildlife Management Area

(H.P. 1213) (L.D. 1759)

Reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed, **PASSED TO BE ENACTED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

The following items were taken up out of order by unanimous consent:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The following matters, in the consideration of which the House was engaged at the time of adjournment Thursday, February 8, 2018, had preference in the Orders of the Day and continued with such preference until disposed of as provided by House Rule 502.

JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING APPLICATION TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO CALL A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION UNDER ARTICLE V OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION TO PROPOSE AN AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION TO RESTORE FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

(S.P. 667)

- In House, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT** on January 18, 2018.

- In Senate, Senate **INSISTED** on its former action whereby the Joint Resolution and accompanying papers **REFERRED** to the Committee on **VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS** in **NON-CONCURRENCE**.

TABLED - January 25, 2018 (Till Later Today) by Representative ESPLING of New Gloucester.

PENDING - Motion of Representative CHAPMAN of Brooksville to **RECEDE** and **CONCUR**. (Division Ordered)

Subsequently, Representative CHAPMAN of Brooksville **WITHDREW** his **REQUEST** for a division.

Representative HERBIG of Belfast **REQUESTED** a division on the motion to **RECEDE** and **CONCUR**.

The Chair ordered a division on the motion to **RECEDE** and **CONCUR**.

A vote of the House was taken. 10 voted in favor of the same and 122 against, and accordingly the motion to **RECEDE AND CONCUR FAILED**.

Subsequently, the House voted to **INSIST**.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

JOINT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MAINE CEMENT MANUFACTURING AND OPPOSING SUBSIDIZED FOREIGN CEMENT IMPORTS

(S.P. 683)

- In Senate, **READ** and **ADOPTED**.

TABLED - February 6, 2018 (Till Later Today) by Representative SANDERSON of Chelsea.

PENDING - **ADOPTION**.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from South Thomaston, Representative Spear.

Representative **SPEAR**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members of the House, I rise in support of this resolution, which expresses our support of Dragon Cement of Thomaston in its efforts to ensure no violation of international trade laws, specifically laws regarding subsidized exports, are transpiring with the operation of the new McInnis Cement Plant in Quebec. The resolution expressly indicates support for appropriate means to ensure a fair and level playing field for the plant, Thomaston Plant, and its hundreds of direct and indirect employees. I urge its passage. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Subsequently, the Joint Resolution was **ADOPTED** in concurrence.

HOUSE DIVIDED REPORT - Majority (8) **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-578)** - Minority (5) **Ought Not to Pass** - Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** on Resolve, To Provide Meals to Homebound Individuals

(H.P. 483) (L.D. 692)

TABLED - February 6, 2018 (Till Later Today) by Representative HERBIG of Belfast.

PENDING - **ACCEPTANCE OF EITHER REPORT**.

Subsequently, Representative HYMANSON of York moved that the House **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from York, Representative Hymanson.

Representative **HYMANSON**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members of the House, this is a bill that supports Meals on Wheels by increasing the 2% of the Meals on Wheels budget that the state pays. There are currently 216 people

waiting for Meals on Wheels who will not be visited and fed by their neighbors. Meals on Wheels is a partnership between volunteers who drive to see their neighbors, check in on these fragile shut-ins, put a smile on their faces, leave them with a meal, and return in subsequent days. The partnership extends to include local volunteer support, to local funding, to state funding, to federal funding. This bill asks for a \$500,000 appropriation to land on the Appropriations desk and fight its way forward, as a fully worthy program that deserves full funding. As a policy body, please vote yea and let the Appropriations Committee do its work. I wanted to give you some sentiments from a woman who has worked for Meals on Wheels for the past four and a half years. She says that hunger is about people, and she gives some examples of people she's visited: "It's about the man living alone, recovering from heart surgery, who has previously only eaten frozen, dried up pizza which was in his refrigerator. It's about the woman who came to the door disheveled, unclean, and confused, who now receives home health care on a regular basis and is clean, coherent, and has had her hair permed. Meals on Wheels is about a 95-year-old woman who starts to cry when I deliver a Christmas card made by a local elementary school student. It's about the 90-year-old who's legally blind who asks me to return her books on tape to the state library for her, and kisses me goodbye when I leave. It's about the woman who literally empties her piggybank once a month to send a donation to Meals on Wheels for her meals." I have two pages of these kinds of sentiments. I ask you for your support. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Chelsea, Representative Sanderson.

Representative **SANDERSON**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Men and Women of the House, I rise in opposition to the pending motion, and not because Meals on Wheels is not a worthy program. This is a bill that we carried over from the first half of the session, because the Department was working on covering this under Section 19. That has gone through, and there's a large number of folks under Section 19 who do receive Meals on Wheels paid for through the MaineCare system. During the line of questioning during the public hearing, or actually the work session, rather, because that's what we had this year, I asked specifically if a gentleman who administers a Meals on Wheels program has been able to go back through their entire clientele and make sure that anybody who receives Section 19 is receiving it under there, so they could save their other resources for folks who maybe don't qualify for the Section 19. As of that time, they had not done so. So, I would certainly urge publicly that to be done, because we may find that there are a great many people who do qualify for Meals on Wheels coverage under the Section 19 waiver, services waiver, and then we would be able to have current funding expanded to those who do not. Thank you very much.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Cumberland, Representative Denno.

Representative **DENNO**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to point out a few elements that I think are relevant here. The cost of a nursing home is approximately \$75,000 for one year. The cost of Meals on Wheels is approximately \$2,000 per year; and, from a Brown University study, it was demonstrated that Meals on Wheels significantly delays entry into nursing homes. Meals on Wheels is a particularly, I think, exemplary model of funding. It's 84% federal funded, 14% is private funding, the work is done primarily by volunteers, and the state's contribution is around 2%. So we're being asked to

fund just enough to take up the waitlist of individuals who are isolated in their home and are unable to get out and buy groceries. And I was chairman of the Cumberland Aging in Place Committee, and even in a town like Cumberland, social isolation of seniors is a significant issue, leads to their having to leave their homes, which is not what they want. So, in my view, this is a very fiscally responsible action for this body to take. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from South Berwick, Representative Parker.

Representative **PARKER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I - you know, with our population in Maine aging and living in a rural state, I think it's really important for us all to remember what Meals on Wheels truly is. It is only one meal a day, at a cost of \$7.00, and served five days a week. This is a very cost-effective way for us to keep a touching point with our seniors who are out of reach, whose houses have long driveways that -- they're not seen from the road. So, please, I urge you to think of our fellow neighbors and friends who need this support; and also, I'd like just to end with that, once an individual starts receiving Meals on Wheels, it's not forever. The average lifespan of a recipient on Meals on Wheels is only six months, and oftentimes neighbors, community, or friends and families will come and relieve Meals on Wheels. So, thank you, and I hope to have your vote on this.

The SPEAKER: The Chair will remind all members to please direct comments towards the Chair.

The Chair reminded all Representatives to address their comments toward the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Newport, Representative Fredette.

Representative **FREDETTE**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, I don't think anybody's questioned the validity of the program and the importance of Meals on Wheels. My understanding, from the good Representative from Chelsea, Representative Sanderson, it's a question of which bucket of money the money comes from, and to the extent that people qualify under the Medicaid program, a certain significant portion of that funding could come as a result of a reimbursable cost, rather than directly through the General Fund; and I believe that that's my understanding the opposition to the bill is. I don't think it's the underlying premise of the program but a questioning of the funding source. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from South Portland, Representative Hamann.

Representative **HAMANN**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Men and Women of the House, I rise in support of the pending motion, because ensuring that homebound Mainers have a hot meal is not only the right thing to do for our seniors and people with disabilities, but providing consistent access to nutrition has been proven to save money by reducing health care costs in the long run. We should all have a handout on our desk with an overview of a partnership between Maine Medical Center and the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. This project provided Meals on Wheels to the population this bill would serve, and they found that providing this service reduced hospital readmission rates, representing a 387% return on investment. A 387% return on investment. Why so high? Health care is expensive, and proper nutrition helps people get healthy faster and respond better to medical interventions. So, what does the bill do? Once passed into law, this bill will ensure that every Mainer on the waitlist for Meals on Wheels gains access to this lifeline. We heard from the Department about the various sources of current funding, mostly federal

and social services block grant funding, but given the stagnant growth in Title 3 funding and the Older Americans Act, we have a duty to our homebound neighbors to ensure that insufficiencies in federal funding don't mean that they are left without food they need to stay healthy and stay out of the hospital.

To be clear, this bill funds the portion of the need that is not covered by federal funding under the Older Americans Act. This bill takes care of eligible homebound Mainers who are not accessing services due to inadequate funding. Meals on Wheels provides meals to people who are over 60 years old and homebound, or who are disabled. It's not a means-tested program, but rather a program for people who can't get to the grocery store and can't prepare a meal for themselves. The program provides participants with daily nutrition, and energy to maintain their health and strength. The meals are delivered by volunteers, and volunteers account for a lot of the muscle in the program. Yes, they are delivering meals to an otherwise isolated individual, but they are also bringing companionship, something to look forward to, and of course a check-in to see how the person is doing, and the check-in benefit of the volunteer cannot be overstated.

Here's a brief story about an elderly gentleman who receives Meals on Wheels. His wife is his primary caregiver. She was away at an appointment when the Meals on Wheels volunteer driver arrived to deliver his meals. No one came to the door. The driver knocked again and listened and thought she could hear someone yelling, "Come in." She opened the door a bit and asked for permission to enter and when she did she found the gentleman on the floor, unable to get up. She stayed with him and called 9-1-1, and then sat with him and assured him that everything would be okay, until help arrived.

Men and Women of the House, I ask for your vote in favor of this motion. Providing meals to people who are disabled, or too frail to cook, is simply the right thing to do. The bill comes with a fiscal note, which represents an investment for which we know we will see a 387% return, as we have seen in the past with this program. And the Representative from Chelsea referenced Section 19 funding: the Department has started enrolling people in that section, and currently there are 38 people enrolled under Section 19. So this is only for the subset of the waitlist population that would be Section 19 eligible. The rest of the population is not eligible, and the total waitlist currently is, actually, the Representative from York referenced a previous statistic, but the latest data is it's risen to 301 individuals on the Meals on Wheels waitlist. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Scarborough, Representative Sirocki.

Representative **SIROCKI**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to pose a question through the Chair, if I might?

The SPEAKER: The Representative may proceed.

Representative **SIROCKI**: I guess I'm a little confused, and I'm wondering if all of the individuals that are receiving Meals on Wheels, and those that are on the waitlist, have they all been screened for Section 19, or is that process still underway? Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Representative from Scarborough, Representative Sirocki, has posed a question through the Chair, if there is anyone who wishes to answer. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Waterville, Representative Madigan.

Representative **MADIGAN**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to talk a little bit about the waitlist for this service, primarily because I think there's been a little confusion about

those. Many agencies that screen people for this stop doing their assessments for Meals on Wheels, in other words, to put them on the waitlist, because of people already waiting. Having a waitlist can make people think, "Oh, I'll never get on it and so I'm not going to bother," kind of, getting screened for that. So, that is one problem we have in having that accurate assessment. The other thing I want us to think about in regards to this program is just the demographics of our state. We have an aging population, we have -- it's flu season. These are all things that can drive more need for the service and just heavier-than-average referrals for it. So I urge you to support this motion. This is an important program that helps our seniors stay in their homes. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Rockport, Representative Casás.

Representative **CASÁS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was not anticipating speaking, but at my Select Board meeting last night, I'm also on the Rockport Select Board, we were related a story about how Meals on Wheels saved one of our residents' lives. The Meals on Wheels folks came, and they started to notice that their client was showing some signs of carbon monoxide poisoning, so they called the fire department. The fire department showed up, there was a blockage in the chimney and they evacuated the house, cleared it of carbon monoxide, and the individual then went back into their house after the fact. So, it was just a very powerful anecdote, that kind of kismet on the timing, that in my local community Meals on Wheels saves lives in addition to all the great benefits of it. So, thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Topsham, Representative Tepler.

Representative **TEPLER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to pose a question through the Chair to anyone who may care to answer.

The SPEAKER: The Representative may proceed.

Representative **TEPLER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The -- do the AAA agencies, the Area Agencies on Aging, who manage the Meals on Wheels program, have the right to information that allows them to access individuals' eligibility for Section 19?

The SPEAKER: The Representative from Topsham, Representative Tepler, has posed a question through the Chair if there is anyone who might be able to answer. The Chair recognizes the Representative from York, Representative Hymanson.

Representative **HYMANSON**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This might partially answer both -- all the questions that have been posed about Section 19. So, I wanted to tell you the definition of people who would fall under Section 19, and just keep in mind that this may not cover everyone who you would consider to be a frail shut-in. Eligibility is: a person who is 18 or older or an emancipated minor; meet both general MaineCare medical and financial eligibility requirements; they must have a permanent or chronic disability or functional impairment which interferes with his/her capacity to provide self-care and daily living skills without assistance. So, I would argue that a permanent or chronic disability is oftentimes not what people have. They oftentimes come home from the hospital, and are frail, and shut in because of that, and will recover. In fact, the usual eligibility is six months. So, generally, people are on Meals on Wheels for an average of six months' time. So, I hope that answers some questions. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 484

YEA - Ackley, Alley, Austin B, Babbidge, Bailey, Bates, Battle, Beebe-Center, Berry, Bickford, Blume, Brooks, Bryant, Campbell, Cardone, Casas, Chapman, Collings, Cooper, Corey, Daughtry, DeChant, Denno, Devin, Dillingham, Doore, Duchesne, Dunphy, Farnsworth, Fay, Fecteau, Foley, Frey, Fuller, Gattine, Ginzler, Golden, Grant, Grignon, Grohman, Guerin, Hamann, Handy, Hanington, Harlow, Hawke, Herbig, Hickman, Higgins, Hilliard, Hogan, Hubbell, Hymanson, Jorgensen, Kinney M, Kornfield, Kumiega, Lawrence, Longstaff, Luchini, Madigan C, Madigan J, Malaby, Marean, Martin J, Martin R, Mastraccio, McCrea, McCreight, McElwee, Melaragno, Monaghan, Moonen, Nadeau, O'Neil, Ordway, Parker, Perry, Picchiotti, Pickett, Pierce J, Pierce T, Pouliot, Reckitt, Riley, Rykerson, Sanborn, Schneck, Seavey, Sheats, Sherman, Spear, Stanley, Stearns, Stewart, Sylvester, Talbot Ross, Tepler, Terry, Tipping, Tucker, Tuell, Wallace, Ward, Warren, Wood, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Austin S, Black, Bradstreet, Chace, Craig, Espling, Farrin, Fredette, Gerrish, Hanley, Harrington, Harvell, Head, Johansen, Kinney J, Lockman, Lyford, Mason, O'Connor, Parry, Prescott, Reed, Sampson, Sanderson, Simmons, Sirocki, Skolfield, Stetkis, Strom, Sutton, Timberlake, Vachon, Wadsworth, White, Winsor.

ABSENT - Cebra, Gillway, Haggan, Herrick, McLean, Perkins, Theriault, Turner.

Yes, 108; No, 35; Absent, 8; Excused, 0.

108 having voted in the affirmative and 35 voted in the negative, with 8 being absent, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended Report was ACCEPTED.**

The Resolve was **READ ONCE. Committee Amendment "A" (H-578) was READ** by the Clerk and **ADOPTED.**

Under suspension of the rules the Resolve was given its **SECOND READING WITHOUT REFERENCE** to the Committee on **Bills in the Second Reading.**

Under further suspension of the rules the Resolve was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-578)** and sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH.**

SENATE PAPERS

Bill "An Act To Amend the Law Regarding the Interest Rate for State Loans under the Potato Marketing Improvement Fund"

(S.P. 691) (L.D. 1839)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act To Allow Cash Prizes for Certain Raffles Conducted by Charitable Organizations"

(S.P. 689) (L.D. 1837)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS** in concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH.**

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from East Machias, Representative Tuell.

Representative **TUELL**: Madam Speaker, request permission to speak on the record.

The SPEAKER: The Representative has requested unanimous consent to address the House on the record. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Newport, Representative Fredette.

Representative **FREDETTE**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I certainly don't object to the good Representative from Machias speaking on the record. I would suggest, however, if it's an issue concerning what I think it is, I would suggest that there is committee work on issues that are being resolved, and not really sure that it should be an issue for the floor. I'll leave that to the discretion of the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Hearing no objection, the Representative may proceed on the record. The Chair will remind Representatives that the House is in order until adjournment. The Representative from East Machias, Representative Tuell, may proceed.

Representative **TUELL**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to say a few things before this body today. As a resident -- as a resident of Washington County, this state has seen some pretty dark days this past week. And, I got to say I'm ashamed of some things that were done last week and how some things played out. But, I've also heard from other members who feel much the same way, and who are in a real bind of character today as to events that may proceed tonight. And I would ask everybody, regardless of how you feel, regardless of how upset you are, regardless of how angry you are, regardless of how you're struggling to deal with certain issues that will be coming before this body: make no mistake of that, they will be coming, and issues will be laid bare when they do. But, as the Representative from Newport reminded us all, they are not here yet; but we, as legislators, as members of this body, as members of the other body, I would ask people to come tonight, to stay -- if they feel or are thinking otherwise, please come tonight. Daniel stayed -- Daniel braved the lion's den, we can certainly brave this, and we can certainly overcome it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Washington County thanks you for all you have done in support of our little area, and for the -- your willingness to go through this. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The House will be in order. The House will be in order.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Lincoln, Representative Hanington.

Representative **HANINGTON**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request to be recorded on record.

The SPEAKER: The Representative has requested unanimous consent to address the House on the record. Hearing no objection, the Representative may proceed on the record.

Representative **HANINGTON**: Madam Speaker, first of all, even though we differ on policy, I was engaged in a debate this weekend upon the slowing down of the tip credit versus other things, and, unbeknownst to me, I apologize that I'm not that technically inclined, a post was posted on my Facebook page saying that I request that Speaker Gideon be removed. I did not say that. I do not wish ill upon anybody, because there's many in this chamber I call friends. And, if you do come across that, Madam Speaker, it did not come from me. How it got there, I do not know. I do not wish ill on anybody. We do differ on many things, but one thing I will not do, belittle anybody, or, just because they don't have my beliefs, say that they're wrong, because they have a constituency that they have to serve, just like I do. So, Madam Speaker, I do apologize, but it did not come from me.

The House recessed until the Sound of the Bell.

(After Recess)

The House was called to order by the Speaker.

At this point, the Senate came and a Joint Convention was formed.

In Convention

The President of the Senate, the Honorable Michael D. Thibodeau in the Chair.

The Convention was called to order by the Chair.

On motion of Senator MASON of Androscoggin, it was ORDERED, that a Committee be appointed to wait upon the Honorable Paul R. LePage, Governor of the State of Maine, and First Lady Ann LePage, extending to them an invitation to attend this Convention and to extend to Governor Paul R. LePage an invitation to make such communication as pleases him.

The ORDER was READ and PASSED.

The Chair appointed the following:

The Senator from Piscataquis, Senator DAVIS
The Senator from Oxford, Senator KEIM
The Senator from York, Senator DESCHAMBAULT
The Representative from Sinclair, Representative MARTIN
The Representative from Windham, Representative BRYANT
The Representative from Rockland, Representative BEEBE-CENTER
The Representative from Old Orchard Beach, Representative HOGAN
The Representative from Rumford, Representative MADIGAN
The Representative from South Thomaston, Representative SPEAR
The Representative from Dixfield, Representative PICKETT
The Representative from Sanford, Representative HARRINGTON
The Representative from Standish, Representative ORDWAY
The Representative from Athens, Representative GRIGNON

Subsequently, Senator DAVIS of Piscataquis, for the Committee, reported that the Committee had delivered the message with which it was charged and that the Honorable Paul R. LePage, Governor of the State of Maine, and the First Lady would attend forthwith.

The Chair welcomed in the House Gallery the First Lady of the State of Maine, Ann LePage, accompanied by daughters Lauren LePage and Lisa LePage and Lisa's husband Brandon Harvey.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the Constitutional and Statutory Officers of the State of Maine: Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap, State Treasurer Terry Hayes, and State Auditor Pola Buckley.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery Staff Sergeant Alyson Pelletier of the United States Army; Staff Sergeant David Burt of the United States Marine Corps; Staff Sergeant Chelsea Morrill of the United States Air Force; Petty Officer First Class John Joeckel of the United States Coast Guard, New England Sailor of the Year; Petty Officer First Class Christopher Fulcher of the United States Navy, Operational Support Center Bangor Sailor of the Year; and other distinguished members of the military. The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard, Major General Douglas A. Farnham and his wife Nichi. The Chair recognized in the House Gallery Clarissa Sabattis, Chief of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians; and William Nicholas, Chief of the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township. The Chair also recognized in the House Gallery representatives from the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy. The Chair also recognized in the House Gallery members of the Governor's cabinet.

The Chair welcomed to the Convention the Honorable Paul R. LePage, Governor of the State of Maine.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the Herald, Staff Sergeant Richard Fowler of the United States Air Force, State of Maine 2018 Outstanding Airman of the Year.

The Chair welcomed the Honorable Governor Paul R. LePage, Governor of the State of Maine, to the rostrum.

Governor LePage then addressed the Convention.

Governor **LePAGE**: Thank you. Thank you so much. Members of the 128th Legislature, distinguished guests, my fellow citizens. I want to briefly remember Paul Mitchell of Waterville, brother of Senator Mitchell, who passed away this weekend. He was a dedicated public servant and a good friend.

As I begin the last State of the State Address of my time as governor of the great State of Maine, let me be first to thank my wife. Honey, please stand.

First of all, she looks gorgeous. She has been unwavering as a representative from the Governor to the people of the State of Maine, and she's done it with grace, with dignity, and she's never said "no" that I can recall. She's just unbelievable. And, in case I forget, happy Valentine's Day.

I also want to thank our children, and tonight there are two that are here; Lauren, who you've all heard and known. She's been with me since 2010. Now she's on her own, trying to set her own career, and I want to tell you, before it's done, she's going to tower over what I've ever accomplished. My other daughter, Lisa, who has two children and I'm so proud of, and she has a son that's very active, and all I can tell you is payback's a bitch, because I remember when she was young.

To Staff Sergeant Ronald Fowler of the Air Force 243rd Engineering Installation Squadron, thank you for your service to the State of Maine and to the United States of America. You make us very proud, to be the outstanding officer in 2018, and I cannot be any happier; and my wife, Ann, and the First Lady, is so proud to be seated next to you, as she is such a dedicated person of our military.

A little unusual, I'm going to thank a few people and recognize a few people tonight, and one is Sergeant Angela Kooistra and, believe me, I don't know how to really pronounce her last name, but she is head of the security detail, and in our home at the Blaine House the rule is this: if my wife's not around, Angela's in charge. And the other one is Holly Lusk. Holly Lusk is my chief of staff, who just took over recently, and I was approached by the press and saying, "Holy mackerel, you seem to be more assertive than you've ever been." Well, Holly has the distinction of getting me out of my shyness.

Tonight, I'm here to speak to you about the future of Maine, the future of this great state. We have made some progress, but there is so much more we could've done and we should've done. But, as we move forward, I hope that you can get it done.

In his last State of the Union, Ronald Reagan said, "If anyone expects just a proud recitation of the accomplishments of my administration, I say leave it to history; we're not finished yet." So, my message tonight is very similar: put on your work boots, our job is not done. Now is not the time to slow down. Now is the time to working until the very last minute of my administration, the last day. As they inaugurate the new Governor in 2019, I hope to take my lovely wife and I, sit back, take some rest, and get to enjoy each other's company once again. I came in to office saying I would put people before politics, and I have tried to do that every single day. Politics as usual puts our most vulnerable Mainers at risk. As most of you know, I'm not a big fan of status quo. Today, special interests continue to hijack our ballot box, and politicians continue to kowtow to wealthy lobbyists and welfare activists. The Legislature has forgotten about the Mainers who mean the most: our elderly, our intellectually and physically disabled, and even our youth, are being left out of the process. I vow to spend my final year as Governor fighting for those Mainers whose voice is not heard here in Augusta.

For the last seven years, I have heard that the left is compassionate. Subsidizing solar panels for wealthy homeowners, at the expense of the poorest people in Maine, is not compassion. Raising taxes on hardworking families to expand welfare entitlements for able-bodied people is not compassionate. Catering to activists in the halls of the State House instead of struggling family businesses on Main Street is not compassion. I know what it's like to need help, and I know some representatives -- I see Craig Hickman right there and we've talked about it recently. We know what it is to have rough times. We understand that it's not always easy. That's why, every Saturday, I meet with constituents one -on -one. We talk about their problems. I have been accused of getting involved with people's personal lives and trying to fight for them

from my office. It is all our jobs. It is our jobs as elected officials to help them. We are, after all, public servants.

For the last seven years, my priority has been to make all Mainers prosper, and I have been fighting both sides of the aisle, because I believe that both sides of the aisle need to be working closer together. Too many Maine families are facing skyrocketing property taxes that strain household budgets. Our elderly on fixed incomes are particularly vulnerable to these increases, yet, simply, we cannot tax our way to prosperity. As Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, "the power to tax is the power to destroy."

School budgets are not commonly blamed but are normally blamed for tax increases. The real culprit is the tremendous amount of land and property value we've allowed to be taken off our tax rolls, leaving homeowners to pick up the tab. These landowners must contribute to our tax base. It's time for all land and real estate owners to take the burden off homeowners, and pay taxes or a fee in lieu of taxes. The Federal Government does it. Maine's property tax people, homeowners, need a break. We, you and I, need to make sure that the large foundations, the Natural Resource Council of Maine, who are ripping off the landowner in the State of Maine, need to step up to the plate. They can put all the land they want in conservation, but they have to contribute to society.

It's going to be the same thing as last year. All those of you who have exercised during the course of this meeting, you're welcome to the Blaine House, the rest of you, you know, you got to break a sweat sometimes.

We proposed allowing municipalities to collect property taxes or fees from large nonprofit entities, and we've tried to require land trusts to contribute to the tax rolls. We have been met with staunch resistance from the Democrats. Now, let's talk about this. Let's think outside the box. Tough problems need tough decisions and tough solutions. I don't walk away from tough decisions, and I think I've proven it many times, even this last weekend. And, I'm not embarrassed to tell you, it's the right decision. We need to be efficient and effective leaders for this state.

We established an online registry for all nonprofits to report conservation land ownership. The result of all property tax exemptions reported within municipalities exceeds \$18 billion. Think about that: \$18 billion. The loss of that tax revenue has shifted over \$330 million to, guess who: hardworking property owners in the State of Maine.

My office is going to be distributing to each one of you the total value of property taken off the tax rolls for each town, along with the estimated increase in taxes that the annual homeowner has had to pay. It's going to be out tomorrow. You can run away, but you can't hide. The Maine people need your help, and you need to stand up and be counted in this dialogue. It's not -- you can continue to put land on conservation, and I compliment you for that. Let's save the planet. But let's pay a fair share. You need to pay your taxes.

Over 4 million acres have been conserved by the federal/state governments as well as nonprofit organizations such as land trusts. Nearly 20% of this state is conserved from development. Ladies and gentlemen, and people of the State of Maine, this area is larger than the entire State of Connecticut. Think about that. We have taken the State of Connecticut and made it tax exempt. In 1993, about 35,800 acres of land was owned by land trusts. That number has increased by an astonishing 1,270% since 1993. Land trusts now control over one-half million acres, with an estimated taxable value of \$400 million. I'm all in for conservation, but they need to contribute towards the hardworking Mainers in the

State of Maine. We cannot just turn our backs and walk away. We need, and could have, a state that is every bit as prosperous as the state of New Hampshire. All we need to do is make sure that everybody contributes. Ask your local officials how much land in your community has been taken off the tax rolls, then ask them how much tax revenue they could be contributing to help the property tax owners of Maine. The desire to preserve land without benefit to the taxpayer, or their input, is out of control. We must restore balance. We must ensure that all property owners are required to contribute to the local tax base. Everyone must pay their fair share.

Now, I have listened to the fair share comment at least a thousand times in the last eight years. It's not only here in the halls of government, but it's in your communities. Everyone has to pay a fair share. It's common sense.

Let me move on. Richard and Leonette Sukeforth are the elderly couple who were evicted from their home due to their inability to pay their property taxes on their fixed income. Due to health reasons, Mr. and Mrs. Sukeforth were unable to attend tonight. There are two or three other couples that have gone through the same thing, and they are also elderly, and weren't able to get them arranged to get here tonight, but I will tell you this: in 2015, the Town of Albion foreclosed on the Sukeforth's home and sold it for \$6,500. The property was worth between \$70 and \$80,000. A compassionate neighbor offered to pay their taxes on the day the lien perfected, and the town officials refused to accept the money. Folks, the town refused. I don't believe there is a person in this room, whether they're in the gallery or sitting here as elected officials, that would think that that is a proper thing to do. If somebody walks in and is willing to help these people, why couldn't they? I was told that it's one example. I'm telling you, it's a lot more. As we're digging into it now, there's a lot more. A lot more than you realize. And I will tell you this, though. I will say this, we're finding out that some of the cities are far more compassionate than some of the rural towns. But it's a problem.

This couple was removed from their home. Mrs. Sukeforth was bedridden from a stroke. They lost everything, all of their equity and everything else. The abutting landowner that bought it demolished it and evicted them. I wish I'd have learned from the Sukeforths a little earlier, because we could've intervened, and we tried. But it was too late to help them. I've submitted a bill to protect the elderly from tax lien foreclosure going forward. I am not suggesting -- and if you need to sit with me and talk about changing the language of the bill, please work with me -- I am not suggesting that we cannot and will outlaw foreclosing on elderly. What I'm saying is very simply this: as a mayor for eight years in the City of Waterville, I never had to throw an elderly couple out of their homes, because there are options. When you file a lien, it takes 18 months to perfect. A town official has 18 months to work with this family, and I urge you all to have the compassion to work with them, so that we can preserve whatever little equity they have, stay in their home for as long as they can, because ultimately, guess who picks up the tab?

I can tell you right now that Mr. and Mrs. Sukeforth are in a nursing home. They are both very ill. And since they lost everything, we, the people, are picking up the tab. They didn't want that. They were very proud people. Mr. Sukeforth is a veteran, elderly gentleman, and he's from the greatest generation, that they don't ask for handouts. We, the public officials of this state, threw them on the street.

We must fight to protect our parents and our grandparents, whose fixed income cannot keep up with the rising cost of property taxes. This common-sense solution will require

municipalities to put a little more effort, and show a little bit of compassion for the people who live in their communities. And, frankly, I don't think that's too much to ask. When I was mayor, we would have folks who have problems with their taxes, we would come in, and I see a counselor here that I shared in those meetings, that we've never had to throw people out. And there were some really sad stories, but we always found a way. And I think we, as Mainers, have the fortitude to do that. And we don't have to make it very complex. It could be a couple -- a one paragraph. Do everything you can before you foreclose. That's all we ask.

Thank you. I want to thank Representative Espling for sponsoring this bill, and I truly, from the bottom of my heart, urge you all to support this bill, because it can be made very simple, and it can be made so that we'll all want to do the right thing. And there's many, many options available to elderly. The problem has always been, they simply don't know. And so, I think that's a really good opportunity for this body.

I want to get into the tax conformity now, because I'm on a roll with taxes. My tax cuts have resulted in tangible savings for Maine families. A family of four earning \$90,000 pays 29% less today than they did when we did the tax package. A family of four earning \$35,000, who were paying \$298 in income tax, no longer pay income tax. And despite -- despite the rhetoric that you hear from people, this is not wealthy people. This is not tax breaks for the rich. These are tax breaks for hardworking Mainers. The people of the State of Maine's per capita income is around \$42,000; New Hampshire is \$74,000. The number one highest per capita income in the United States of America, they border our state, and we haven't figured out their secret yet. We ought to try.

The new federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will provide more savings for families and businesses. The federal tax cut will result in an estimated economic benefit of approximately a billion dollars in 2019 for Mainers. More than \$500 million of that will be direct income tax benefits to the Maine families, and to small businesses in the State of Maine. However, whenever Congress changes the federal tax code, Maine has to make a decision whether to conform to the federal tax code or to stay on its own. We have, historically, and most states with an income tax, have historically stayed and conformed with the federal tax code. Doing it is better for Maine because it simplifies the tax code, it keeps one tax system. Not doing so means the State of Maine has to go on to its own, and hire a whole lot of people and beef up their income tax division. For that reason, I am proposing legislation to conform fully to the federal tax code. However, again, because of the hard work that's been done over the last seven years, and in reducing our taxes, dealing with the exemptions and the standard deduction, which the Federal Government is doing now, if we conform fully we are going to be having a tax increase. I am asking you all that -- this is really federal tax dollars, and I'm asking you to pass it on to the Maine people. Conform, but pass it on, because that's the right thing to do.

And I'm asking you, that if you don't, I will not use the tax cuts the Federal Government is trying to pass on to Americans, I will not stand in the way and allow it to conform and not pass it on. I'm simply not going to. In fact, I think after seven years you've probably got the hint that I'm not big on increasing taxes. I do believe in conformity, and I do believe in Medicaid expansion. Medicaid expansion, while I think it's a bad public policy when you give able-bodied people a free ride, it is the law of our state. I will enforce the law of the state. That's the good news. That is the good news. Now, let me give you the bad news.

Medicaid expansion is the law, and I will execute the law, but funding is a legislative constitutional duty, and it is the Legislature's responsibility to appropriate the funds. Appropriate the money so we can implement the law sooner than later. I do not believe it's appropriate for this body to wait until after the November elections. Do it now. Do it now. The people of Maine, if you believe in it, then find it. I have laid out the basic principles to guide your decision on how to pay Medicaid expansion. I will not jeopardize the state's long-term fiscal health. We must avoid the budget disasters of the past, and many of you were here and you know what I'm talking about. We paid off \$750 million to our hospitals. We must fund Medicaid expansion in a way that is sustainable and ongoing. Therefore, my principles are very, very simple: no tax increases on Maine families or businesses; no use of the Budget Stabilization Fund, which is better known as the Rainy Day Fund; no use of other one-time funding mechanisms, known as gimmicks. You all know what I'm talking about. Fully fund the vulnerable Mainers who are still waiting for services.

No reductions of services or funding for nursing homes or people with disabilities. It would be fiscally irresponsible for the Legislature to demand we implement Medicaid expansion without adequate funding. It is simply not too much to ask a Legislature to prioritize our truly needy over those looking for taxpayer-funded handouts. And I'm very serious when I tell you that it's important that the disabled, the elderly, and those with mental and intellectual disabilities are put in front of the line and not behind the line.

DHHS cannot hire and train the additional 105 people needed to run expanded Medicaid program without money. We cannot pay the state's share of new enrollees' medical bills without funding. Democrats, hospitals, advocacy groups, and wealthy out-of-state interests who campaigned for this referendum claim that adding 80,000 people onto this program will save us money, and I will tell you right now, I will take you to your word. Show me the money, and put it in writing.

Before this election, show the Maine people that what you campaigned on is the truth, and I will be the first one to admit that I was wrong. But, I will tell you, I have been trained in this business of finance for many, many years, and there's only two ways to fund this program. One is the way you say it could be done, because there are savings, and the other one is with new revenues. And, either way, you have the responsibility to make sure that the Executive Branch and the Department of Health and Human Services has the resources necessary to move forward; and I'm ready to do it.

And now, I would ask Theresa Daigle and Josiah Godfrey to please stand up. If you look back at the top, these are people you should be thinking about. Theresa has shared with me the hardships she and her son have experienced while awaiting services for his physical and intellectual challenges. Josiah has autism, an intellectual disability, and bipolar disorder. He qualifies for services, but he is stuck on a waitlist. Because his mother needs to care for him, it will be impossible for her to continue working. She has been told that she could leave Josiah at St. Mary's and refuse to pick him up, thus making him homeless and available for Section 21. Mainers, this is wrong. It's absolutely highway robbery to do that to a Maine citizen who is actually a constituent of all of ours; and we need to take care of our own.

I ask the Legislature fully fund these programs so people like the Daigles can get the help they desperately need and qualify for. It would be unconscionable to have to do the nuclear option, and leave Josiah so he could get services. We

are better than that. You are better than that. And we need to take care of it now.

Now I'm going to get on my high horse. Many legislators tell me they don't pass bad bills. I had a whole list, but I've decided to just cut it down to one that is current and one that I see -- I feel very, very passionate about, and my family does, and my wife does in particular because she's given so much of her time for the military. I vetoed a bill that would prohibit 18-year-old adults from buying cigarettes, but the Legislature overturned. The law denies rights and responsibilities for 18-year-old adults who want to purchase a legal product. Folks, this is not about cigarettes. No one should ever start smoking, because it's a little difficult to quit. Actually, I will say it's not that bad; I've done it seven times. It is a terrible thing to do. But this is about protecting one's personal choices from a forever-expanding nanny state. Our laws must recognize one age when adulthood begins. You, the Legislature, must pick that age. You know, I don't care if the age is 18 and I don't care if it's 21, but it can't be both.

Legislators have no problem letting 18-year-olds vote for them in elections or die in wars. Let's think about that a moment. Legislators think 18-year-olds are not adult enough to decide whether they can buy a pack of cigarettes, but they think 18-year-olds are adult enough to vote on complex referendums like the legalization of marijuana, the elimination of the tip credit, and a 3% tax surcharge that almost devastated our economy. Think about that. Thank God, thank God that cooler heads prevailed, because economically, folks, that was an absolute financial disaster. Just the period between November and the time in which we shut down government, 500 prominent affluent people said, "I'm done with the State of Maine." It would've continued.

Young adults should be treated like young adults. If an 18-year-old can fight for our country, pay taxes, get married, divorced, make personal medical life-and-death decisions, and even younger teens can use birth control, smoke medical marijuana, then let 18 years old be the maturity age. Let them be adults. As a parent, I will tell you, I would much prefer 21, because I have a son. And when he was going through college, and when I was in college... of course, there are very few in this room that were around when I was in college. I mean, I was Abraham Lincoln's roommate; but the point was, it was a draft. You didn't have a choice then. And I will tell you, in Vietnam we lost 55,000 soldiers; 38,000 -- 38,000 were 18-year-olds. Nearly 45,000 of the 55,000 were under 21. Folks, if we're going to put a rifle on their back and send them to war, I think we owe it to them to help them have the maturity to make the decision whether they can buy a pack of cigarettes or not. So, my message to you is: educate, don't legislate. It's time.

We are the oldest state in the nation, and we must attract people to Maine. Matter of fact, I would prefer attracting young people to Maine. Our current position requires us to get serious about growing our state. I'm going to ask you all to please join in that effort. Let's talk about it. Let's try to move in that direction. I put forward a bill -- I will put forward bills this session to support investment in Maine and the development of our workforce. We have spent seven years fixing Maine's balance sheet. Now is the time to make strategic investments in our economy, and for the people of the State of Maine.

Our bond sales have not focused on commercialization. I support commercialization of bonds. Maine has always supported research and development, and that is good, it's critical, it's important, and the hope has always been to create jobs. R&D is very critical, but it's not enough to bring the

innovative products to market. Developing a patent that sits on the shelf is not a good return on investments to the taxpayers, and that's what's happened in the past. Most of our money in R&D has gone to universities, it's gone to Jackson Lab, it's gone for research and development and patents; and at one point, earlier on in my tenure as Governor, we had 37 patents on shelves, collecting dust. Our innovators create a vast array of the products in many industries: biotech, high-tech, forest products, manufacturing, agriculture, aquaculture, aquaponics. We must invest in commercialization in addition to what we've done in the research. We have to do both. Let's get our products to market. Let's be who we used to be: innovators, creators. Here in Maine, we were leaders in the boating industry, we were leaders in the forest industry, in the paper industry. We were there; but we've got dumb, fat, and happy. I had to go out and lose 75 pounds to wake up. The bottom line is this: Maine needs to reinvent itself, and the time has come. We need to do it now.

I believe a commercialization bond will go a long ways at helping companies like NewPage, who wants to put in a new tissue machine. It will go a long ways for some of the people that I will talk about in a little bit, that there's some great things happening and some great companies that are looking at Maine, to come and invest. The paper companies may have left, but the 18 million acres of forestland is still here. Let's reinvent ourselves. Let's get into better, more high-tech products, let's get into the 21st century and move this state so we can catch New Hampshire. But, and -- it's "but and" -- if we are to survive and succeed, we need to grow our workforce and keep our economy growing. Record numbers of baby boomers are entering retirement. Employers need to replace these skilled workers. For our economy to continue to grow, we must attract and retain young workforce. Not only will these young people work in our industries, but they will also buy homes, they will pay taxes, invigorate our communities, and, yes, most important for Maine right now, is have children. We need to have children. Our schools are losing population. We need to reinvent ourselves again, and put more kids in our schools. My wife and I are done.

We can and should invest in relieving the burden of student debt for those who want to stay in Maine and choose to -- or choose to relocate to Maine to start their professional career. No one else is doing it. High student loan payments prevent our young people from buying a house or car, or spending their money in local businesses. Many take higher-paying jobs out of state to survive. They simply cannot afford to live in Maine. That is unconscionable as parents. We should do everything we can to turn that around. We cannot continue to sit by and watch employers have vacant positions that young people could fill.

I will be submitting legislation, again, to create funds to make strategic investment in our youth. My initiative, the Maine Student Debt Relief Program, calls for a \$50 million bond to fund zero-interest student loans to Maine kids who attend Maine schools. It also calls for a new low-interest refinancing program to encourage graduates from other states to move to Maine. And so many people that I've met in the course of their travels this last seven years will say, "Maine is so beautiful. I'd love to live here, but it's so expensive." And it is. It is, and there's no question about it. And until we realize that we have to get involved in commercialization and we have to develop a training program for young people and attract young people, we are always going to be a very high-cost place to live. So, in addition to just asking the Legislature to simplify the Opportunity Maine credit, and providing low-

income loans and interest-free loans to our students, let's increase the credit so that employers can get involved in paying off student debt. It could be a hiring mechanism for employers. You come to Maine, I'll not only pay you X, but I'll help you pay your loans off. We've already put it on the books. There's the no phantom income; and yesterday, when I was in Washington, I spoke to the President, and to Ivanka Trump, who's on the program, to take phantom income at the national level and get rid of it for phantom income for students. And I also said Maine would be a great place to have a pilot.

I'm going to ask you one other thing to have a very serious dialogue and its -- I don't expect it to happen this year, but I really do believe you need to have this dialogue. Good-paying jobs attract good workers. To attract manufacturing jobs, more than half the states, 28, in fact, have now passed right-to-work legislation. I'm going to talk a little bit of reality here. 28 states now have Right To Work and the most recent state to become right-to-work was the State of Kentucky, in 2017; and within three months after they announced it, Toyota committed, Amazon committed, and another company, I think it's called Bailey Industries or Baylor Industries, committed. In 2017, the State of Kentucky received commitments for \$9.1 billion of capital investment, setting a new record, of the previous high of being \$5 billion. They nearly doubled it. And folks, I will tell you, when I spoke to Airbus three or four years ago about getting them to come to Brunswick, which I really believed it was the right thing for them to do, they would've invested \$250 million, but they elected to go to Alabama; and this is what the CEO told me: "Governor, I'm going to ask you two questions. How's your energy cost?" I said, "We're the cheapest in New England." He said, "But we're looking at Alabama." Strike one. The second one was, "Are you right-to-work?" And I said "No." He said, "Well, Alabama is." So, they went to Alabama and spent \$600 million, and this is what he said to me, and I think I said this last year, in fact. He said, "You may be a good Governor or you may be a bad Governor, I don't know; but I'll tell you right now, you don't know how much energy it takes to assemble a jet, and at 14 cents versus 4 cents, we will get our money back, our investment back in Alabama three times faster than we could in Maine." It's just food for thought. I think you really need to be thinking about it. I think it's very, very important.

Now, I've told you all the things you should be doing, let me tell you what we have done. And, to your help -- for many of you, you helped. Some of you, you didn't. But some of you really put it on the mat and really went to battle for us, and we got some things done. Despite our challenges, we have made State Government more efficient and more accountable. We have lowered the tax burden on hard-working Mainers. We cut the pension fund deficit by nearly half. We paid off our hospital debt. We reformed welfare. And, you know, I was in Austin, Texas, last year, and I heard somebody say, "People say they want government to run like a business, until it does." Well, guess what, I have run it like a business. I think I'm very, very compassionate, because I believe that a state lives and dies by its safety net, but you have to be able to afford your safety net, and you have to be very, what I call "tough love" when you set your safety net up. I am all for our elderly. I am all for disabilities. Intellectual disabilities, under the King administration, we closed AMHI and we thought the problem went away; but what we have done is we've filled our county jails. It's time to fix it.

We must continue to make progress, and progress is not allowing ourselves to be hijacked by big out-of-state money. We must continue to look at our referendum system as a

means of implementing a new way for Maine. I will tell you right now, the referendum system in Maine, whether you're Democrat or Republican, you must admit that it's not working. I will tell you right now, it is not the will of the people. Because if it was the will of the people, we would rip up our Constitution, and we would get rid of a representative republic and you'd all be out of a job, because referendums is pure democracy; and it has not worked for 15,000 years. If you're going to have a system, have a system. If you want to have referendums, loose referendums, and you do not want to save it so that you can get the true will of the people... I'm going to tell you right now, 50 plus one is not the will of the people. And, I will tell you, it is heartbreaking, if you're a Governor, to have to continually veto bills because no one wants to work on getting to a good bill, and so, you've got to lobby like heck to get the minority to beat the majority. Folks, that's the wrong way. And, if you were doing your job, and we were working at the center and we were all working together, we would not need these referendums. They're destructive.

Right now, right now, -- as you're going to be hearing it more and more, minimum wage is great, the private sector, unemployment is way down, everybody's making money; except for one group: the nonprofits who serve nursing homes, home care, all of the medical services that require a lot of intensive labor are losing money, and we're not giving them reimbursements. We're not increasing their reimbursements. This is wrong. That's another way of forgetting our elderly. We can't walk away. We need to allow the elders to live their lives in dignity in their golden years. So, I beg -- we are not a true democracy, and I would urge you all, strongly urge you, to go into this session and fix our referendums. Make them equal to the whole state. And, I will tell you, and folks on the left, I will look at you right now and tell you, I can get any referendum passed in this state by spending two weekends in Portland Mall, and that's not governing properly.

I am pleased to report that the state financial house is in good order. In fact, it is in better shape than at any time in the last 40 years. Our economy is strong, unemployment is at or below 3% (it was at 8.2% when I took office in 2011), and lower than the national average and lower than all of New England.

I'd like to take full credit for it, but guess what: I'd be a hypocrite. The fact of the matter is, there's only one thing I did that was different than when I took office. One thing; is I changed the environment for business. I became more business-friendly. People come into our office and say, "Wow." I get more letters and compliments from people talking about DOT, DEP, DECD, that now people are working with business instead of against business. That's all we did. Everything else was done by business. And I really tell you, that's a message for the future. I just finished a book, reading a book, *Scalia's Letters*. And in there, there's one of his speeches that he gave about the right and the left. And he goes through a whole lot of very complicated analogies and analysis, and it all comes down to two things: capitalism and socialism. And he says, "In this day and age, capitalism is greedy and socialism is power hungry." If you fix those two problems, society is great. The only people that can fix that are you people. You're the only ones that can do that, with good public policy: public policy that will invite capital investment into our state, and once it gets here, you appreciate it and you treat them fairly. That's all we ask: fair treatment.

You know, people talk about unemployment rate. I'll be very honest, 3% unemployment rate is not the real story. The real story is that unemployment has a lot of people that work

part-time, and unemployment has people that have given up on working, looking for work at all. But, this is one that I really believe that I've had a little bit to do with. The State of Maine has the -- is number one in the country for having the most amount of people working that are in the labor force, as a percentage of its population. We lead. If they can work, we get them to work, and we have to continue doing that. The number of jobs in the private sector, all-time high in 2017; never been any higher, although our population is not as high as it has been in the past. Our good fiscal health is the result of making tough decisions and taking bold action. And I believe that using the liquor money to buy bonds to pay off the hospitals was a good move. The only mistake I made there: we should've paid it in smaller increments, we shouldn't have paid it all at once, because right now there's \$800 million of hospital projects on the drawing board. 800 -- we paid off \$750 million and now we got \$800 in capital investment. I guess they're not as poor as I thought they were, but --.

Before I took office, Augusta used the Budget Stabilization Fund as a personal slush fund. It damaged our credit rating and put us at risk in very severe emergencies. And, you must go back to '11, '12, and '13 when we first came in, and those of you that were here, we had budget shortfalls in DHHS like there was nobody's business. We had a structural gap of \$1.2 or .3 billion. Now, the structural gap is \$165 million. So, let me explain it. A structural gap is simply the amount of money that a Legislature wants to spend versus the amount of money they have available to spend. That's the differential. We have lowered that, and I would thank both sides here. I'm not -- this is -- you've both done a very good job in helping me get this state in good financial order.

Right now, the Rainy Day Fund is over \$200 million. I will challenge you to look forward to getting it to \$300 million, because I believe that \$300 million Rainy Day Fund or Budget Stabilization Fund will yield the State of Maine a AAA credit rating, and we would be in the top ten states in America. This area that I'm talking about for a minute, I take great pride in, and I do take a lot of credit for, and I've got the scars to show it. We have right-sized the state workforce, making it more efficient and more accountable. Former administrations balanced the budget on the backs of our state workers. I promised I would not do that, and I didn't. We eliminated furlough days. We restored merit pay increases. We provided cost of living increases, which this biennium is 6%. We told the state employees that if you like your unions, you can keep your unions, but we also told them if you don't want to, you don't have to join a union. And this I believe, before the end of this year, you will find the Supreme Court of the United States coming in and saying, "You do not have to pay extortion money to have a job."

Many of our state employees have left the union ranks. I think the whole nation is moving away from seniority, into performance-based employment, and I think that is the path of the 21st century, because you know what the alternative is? The alternative is going to McDonald's, and you hit a couple of keys, and then your food comes down a little trough and you never see a human being. That's the problem with overpowering the business community, they go to robots. Now, do robots think intelligently? No, they do what they're told, consistently, there's no creative thinking, I agree. And it's the downfall of society. I don't like it. In fact, I don't go to a bank, I don't use ATMs; if I can't see a person in front of me, I don't bank. I haven't been at a bank in seven years. As long as I'm married, I won't have to. I haven't seen a check in 35 years.

We really have made a lot of progress, and all joking aside, and a little seriousness and joking aside, but we are moving ahead. Folks, we are moving ahead. This week there are going to be three major announcements, I'm hoping three major announcements, for companies coming to Maine. One, I will make tonight. Just today, North Carolina-based company LignaTerra announced it will build a new cross-laminated timber facility at the former Great Northern Paper site in Millinocket, Maine. A \$28 million investment, 120 new jobs, good-paying jobs. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome LignaTerra. Your investment is welcome and we will appreciate you.

By Friday, I hope you're going to hear two more major investments. We have been working very, very hard at getting people here. It is a difficult one, and I would ask you, you could make our job a little easier if you attacked the high cost of energy, because that's the single biggest issue. Our red tape that we had back in 2011 is under control, people are not -- they like the consistency. They don't mind having tough regulations as long as we're consistent and we're reliable, and we don't change them every three months. Energy, however, is a big problem, is a really big problem. I think that if we continue doing what we're doing, if we could get our energy under control, bring new companies in, our revenues will be there. The revenues will be there. I just think we need to work together to make sure that we look at energy. This weekend Oklahoma, the State of Oklahoma, who was big in wind, have pulled all their wind subsidies. They're saying there's no return on it, we've been doing it 15 years, it's killing us. Now, don't think for a minute that I'm against wind or solar. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not. My energy policy is very simple. It's so simple it's hard to understand. Lower the cost without hurting the environment. That's my energy policy. Do not raise rates above market. You only hurt your own people. That's that simple.

Right now, you've all heard that Massachusetts was trying to go through the Northern Pass, and they were going to have power from Quebec go through New Hampshire. They rejected it. The people from New Hampshire are coming this week -- I mean, from Massachusetts are coming this week to see if we are serious about allowing a transmission line, that's only about 40 miles that we need to connect into the infrastructure we already have. So, there's an opportunity. It's not over yet.

I do want to thank many of you in this audience. First, I will tell the Republican caucus in the House, thank you. Without you, we would not be having the financial success that we currently have. It's that plain and simple. I'm just telling you the way I see it. I want to thank Ken Fredette, Ellie Espling, Jeff Timberlake, and Heather Sirocki for being tough and consistent and hard on Appropriations. We needed you.

I also want to thank John Martin and Craig Hickman, because they're two of the few Democrats that had the courage to come down and work with me. And, while we didn't get everything we worked on, we certainly had some good dialogue, some good debate, and we moved -- we both moved in the right directions, and Craig knows what I'm talking about. He moved me about a mile and I got about 6 inches.

I want to thank Rob Whittemore, Senator Whittemore, Senator Kiem, Senator Brakey, and Senator Jackson. These senators never hesitated, when they had a question, to come down and sit down with me and talk. And, believe me, I am the first one to know I am a tough negotiator, but it never fazed them at all, they didn't hesitate to come down. And, Troy and I have been down and out on several issues, but we do agree

on one thing. We do agree on one thing, and we're both committed to it: is Maine people come first.

I'm about ready to close. This is an election year, and this year's vote will be especially important. It's especially important to me because I'm leaving, and I really feel that I'm leaving with a state that's in good financial condition. Mainers get the government they vote for, so I urge Mainers to think long and hard who you're going to vote for, and who you're going to send to the Blaine House, who you're going to send back to the Senate and to the House. Many are termed out. You will be voting to either protect Maine's fiscal health or let politicians run it back into the ground. I'm not picking sides here, I'm just telling you these are the options. You will be voting on whether to keep our taxes low and to maintain the right size of government, or to allow the special interests and the public-sector unions to raise and bloat their government again. You will be voting whether to respect our young adults or exploit our youth and chase them out of state. You will vote on whether to keep growing our economy or stifle it once again.

Now, I want to tell you, I'm not speaking as a governor now. I'm speaking as Paul LePage, who spent the overwhelming majority of his life in this state, and I have watched it, and, matter of fact, when John Reed passed away a few years ago, I was the only elected official in the State of Maine to go to his funeral who remembered him. So, I speak of something I've experienced my whole life. You will be voting on whether to continue our significant progress on welfare reform. Our policies now protect our most vulnerable while encouraging welfare-to-work, if you are able. That is critical. I do not want to force somebody to work who is not able. If you are able and you have work skills, you will find that working will improve your life, your quality of life. That's all I'm asking. I'm a firm believer in a hand up and not a handout, only because I lived the American dream here in Maine, because of some very compassionate and thoughtful people who helped me out, who got me off the streets; and I'm very indebted to those people, and I believe that the ideology, that process, that whole caring -- of moving you forward and allowing you to learn is so, so important for all Mainers and all Americans. They all have to have an opportunity. And, you know, most people, and we've experienced it, now, I'm getting letters all the time of people that said, "I used to hate you years ago when you first got elected." Now we have one that -- a young lady who's got her RN, she's working in Bangor, and she says, "I don't take anything from the state. I give now. I pay back. I'm really happy. My kids are proud of me. I got my kids looking at going to college." Think about that. That's really what is success, and I really believe in that.

We will be voting to whether we continue the path we're on or revert back to where we were. In my inaugural address, I made a pledge to the Maine people to put people before the politics. I think, if you've read the newspapers the last seven years, I've been rather successful at one of my pledges. The parents trying to keep and make a better life for their kids. The retirees trying to hold on to their home on fixed income, the college graduate trying to find a good-paying job in Maine, the entrepreneur with the courage to take a chance on an idea. The taxpayers, tired of footing the bill for a bloated establishment in Augusta.

Do you know what we've done -- when I came here we were just short of 14,000 employees, where right now we're about 11,800. We have 1.3 million people. New Hampshire has -- we're considered an outlier, we are high on employment, employees to population. New Hampshire is right where they

should be, they're at 9,500; 9,500. It's all a matter of managing and making sure that the people you have are treated well, they're compensated well, and you've given the proper resources that they need, and this is one area the state needs to invest in, is we have to have better resources for our employees and they can become more efficient.

So, those are promises I made and those are promises I kept; and I will promise to all the Maine people, tonight, that I will continue to fight until 11:59 a.m. on inauguration day. To all the hardworking Maine taxpayers out there, it has been a marvelous and the biggest honor to serve you, be your Governor. As a person who was born on -- in a very difficult situation, on the streets, homeless at 11, never once did I ever imagine that I would be living at the Blaine House. Never did I imagine that I'd even be invited to the Blaine House. Ann and I both can tell you that you are in our thoughts and prayers every day. Maine people, we absolutely love you. Your prosperity is paramount to Maine's success, and we will fight for prosperity for the rest of the way.

I fought for every day, and believe me, I made some good decisions, bad decisions, and sometimes I -- I drive my staff crazy. But I will tell you, there's not one day or one second in the last seven years as your Governor that every decision that I tried to make was not for the betterment of the State of Maine.

I will leave you with a quote President Reagan attributed to Abraham Lincoln, and I firmly believe this with all my heart, and that's how I've tried to govern. "You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot lift the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot further the brotherhood of mankind by inciting class hatred. You cannot build character and courage by taking away people's initiative and independence. You cannot help people permanently by doing for them what they could and should be doing for themselves."

God bless the State of Maine, God bless all of you, and God bless America. Thank you.

(After the Joint Convention)

The House was called to order by the Speaker.

On motion of Representative SHEATS of Auburn, the House adjourned at 8:30 p.m., until 10:00 a.m., Thursday, February 15, 2018, in honor and lasting tribute to Eda Phyllis Tripp, of Minot.