

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION
5th Legislative Day
Tuesday, January 28, 2025

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

Prayer by Nic Benner, Granite Hill Church, Hallowell.

National Anthem by Westbrook High School Chamber Singers, Westbrook.

Pledge of Allegiance.

The Journal of Tuesday, January 21, 2025 was read and approved.

Under suspension of the rules, members were allowed to remove their jackets.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Following Communication: (H.P. 177)

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

January 23, 2025

Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

132nd Legislature

Honorable Matthea Daughtry

President of the Senate

132nd Legislature

Dear Mr. Speaker and Madam President:

On January 23, 2025, 13 bills were received by the Clerk of the House.

Pursuant to the provisions of Joint Rule 308.2, these bills were referred to the Joint Standing Committees on January 23, 2025, as follows:

Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Bill "An Act Regarding the Authority of Municipalities to Regulate Timber Harvesting" (H.P. 164) (L.D. 261) (Sponsored by Representative BUNKER of Farmington)

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Bill "An Act to Restore Sentencing Discretion to the Judiciary by Removing Mandatory Minimum Sentences of Incarceration" (H.P. 171) (L.D. 268) (Sponsored by Representative SINCLAIR of Bath) (Cosponsored by Representatives: BECK of South Portland, LEE of Auburn, SATO of Gorham)

Environment and Natural Resources

Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 375: No Adverse Environmental Effect Standards of the Site Location of Development Act, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection (EMERGENCY) (H.P. 172) (L.D. 269) (Submitted by the Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 8072.)

Health and Human Services

Resolve, to Provide Rural Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community Benefits Under MaineCare (H.P. 166) (L.D. 263) (Sponsored by Representative SHAGOURY of Hallowell) (Cosponsored by Senator INGWERSEN of York and Representatives: CLOUTIER of Lewiston, DEBRITO of Waterville, GRAHAM of North Yarmouth, MCCABE of Lewiston, MITCHELL of Cumberland, MONTELL of Gardiner)

Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 850: Health Plan Accountability, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation, Bureau of Insurance (EMERGENCY) (H.P. 173) (L.D. 270) (Submitted by the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 8072.)

Housing and Economic Development

Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 12: Fees for Kickboxing Contests and Authorized Participants, a Major Substantive Rule of the Combat Sports Authority of Maine (EMERGENCY) (H.P. 174) (L.D. 271) (Submitted by the Combat Sports Authority of Maine pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 8072.)

Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 2: Fees for Muay Thai Contests and Authorized Participants, a Major Substantive Rule of the Combat Sports Authority of Maine (EMERGENCY) (H.P. 175) (L.D. 272) (Submitted by the Combat Sports Authority of Maine pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 8072.)

Judiciary

RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law (H.P. 163) (L.D. 260) (Sponsored by Representative SARGENT of York) (Cosponsored by Senator TALBOT ROSS of Cumberland and Representatives: ABDI of Lewiston, ANKELES of Brunswick, ARCHER of Saco, ARFORD of Brunswick, BECK of South Portland, BELL of Yarmouth, BOYER of Cape Elizabeth, BRENNAN of Portland, BRIDGEO of Augusta, BUNKER of Farmington, CLOUTIER of Lewiston, CLUCHEY of Bowdoinham, COPELAND of Saco, CRAFTS of Newcastle, CROCKETT of Portland, DANA of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, DEBRITO of Waterville, DHALAC of South Portland, DILL of Old Town, DODGE of Belfast, DOUDERA of Camden, EATON of Deer Isle, FARRIN of Jefferson, Speaker FECTEAU of Biddeford, FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor, FROST of Belgrade, GATTINE of Westbrook, GEIGER of Rockland, GERE of Kennebunkport, GOLEK of Harpswell, GRAHAM of North Yarmouth, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, HASENFUS of Readfield, HEPLER of Woolwich, JULIA of Waterville, KESSLER of South Portland, KUHN of Falmouth, LAJOIE of Lewiston, LEE of Auburn, LOOKNER of Portland, MACIAS of Topsham, MALON of Biddeford, MASTRACCIO of Sanford, MATHIESON of Kittery, MATLACK of St. George, MCCABE of Lewiston, MEYER of Eliot, MILLIKEN of Blue Hill, MITCHELL of Cumberland, MONTELL of Gardiner, MOONEN of Portland, MURPHY of Scarborough, O'HALLORAN of Brewer, OSHER of Orono, PLUECKER of Warren, PUGH of Portland, RANA of Bangor, RAY of Lincolnville, RIELLY of Westbrook, ROBERTS of South Berwick, ROEDER of Bangor, ROLLINS of Augusta, RUNTE of York, SACHS of Freeport, SALISBURY of Westbrook, SATO of Gorham, SAYRE of Kennebunk, SHAGOURY of Hallowell, SINCLAIR of Bath, SKOLD of Portland, STOVER of Boothbay, SUPICA of Bangor, TERRY of Gorham, WARREN of Scarborough, WEBB of Durham, YUSUF of Portland, ZAGER of Portland, Senators: BAILEY of York, BALDACCI of Penobscot, BEEBE-CENTER of Knox, BRENNER of Cumberland, CARNEY of Cumberland, CURRY of Waldo, President DAUGHTRY of Cumberland, DUSON of Cumberland, GROHOSKI of Hancock, HICKMAN of Kennebec, INGWERSEN of York, LAWRENCE of York, NANGLE of Cumberland, PIERCE of Cumberland, RAFFERTY of York, RENEY of Lincoln, ROTUNDO of Androscoggin, TEPLER of Sagadahoc, TIPPING of Penobscot)

Bill "An Act Regarding the Remote Appearance of Counsel in Pretrial Nontestimonial Criminal Matters" (H.P. 170) (L.D. 267) (Sponsored by Representative LEE of Auburn) (Cosponsored by Senator CARNEY of Cumberland and Representatives: CARUSO of Caratunk, HENDERSON of Rumford, KUHN of Falmouth, POIRIER of Skowhegan, SATO of Gorham, SINCLAIR of Bath, Senators: President DAUGHTRY of Cumberland, STEWART of Aroostook)

State and Local Government

Bill "An Act to Require the Updating of Voter Registration Signatures" (H.P. 169) (L.D. 266) (Sponsored by Representative SMITH of Palermo) (Cosponsored by Representatives: COLLINS of Sidney, DAIGLE of Fort Kent, FLYNN of Albion, GUERRETTE of Caribou, HYMES of Waldo, LANCE of Paris)

Taxation

Bill "An Act to Remove the 12-month Waiting Period for the Maine Resident Homestead Property Tax Exemption" (H.P. 167) (L.D. 264) (Sponsored by Representative HEPLER of Woolwich) (Cosponsored by Representatives: ANKELES of Brunswick, DILL of Old Town, RAY of Lincolnville, SINCLAIR of Bath)

Veterans and Legal Affairs

Bill "An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Taste Testing of Wine and Malt Liquor to Facilitate Marketing by Wholesalers" (EMERGENCY) (H.P. 165) (L.D. 262) (Sponsored by Representative CROCKETT of Portland) (Cosponsored by Representative: BOYER of Poland)

Bill "An Act to Prohibit the Maine National Guard from Combat Deployment Absent an Act of the United States Congress" (H.P. 168) (L.D. 265) (Sponsored by Representative HYMES of Waldo) (Cosponsored by Senator HAGGAN of Penobscot and Representatives: BOYER of Poland, FREDERICKS of Sanford, LIBBY of Auburn, PLUECKER of Warren, QUINT of Hodgdon, SMITH of Palermo, WARREN of Scarborough)

Sincerely,
S/Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
S/Darek M. Grant
Secretary of the Senate

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.
Sent for concurrence.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 22)
**STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0001**

January 14, 2025
Honorable Mattie Daughtry
Senate President
3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
Honorable Ryan Fecteau
Speaker of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:
I am honored to accept your invitation to deliver the State of the Budget Address before a Joint Convention of the Legislature on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
As I recently wrote to the Legislature, with revenues leveling off, maintaining our commitments to Maine people will require us to make difficult choices in the FY 26-27 biennial budget.

Last week, I proposed to you a balanced budget that maintains core commitments to Maine people, including voter-approved health care, 55 percent of education funding, free school meals, free community college, and five percent municipal revenue sharing to stabilize property taxes and support local services. Each of these priorities is adequately funded in my budget proposal.

This proposal also requires difficult choices – including programmatic changes, spending reductions, and targeted revenue enhancements – in order to serve the public's interests and balance the budget, as required by the Maine Constitution. I know that each of you share my commitment to preserving key programs and services that Maine people count on and to enacting a fiscally responsible biennial budget proposal. I look forward to addressing the Joint Convention of the Legislature, and I am confident that – as we have done before – Republicans, Democrats, and Independents can come together to do what is right for Maine people.

Sincerely,
S/Janet T. Mills
Governor

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 23)
**STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER'S OFFICE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002**

January 22, 2025
Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt,
Pursuant to my authority under MRSA 7, §320-L, I am pleased to appoint the following members to the *Advisory Committee on the Fund To Address PFAS Contamination*, effective immediately:

Representative Daniel Ankeles of Brunswick as a member of the party holding the largest number of seats in the House of Representatives. As the first-named House member, Representative Ankeles will serve as the House chair of this advisory committee; and
Representative Randall Hall of Wilton as a member of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the House of Representatives.

Should you have any questions regarding these appointments, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,
S/Ryan D. Fecteau
Speaker of the House

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 25)

**STATE OF MAINE
132ND MAINE LEGISLATURE**

January 23, 2025
Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt:

Pursuant to our authority under MRSA Title 30-A, Ch. 202, Subchapter 5-A, §5047, we are pleased to appoint the following to the Statewide Homeless Council:
Emily Flinkstrom of Kittery is a reappointment who will continue to represent Region 1;

Andrew Lardie of Brunswick will represent Region 2;

Honorable Elsie Flemings of Bar Harbor will represent Region 3.

Should you have questions regarding these appointments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

S/Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry

President of the Senate

S/Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 26)

**STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER'S OFFICE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002**

January 24, 2025
Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt,

Pursuant to my authority under Title 5 MRSA, Part 8, Chapter 310, §3111, I am pleased to appoint the following to the *Office of New Americans Advisory Council*, effective immediately:

Inza Ouattara of Lewiston, representing an organization providing refugee resettlement services;

Lisa Parisio of Pittston, representing a provider of legal assistance to immigrants;

Liam LaFountain of Biddeford, representing a municipality.

If you have any questions regarding these appointments, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

S/Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 27)

**STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER'S OFFICE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002**

January 27, 2025
Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt,

Pursuant to my authority under PL 23, Chapter 643, Part N, I am pleased to appoint Representative Kristen Cloutier of Lewiston to the *Working Group to Recommend any Changes to Eligibility Standards for Expenditures from the Maine Mass Violence Care Fund*, effective immediately.

Representative Cloutier will serve on this Working Group as a member of the House of Representative and as co-chair.

Should you have any questions regarding this appointment, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

S/Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 24)

**MAINE VENTURE FUND
P. O. BOX 63
NEWPORT, ME 04953**

January 22, 2025
Honorable Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry
President of the Senate
3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to 5 M.R.S.A., Section 12023, please consider this the letter of transmittal for the attached Report to Legislature for 2024 on behalf of the quasi-independent state entity, Small Enterprise Growth Board, due February 1, 2025.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

S/Terri Wark

Office Operations Manager

Small Enterprise Growth Board d/b/a Maine Venture Fund

READ and with accompanying papers ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

At this point, a message came from the Senate borne by Senator DUSON of Cumberland 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 Her Excellency, Governor Janet T. Mills, an invitation to attend the Joint Convention and to make such communication as pleases her.

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 MOONEN of Portland to convey this message to the Senate.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 28)

**MAINE PORT AUTHORITY
460 COMMERCIAL STREET
PORTLAND, ME 04101**

January 24, 2025

Honorable Matthea Daughtry
President of the Senate
3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable Ryan Fecteau
Speaker of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:
Pursuant to 5 M.R.S.A., Section 12023, please consider this the letter of transmittal for the required FY 2024 report from the Maine Port Authority due by February 1, 2025.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

S/Chelsea Pettengill

Interim Executive Director

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

The Following Communication: (H.C. 29)

**STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER'S OFFICE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002**

January 28, 2025

Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt:

Please be advised that pursuant to her authority, Governor Janet T. Mills has nominated the following:

on January 21, 2025

Thomas Minch of Cumberland, Jason Bubier of Ellsworth, and Elizabeth Seal of Lisbon Falls for reappointment, and Claire Jeffers of Portland and Janet May of Bangor for appointment to School Board of the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf.

Pursuant to Title 20-A §7406, these nominations are contingent on confirmation by the Maine Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

Elise Baldacci of North Yarmouth for reappointment and Riley Worth of Sabattus for appointment as a student member to the University of Maine System, Board of Trustees.

Pursuant to Title 5, M.R.S.A. §12004-C, these nominations are contingent on confirmation by the Maine Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

on January 22, 2025

F. Jay Astle of Brunswick and Linda E. Smith of Richmond for appointment to the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority.

Pursuant to Title 5, M.R.S.A. §13083-H, these nominations are contingent on confirmation by the Maine Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

Stacey M. Harris of Windham for appointment to the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees:

Pursuant to Title 20-A, M.R.S.A. §12075, this nomination is contingent on confirmation by the Maine Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

on January 27, 2025

The Honorable Ann M. Murray of Bangor for reappointment as a Justice of the Maine Superior Court.

Pursuant to Article V, Part First, §8, of the Maine Constitution, this nomination is contingent on confirmation by the Maine State Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

The Honorable Brent Davis of Skowhegan, the Honorable Tammy Ham-Thompson of Hallowell, and the Honorable LeAnne Sutton of Hallowell for reappointment as Judges of the Maine District Court.

Pursuant to Article V, Part First, §8, of the Maine Constitution, these nominations are contingent on confirmation by the Maine State Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

Sincerely,

S/Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

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

**PETITIONS, BILLS AND RESOLVES REQUIRING
REFERENCE**

Bill "An Act to Raise the Limit on the Total Number of Public Charter Schools"

(H.P. 182) (L.D. 282)

Sponsored by Representative DRINKWATER of Milford.
Cosponsored by Senator BRADSTREET of Kennebec and Representatives: COLLINS of Sidney, QUINT of Hodgdon.

Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Repeal the Law Prohibiting Places of Business from Being Open to the Public on Sunday"

(H.P. 181) (L.D. 277)

Sponsored by Representative MORRIS of Turner.
Cosponsored by Representatives: BAGSHAW of Windham, BOYER of Poland, CHAPMAN of Auburn, FLYNN of Albion, LIBBY of Auburn, SMITH of Palermo.

Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act Regarding Inland Fisheries and Wildlife"

(H.P. 180) (L.D. 276)

Sponsored by Representative ROBERTS of South Berwick.

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.

Bill "An Act to Update Major Policy-influencing Positions Within the Maine Human Rights Commission"

(H.P. 184) (L.D. 284)

Sponsored by Representative MOONEN of Portland.

Submitted by the Maine Human Rights Commission pursuant to Joint Rule 204.

Committee on **JUDICIARY** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **JUDICIARY** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Preserve Legislative Authority over Investigating Committees"

(H.P. 176) (L.D. 273)

Sponsored by Representative LEE of Auburn.

Cosponsored by Senator HAGGAN of Penobscot and Representatives: ABDI of Lewiston, HENDERSON of Rumford, LOOKNER of Portland, MILLIKEN of Blue Hill, POIRIER of Skowhegan, ROEDER of Bangor, SINCLAIR of Bath, SUPICA of Bangor.

Bill "An Act to Allow County Commissioners Greater Flexibility When Establishing a Payment Schedule for Municipalities to Pay County Tax Bills"

(H.P. 186) (L.D. 286)

Sponsored by Representative BRIDGEO of Augusta.

Cosponsored by Representatives: FROST of Belgrade, HEPLER of Woolwich, Senator: BRADSTREET of Kennebec.

Committee on **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Expand Local Revenues by Including Meals and Lodging Sales Tax Revenue Under the State-Municipal Revenue Sharing Program"

(H.P. 183) (L.D. 283)

Sponsored by Representative HEPLER of Woolwich.

Cosponsored by Senator TEPLER of Sagadahoc and Representative: BUNKER of Farmington.

Committee on **TAXATION** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **TAXATION** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act Making Unified Allocations from the Highway Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 178) (L.D. 274)

Sponsored by Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle. (GOVERNOR'S BILL)

Bill "An Act to Make Supplemental Allocations from the Highway Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 179) (L.D. 275)

Sponsored by Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle. (GOVERNOR'S BILL)

Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Amend Its Rules Regarding Seasonal Load Restrictions on Certain State and State Aid Highways (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 185) (L.D. 285)

Sponsored by Representative FROST of Belgrade.

Cosponsored by Senator BLACK of Franklin and Representatives: BUNKER of Farmington, COOPER of Windham, DILL of Old Town, GUERRETTE of Caribou, PLUECKER of Warren.

Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Require and Encourage Safe and Interconnected Transportation Construction Projects"

(H.P. 187) (L.D. 287)

Sponsored by Representative LEE of Auburn.

Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** suggested.

On motion of Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle, the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**, ordered printed and sent for concurrence.

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

ORDERS

On motion of Representative LAJOIE of Lewiston, the following House Order: (H.O. 11)

ORDERED, that Representative Kenneth Wade Fredette of Newport be excused Jan 8 for health reasons.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that Representative Anne P. Graham of North Yarmouth be excused Jan 8 for health reasons.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that Representative Michel A. Lajoie of Lewiston be excused Jan 21 for health reasons.

READ and PASSED.

The following item was taken up out of order by unanimous consent:

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

Change of Committee

Report of the Committee on **APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS** on Bill "An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure" (EMERGENCY)

(S.P. 29) (L.D. 1)

Reporting that it be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**.

Came from the Senate with the Report **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED**.

Subsequently, the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** in concurrence.

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

Subsequently, Representative MOONEN of Portland reported that he had delivered the message with which he was charged.

SPECIAL SENTIMENT CALENDAR

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

Recognizing:

Robert Weymouth, of Charleston, for his bravery and quick action on January 1, 2025. While passing a house on the Stagecoach Road in Atkinson, he and two companions noticed that the house and a barn were on fire. They immediately stopped and woke the sleeping occupants of the house, ensuring that they exited to safety. Mr. Weymouth's actions were in keeping with the traditions of Maine people looking out and caring for their neighbors. We commend him and offer our best wishes;

(HLS 18)

Presented by Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft. Cosponsored by Senator GUERIN of Penobscot, Representative FOSTER of Dexter.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar. **READ.**

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

Recognizing:

Kaleb Weymouth, of Charleston, for his bravery and quick action on January 1, 2025. While passing a house on the Stagecoach Road in Atkinson, he and two companions noticed that the house and a barn were on fire. They immediately stopped and woke the sleeping occupants of the house, ensuring that they exited to safety. Mr. Weymouth's actions were in keeping with the traditions of Maine people looking out and caring for their neighbors. We commend him and offer our best wishes;

(HLS 19)

Presented by Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft.

Cosponsored by Senator GUERIN of Penobscot, Representative FOSTER of Dexter.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar. **READ.**

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

Recognizing:

Colby Simmons, of Dover-Foxcroft, for his bravery and quick action on January 1, 2025. While passing a house on the Stagecoach Road in Atkinson, he and two companions noticed that the house and a barn were on fire. They immediately stopped and woke the sleeping occupants of the house, ensuring that they exited to safety. Mr. Simmons's actions were in keeping with the traditions of Maine people looking out and caring for their neighbors. We commend him and offer our best wishes;

(HLS 20)

Presented by Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft.

Cosponsored by Senator GUERIN of Penobscot.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar. **READ.**

The **SPEAKER**: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Dover-Foxcroft, Representative Perkins.

Representative **PERKINS**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I've had the opportunity to stand in this Chamber numerous times to proudly recognize the amazing citizens of the State of Maine and their accomplishments. However, never before today have I been able to stand before you and praise more of those outstanding people and use the word hero.

In the early morning of January 1st, while traveling on the Stagecoach Road in Atkinson, three young men; Colby Simmons of Dover-Foxcroft and Robert and Kaleb Weymouth of Charleston; noticed that a nearby farm was on fire. The three young men stopped and noticed that there were not any people outside. Deducing correctly that the residents of the farm might still be inside the house, the boys attempted to wake them by banging on the door. When nobody answered, they made the decision to place themselves in danger and enter the house; despite the fact that the fire was spreading from the barn to the house and the three could hear the sound of propane tanks hissing; to try and locate anybody that might be inside. Once inside, the boys located the owners, a sleeping couple, and woke them, alerting them to the danger. They helped the couple quickly put on some clothing and escorted them safely out of the house.

Mr. Speaker, had it not been for their quick thinking, calm execution and selfless bravery on that cold New Year's morning, it would be just as likely that we would today be mourning the loss of two of our citizens, overcome by smoke and flame, than celebrating three teen heroes. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if it is because these young men were raised around the fire service, having family members who have served as firefighters and even a fire chief, or if it is because of the sense of duty to others and public service that was instilled to them by their exemplary upbringing, but I do know that Colby, Robert and Kaleb, whose ages range only 15 to 17, serve not only as the finest examples of our young people, but their actions set them apart as what it truly means for Maine people looking out for their neighbors. Their actions are keeping within our finest traditions, and they are to be lauded. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Dexter, Representative Foster.

Representative **FOSTER**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will only add to my good friend, the Representative from Dover-Foxcroft's message and just say that in today's times, it's good to know that we have young men, young people of this vintage, if you will, that especially at times when we wake up on New Year's Day and that time of year, that we don't often hear the good news like we heard about what these young men were able to do that night. Quite often, tragedy is what we see on the news, but it's encouraging to know that the young people we are raising here in the State of Maine are those that will take such action. And also, it's a credit to their parents, their families, their town that's helped to raise them and it's encouraging to know that generations today are just as they were when we were kids, and they took responsibility and took action when it was available to them. And I know they would say it's nothing anybody else wouldn't've done, but we know that they are heroes, and I thank them for what they did. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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:

SENATE PAPERS

The following Joint Order: (S.P. 132)

ORDERED, the House concurring, that when the Senate and House adjourn, they do so until Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 10:00 in the morning, or until the call of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, respectively.

Came from the Senate, **READ** and **PASSED**.

READ and **PASSED** in concurrence.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Following Communication: (S.P. 127)

MAINE SENATE

132ND LEGISLATURE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 23, 2025

Hon. Matthea E. L. Daughtry

President of the Senate

132nd Legislature

Hon. Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

132nd Legislature

Dear Madam President and Mr. Speaker:

On January 23, 2025, 4 bills were received by the Secretary of the Senate.

Pursuant to the provisions of Joint Rule 308.2, these bills were referred to the Joint Standing Committees on January 23, 2025, as follows:

Energy, Utilities and Technology

Bill "An Act to Eliminate the Practice of Net Energy Billing" (S.P. 124) (L.D. 257) (Sponsored by Senator STEWART of Aroostook)

Health and Human Services

Resolve, to Establish a Program to Recruit and Retain Behavioral Health Clinicians (S.P. 125) (L.D. 258) (Sponsored by Senator STEWART of Aroostook) (Cosponsored by Senators: BENNETT of Oxford, MARTIN of Oxford, TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin, Representative: MORRIS of Turner)

Housing and Economic Development

Bill "An Act to Support Mobile Home Residents in Purchasing Their Mobile Home Parks" (S.P. 122) (L.D. 255) (Sponsored by Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot) (Cosponsored by Senators: GROHOSKI of Hancock, RAFFERTY of York, DUSON of Cumberland, NANGLE of Cumberland)

Taxation

Bill "An Act to Establish a Sales Tax Holiday for Purchases of Certain School Supplies for the Month of August" (S.P. 123) (L.D. 256) (Sponsored by Senator MARTIN of Oxford) (Cosponsored by Representative LANCE of Paris and Senators: BRADSTREET of Kennebec, HAGGAN of Penobscot, MOORE of Washington, BICKFORD of Androscoggin, LIBBY of Cumberland, Representatives: HENDERSON of Rumford, SOBOLESKI of Phillips, WOOD of Norway)

Sincerely,

S/Darek M. Grant

Secretary of the Senate

S/Robert B. Hunt

Clerk of the House

Came from the Senate, **READ** and **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

READ and **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE** in concurrence.

SENATE PAPERS

Bill "An Act to Provide Support for Certain Maine Discovery Museum Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Educational Programming Throughout the State"

(S.P. 131) (L.D. 281)

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

REFERRED to the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Address the Shortage of Direct Care Workers for Children with Disabilities in Maine" (EMERGENCY) (S.P. 129) (L.D. 279)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Establish the Criminal Records Review Commission in Statute"

(S.P. 126) (L.D. 259)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **JUDICIARY** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **JUDICIARY** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Eliminate the Tobacco Products Tax on Certain Products That Contain Nicotine"

(S.P. 128) (L.D. 278)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **TAXATION** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **TAXATION** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Establish Lifetime Ferry Passes for Retired Maine State Ferry Service Employees"

(S.P. 130) (L.D. 280)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** in concurrence.

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

The **SPEAKER**: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Carmel, Representative Thorne, who wishes to address the House on the record.

Representative **THORNE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This coming Monday is a day that is known in the military as Four Chaplains Day. You say to yourself, what is Four Chaplains Day? Well, February 3, 1943, was the day that four Army chaplains gave their lives to save others who were serving on the U.S. Army transport *Dorchester*, which had been torpedoed by German submarines. Through the ensuing chaos, Army chaplains Lt. George Fox, Lt. Alexander Goode and Lt. John Washington, along with Lt. Clark Poling, were witnessed praying over the dying, helping the injured and speaking courage to those around them. They distributed life jackets until there were no more to be found, then they each took off their own life jacket and gave them to the next man in line. Survivors testified that as they watched the ship going down from nearby lifeboats, the four chaplains linked arms, braced against the slanting deck of the sinking ship, their voices heard praying until the ship went down.

This is to commemorate Methodist lieutenant; and I would say that in military terms, lieutenant is the lowest of the officer grade, so, these were young men; Lt. George Fox, Methodist; Lt. Alexander Goode, Jewish; Lt. Clark Poling of Dutch Reform; and Roman Catholic Lt. John Washington. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

In Convention

The President of the Senate, the Honorable Matthea Elizabeth Larsen Daughtry, in the Chair.

The Convention was called to order by the Chair.

On motion of Senator PIERCE of Cumberland, it was

ORDERED, that a Committee be appointed to wait upon the First Family of the State of Maine, inviting them to attend this Joint Convention now assembled in the Hall of the House for the purpose of extending to Governor Janet T. Mills, an invitation to attend and make such communication as she may be pleased to make.

The **ORDER** was **READ** and **PASSED**.

The Chair appointed the following:

The Senator from Penobscot, Sen. **BALDACCI**

The Senator from Knox, Sen. **BEEBE-CENTER**

The Senator from Oxford, Sen. **MARTIN**

The Representative from Westbrook, Rep. **SALISBURY**

The Representative from St. George, Rep. **MATLACK**

The Representative from Saco, Rep. **COPELAND**

The Representative from Augusta, Rep. **ROLLINS**

The Representative from Jefferson, Rep. **FARRIN**

The Representative from Wales, Rep. **GREENWOOD**

The Representative from Lebanon, Rep. **ADAMS**

The Representative from Standish, Rep. **POMERLEAU**

The Representative from Presque Isle, Rep. **UNDERWOOD**

The Representative from East Machias, Rep. **TUELL**

Subsequently, Senator **BALDACCI** of Penobscot, for the Committee, reported that the Committee had delivered the message with which it was charged and that the First Family of the State of Maine would attend forthwith.

The Chair welcomed in the House Gallery the First Family and friends of the State of Maine.

On motion of Senator PIERCE of Cumberland, it was

ORDERED, that a Committee be appointed to wait upon the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, and Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill extending to them an invitation to attend this Convention, and to extend to Governor Janet T. Mills an invitation to make such communication as she may be pleased to make.

The **ORDER** was **READ** and **PASSED**.

The Chair appointed the following:

The Senator from Androscoggin, Sen. **ROTUNDO**

The Senator from Lincoln, Sen. **RENY**

The Senator from Aroostook, Sen. **BERNARD**

The Representative from Westbrook, Rep. **GATTINE**

The Representative from Lewiston, Rep. **CLOUTIER**

The Representative from Portland, Rep. **BRENNAN**

The Representative from Boothbay, Rep. **STOVER**

The Representative from South Portland, Rep. **DHALAC**

The Representative from Bangor, Rep. **RANA**

The Representative from Madison, Rep. **DUCHARME**

The Representative from Newport, Rep. **FREDETTE**

The Representative from New Gloucester, Rep. **ARATA**

The Representative from Buxton, Rep. **BLIER**

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the Constitutional and Statutory Officers of the State of Maine: Secretary of State, Shenna Bellows; Attorney General, Aaron Frey; State Treasurer, Joe Perry; and State Auditor, Matt Dunlap.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery members from the Judicial Branch: Judge Brent Davis, Chief Judge of the District Court; and Judge Eric Walker, Deputy Chief Judge of the District Court.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery Maine's tribal leaders: Chief Clarissa Sabattis, Houlton Band of Maliseets; and Chief William Nichols, Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the leaders of higher education for the State of Maine: Dannel Malloy, Chancellor of the University of Maine System; Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President of the University of Maine; Craig Johnson, President of Maine Maritime Academy; Trish Riley, Board of Trustees Chair of the University of Maine System; and Peter DelGreco, Board of Trustees Chair of the Maine Community College System.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery members of the Governor's Cabinet, Commissioners and Department heads: Bruce Van Note, Laura Fortman, Melanie Loyzim, Pender Makin, Kirsten Figueroa, Judy Camuso, Heather Johnson, Patrick Keliher, Joan Cohen, Sara Gagne-Holmes, John Rhode, Randall Liberty, Amanda Beal, Mike Sauschuck and Bob Carey.

Subsequently, Senator ROTUNDO of Androscoggin, for the Committee, reported that the Committee had delivered the message with which it was charged and that the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, accompanied by Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill, would attend forthwith.

The Chair welcomed to the Convention the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, accompanied by the Honorable Valerie Stanfill, Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court.

The Chair thanked this evening's Herald: Specialist Keygan Wyman of the Maine Army National Guard.

The Chair welcomed the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, to the rostrum.

Governor Mills then addressed the Convention.

Governor **MILLS**: Thank you. Thank you. Oh, okay, wow, that's good. Thank you. Thank you, thank you.

Madam President, thank you. Mr. Speaker, Madam Chief Justice, Mr. Attorney General, Madam Secretary of State, up there somewhere, Mr. Treasurer, Chief Sabattis, I believe is here, Chief Nicholas, thank you for joining us, Members of the Cabinet, including our newly confirmed Commissioner Joan Cohen, Members of the 132nd Legislature and esteemed

guests. Tonight, we gather for the time-honored tradition of a Governor's address to you, the 186 public servants who collectively have been chosen to represent the interests of 1.4 million people of the State; we just broke that threshold, you know.

You remember one year ago today, one year ago this week, we were actually starting to recover from several deadly storms. Storms that had devastated communities up and down the State. We responded with the largest investment in storm relief in State history to rebuild our working waterfronts, our critical infrastructure and local businesses. That funding that you all authorized was significant, but it was merely a down payment on the rest of the work ahead to prepare for the violent storms of the future. So, as the very first measure of this session, we've come together again to introduce LD 1, a bill that directly responds to the interim recommendations of our Rebuilding Commission to prepare our homes and public infrastructure against future storms. And so, I want to thank Hannah Pingree, Director of my policy office, for spearheading this measure, and, of course, Bob Carey, our Superintendent of Insurance, for his contributions to this important legislation. I also want to thank President Daughtry, Speaker Fecteau, Minority Leader Stewart, and House Minority Leader Faulkingham for sponsoring this bill. LD 1 is the next step in fortifying our State and our economy from the type of damage that we experienced a year ago and that we are bound to see again. This bill has no General Fund impact, so, send LD 1 to my desk, I will sign it.

We gather tonight during a period of transition as a new administration takes shape in Washington. The new President has issued a flurry of orders, and he promises others, that could affect our biennial budget and the very way we do things in our State and other states. Just yesterday, the President directed a halt to nearly all federal loans, grants and other financial assistance. Like many of you, I have serious questions about the extent and scope of this decision, about the impact on Maine people, Maine industries, schools, small businesses, the elderly and our most vulnerable, and about his legal authority to issue such an edict. My administration is evaluating the effects of this order, but it's already clear that it's causing needless chaos and confusion that could turn into real and serious harm. I want to reaffirm for the people of Maine, though, as with any administration in Washington, if the President does something good for our State, I will support him. If he does something that would harm our State, I will firmly oppose him. Time will tell what paths the President and the new Congress choose. No matter what, I ask this Legislature to join me in putting the people of Maine first. The people we serve; they think for themselves, they take care of their neighbors and they stand together when things get tough, regardless of their differences, and so can we. The people of Maine expect us to get things done regardless of what happens in Washington.

Drawn from 16 counties across the State of Maine, you bring diverse views and backgrounds and beliefs to this Capitol to create positive change and make our State a better place. Each of the bills you'll debate this session is designed to change things for the better, but the most consequential and complex tool we have to affect the lives of Maine people is the State budget, and that's the bill I want to talk with you about tonight.

For six years, I've introduced balanced budgets, and with your support, these budgets have sent historic amounts of money back to Maine schools, Maine communities and Maine people to create the conditions for strong economic growth. Nearly 40% of State revenue goes right back to local schools and local governments, with the hope that those funds will

relieve the burden on property taxes assessed at the local level. Alleviating the burden of those taxes and investing wisely in the things that bring jobs, that expand our workforce and that protect those in need will keep us on the path to more economic growth.

Well, I'm proud to report to you that Maine's economic growth is outpacing the national average, including the rest of New England, and it's outpacing even large states like New York and California. In fact, over the past six years, in spite of the pandemic, Maine has experienced more economic growth than it did in the entire 14 years before I took office. Our State's credit ratings have been upgraded to the second-highest possible rating after being downgraded during the previous gubernatorial administration. And that's a reflection of what the credit agencies themselves have called our strong fiscal governance. Maine's unemployment rate has remained below four percent for three years straight, one of the longest stretches ever, and it's been consistently below the national average. The number of people working in Maine is at an all-time high. The average salary of a Maine worker has increased by more than 25% from 2019 to 2023. Our Budget Stabilization Fund is near its record high limit. In fact, this emergency fund has grown by nearly \$720 million since I took office. Last year, more than 17,800 new businesses opened up in Maine. We're proud of that. And one person who's been pretty instrumental in bringing about Maine's remarkable economic growth is Commissioner Heather Johnson. Author of our 10-year economic plan, a Maine native with national credentials, Commissioner Johnson has championed innovative new businesses, she's promoted free community college and she's fought for universal high-speed internet for all Maine people, another economic driver and a boon to our State. Now, to my dismay, Commissioner Johnson has announced that she'll be pursuing new opportunities come March. But I want to thank her for her six years of hard work making Maine a better place to live. Thank you, Heather.

I'm proud of our economic accomplishments, but some folks might be thinking, well, so what? A strong GDP isn't making my groceries any cheaper, a big Rainy Day Fund isn't helping me buy a house, a low unemployment rate isn't making a dent in my electric bill. Well, I hear you. The cost of living in Maine, as in much of America, is too high. The price of fuel, the cost of supplies, utilities and labor have driven up expenses for families all across the country and have impacted the budgets of nearly every state. And so, I welcome a robust discussion among Democrats, Republicans and Independents during this legislative session because I want everyone to benefit from the availability of good jobs, a good public education and good health care in our State. Those are the things that allow every person to be their best selves.

While not everyone is feeling it, our economy is strong. And that strength is reflected in recent budget surpluses. Over the past three years, for instance, we've ended every fiscal year in the black. In 2022, our budget surplus was \$562 million. In 2023, it was \$141 million. In 2024, nearly \$94 million. But last year, we could see that these State revenues were leveling off as federal stimulus funds faded and as the economy returned to normal following the pandemic. That was no surprise. Most other states across the country, including many in New England, are seeing revenues level off, too. At the same time, programs that people widely support like education, revenue sharing, free community college, school meals; they're all costing more. The price of goods, the cost of fuel, equipment, technology and labor all impact our baseline budget for K-12 education, school meals, higher ed, corrections, public safety and other services. And these baseline expenses also generate some of the increases included in this proposed budget. Maintaining the State's share

of K-12 education alone costs an additional \$156 million over the biennium, over and above the more than \$2.8 billion in the baseline budget. That's K-12 education. On top of that, we are required by a Constitutional Amendment passed in 1995 to pay down the debt to the teachers' retirement fund. That alone costs an additional \$30 million, bringing the total cost of that item alone to more than \$470 million over the next two years. That's a debt we have to pay. Well, for some of the same reasons, operational costs for hospitals, nursing homes, doctors and nurses are also increasing. And at the same time, people are catching up on medical procedures that were postponed during and after the pandemic. And because our economy has improved, the federal share of those medical costs, or FMAP, for the Medicaid program has gone down, meaning we have to cover the \$63 million the federal government is taking away from us for this coming biennium alone.

Well, higher operational costs and a leveling off of revenues have merged to produce a tougher-than-usual budget environment this year. We saw this coming, which is why I asked the Legislature last year to reduce spending by amending certain programs and to set aside \$107 million for this coming biennium. That didn't happen, and instead, measures were supported by people from both parties which added spending onto the budget. Lawmakers then sent more spending bills to my desk, which I did not sign, so, they did not become law, and some folks; again, not just Democrats; even tried to advance a spending bill that would've added another \$117 million. We stopped that, too. Now, I say this not to wag a finger at anybody, but simply to acknowledge that regardless of whether you're a Democrat, an Independent, a Republican, the urge to say yes to well-meaning measures, especially at the end of a long legislative session, is very strong and it's difficult to say no to last-minute appeals and heavy lobbying. My friends, this time around, we simply cannot say yes. The time for hard conversations and tough decisions is here, starting with the supplemental budget.

In the supplemental budget, I'm asking you to close a current gap in MaineCare that jeopardizes our timely payments to hospitals and others. That gap is the result of four things: The federal government requiring us to keep people on MaineCare during and after the pandemic; an uptick in medical procedures, health care services as more people went back to the doctor after the pandemic; three, an increase in the cost of those services because of inflation; and four, the practice of cost reimbursement, which does not allow the State to control those costs; something we're trying to move away from. Any of those things on their own might not have been troublesome, but together, they're very concerning. We will need to address this shortfall promptly and within existing resources. And so, I'm proposing to use the additional revenue we have taken in from this current fiscal year to cover that gap. Maine patients and providers need you to approve the supplemental budget in a timely, bipartisan manner, to fulfill our obligation to hospitals, nursing homes and others. Their budgets and their patients cannot afford disruptions and delays, so, I urge you all to please approve this funding.

Now, let's turn to the biennial budget, another place where some tough choices will be required. Look, to fund every program in current law, every bill already enacted, every program already authorized; that would cost a minimum of \$11.67 billion over the next two years; \$11.67 billion. Current law. And that, actually, is very likely an underestimate, because costs have actually grown since last October when that number was calculated. On the other hand, the State is expected to take in about \$11.2 billion in revenue. I don't have to spell that out

for you, that's a budget gap. Now, Maine is far from the only state facing such a gap. In fact, many states are; red and blue states, both. Colorado is looking at a shortfall of around \$750 million next year; Washington State is facing a \$10-12 billion budget gap; Nebraska, a Republican-led state, is facing a \$432 million shortfall; Iowa, another Republican-led state, is looking at a \$1.1 billion budget gap, one driven not by spending but by tax cuts. The point is that budget constraints are not unique to blue states or to red states this year. Every state is facing fiscal challenges right now, and for a variety of reasons. I'm pleased to say that Maine is in better shape than many other states, but we have work to do to enact the balanced budget as required by the Maine Constitution; one that provides stability, one that protects public safety, one that preserves a basic social safety net and one that promotes the continued growth of our economy. That work will be hard, but we've done it before.

It's easy to forget that of 20 major money bills in the last six years; supplemental budgets, biennial budgets, highway fund budgets; 16 of those, 16 of 20, were enacted with bipartisan support. Across these various spending bills, members of the minority and the majority parties voted together to change the lives of Maine people. We enacted Medicaid expansion as voters told us to do. We achieved 55% State funding for education for the first time in Maine history, putting funds directly into the classrooms to benefit Maine kids. We fully restored revenue sharing to five percent after it'd been severely cut by the previous administration. We're sending a lot more money to towns and cities for fire, police protection and the like, so that those costs won't all be passed on to the property taxpayers. We delivered \$850 checks to Maine taxpayers, one of the strongest inflation relief programs in the nation. And later, another \$450 in winter energy relief payments. We did that together. We expanded property tax relief to keep more money in the pockets of Maine taxpayers; Maine residents, especially; and we became the second state in the nation to fund universal free meals in the public schools, erasing a divide that only stigmatized kids whose families have less. We delivered two years of free community college to recent high school grads, bringing higher ed within reach of more students and creating a direct pipeline for trained workers for employers. We expanded student debt relief to all graduates, not just those who attended Maine schools, encouraging them to work here in Maine, and that tax credit is now one of the strongest student debt relief programs in the country. We enacted housing tax credits that are spurring construction across the State, and we developed a nation-leading Housing First program to end chronic homelessness. And we invested hundreds of millions of dollars in rate reform to improve MaineCare reimbursements for many health care providers and to base those increases on objective criteria, not just on who lobbies more effectively. So, I'm grateful to you in this room; both Democrats and Republicans and Independents; who contributed to these and other achievements.

My budget proposes to maintain these core commitments to Maine people; providing affordable health care, fully funding education, protecting the public safety, sending money back to our towns and cities in order to reduce property taxes and keeping the doors of opportunity open for all people. This isn't reckless spending, as I've heard some say. Rather, if we did not do these things, hospitals would see more uncompensated care, property taxes would go up and tuition to higher eds would certainly rise. Stealing from Peter to pay Paul never works. I should know; they're both my brothers.

Now, let's talk about health care. I've long said that we can't have a healthy economy if we don't have healthy people. We all know it's pretty hard to hold down a job or pay attention to school, support a family, if you're sick or taking care of someone who is. I'm proud that we've expanded access to health care to more than 100,000 people in Maine, as the voters told us to do, and that expansion group is funded 90% by the federal government. In recent years, you also expanded health care for children to families with incomes of up to 300% of the federal poverty level, recognizing that, as we all do, keeping children healthy promotes better outcomes later in life. Last year, about 133,000 kids were on MaineCare. That's up from about 100,000 in 2019. Those are the children alone. At the same time, nearly 70,000 people have come off the MaineCare roles as a result of the unwinding required by the federal government. And just recently, nearly 65,000 people have enrolled in private health insurance through Maine's state-based marketplace, CoverMe.gov, under the Affordable Care Act, a larger enrollment than ever before.

Protecting the health care of Maine people, particularly our most vulnerable and those who cannot afford health insurance, it's important. And that's why in this budget, I've proposed \$122 million a year to stabilize the MaineCare program over the biennium. Nearly 400,000 people, including children, the elderly, people with serious disabilities, pregnant women, veterans, are enrolled in MaineCare. They should not have to choose between getting medical care and going hungry, or going without heat or being evicted from their home because they've had a heart attack or had a car accident or had a cancer diagnosis. In this budget, we're also strengthening our children's behavioral health system, including fully funding a residential psychiatric treatment facility for youth, the first of its kind in Maine, so that kids aren't sent out of state in order to get care. I also propose more money for therapeutic foster care, along with a screening system to better identify children's behavioral health needs. We know that emergency rooms are not where a child's needs are best met. All these measures are at the heart of our recent settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice to improve children's behavioral health services.

I read a story recently about a family whose son waited nearly a year for a treatment bed for severe behavioral health needs. His mom, Jessica, said, quote, "we don't have choices, and he's in constant distress; we need to figure this out," end-quote. Jessica's right. With the Legislature's support, we have invested more than \$260 million in recent years to improve these services. With this budget, we can and will do better by children with severe behavioral health needs and their families.

Just as health care is a central part of this budget, so too is education. Every child in Maine deserves a good education, regardless of their ZIP Code, regardless of their family's assets. I know you agree. In 2021, with that goal in mind, we met the State's obligation to pay 55% of local education costs for the first time since the voters told us to do so in 2004. It took a long time, but we got there. My budget; to keep us there, my budget includes an additional \$156 million to continue this commitment, investing directly in our schools, teachers, staff and students, and preventing the entire cost of public education from being passed onto the property taxpayers. Now, I know that sounds like a lot of money, and it is. Fully funding education is the largest cost driver in State government behind Medicaid. In 2019, the State paid nearly \$1.1 billion towards the cost of K-12 education. Having achieved 55%, that total now stands at \$1.5 billion per year. It's a fact of life these costs keep going up and we have an obligation to our children to pay them.

In 2021, we also passed nation-leading legislation to ensure that no Maine child goes hungry during the school day. I am now proposing another \$6 million, for a total of \$126 million over the biennium, to continue this popular program, so that no child tries to learn on an empty stomach. Together, we also increased funding for career and technical education centers by more than \$20 million over the last five years. All of you agree, I know, that's a good investment. And in 2022, we made two years of community college free for recent high school graduates impacted by the pandemic. We believed that not only would it allow students to pursue higher education debt-free, but that it would make ready a trained workforce where it was sorely needed in certain sections of our economy, and that it has done and continues to do. In the two years since then, more than 17,000 students have enrolled in Maine community college tuition-free. Hundreds of those students then transferred to four-year colleges, and they contributed to the highest increase in enrollment in the University of Maine System in three years.

Cameron Beers of Eddington is a young person who studied welding at the United Technology Center in Bangor. She then used the free community college program to enroll in welding classes at Eastern Maine Community College. After she graduates, Cameron intends to work full time and take courses at the University of Maine as well. Cameron is a shining example of the success of this program. Over the past several years, we've funded that free community college program on a one-time basis to evaluate whether it's working. I think the answer clearly is yes, and the time has come to make free community college permanent for recent high school graduates. I hope you'll support this investment in my budget.

Importantly, the budget also includes \$41 million for a 4% increase for all of our public higher eds in Maine; the University of Maine System, Maine Community Colleges and the Maine Maritime Academy; to cover basic operational costs. We have to make sure that a college education in Maine remains affordable, and we cannot ignore the economic contributions of all of our higher eds, including the world-renowned research going on at our R1 institution, the University of Maine. Thank you, President Ferrini-Mundy and Chancellor Malloy for your leadership as well. Thank you.

As I mentioned, together we have made historic investments in education to boost our public schools and, hopefully, fight property tax increases. In 2022, we also made historic investments in municipal revenue sharing. Finally, we restored revenue sharing to five percent for the first time in 13 years, sending more than \$260 million last year alone to cities and towns across Maine. By contrast, in 2019, revenue sharing was only \$74 million to our cities and towns. My budget includes a total of \$561 million to maintain the statutorily required level of municipal revenue sharing. That's about \$284 million a year going directly back to cities and towns in 2027, and that increase makes a big difference to our communities. As Auburn firefighter Michael Scott said a few years ago, quote, "any additional revenue coming into municipalities that doesn't come straight from property taxes always makes it a little bit easier for the municipalities to figure out their budgets," end-quote. Now, with these large increases in funds coming from State government, I fervently hope that towns, cities and schools will find better ways to share and coordinate services and personnel, regionalize programs, save money and reduce the burden on our property tax payers. Stabilizing property taxes is important, and we also have to bring down other costs related to homeownership. You passed, and I signed into law, expansions of tax relief programs like the Property Tax Fairness Credit, the Homestead Exemption and the State Historic

Rehabilitation Tax Credit to promote housing development. You also passed, and I signed into law, historic new tax relief programs like the Affordable Housing Tax Credit, sponsored by Speaker Fecteau. You even let Speaker Fecteau move into his own Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) right off the House Chamber. He's back.

My budget maintains these significant programs and it maintains funding for our Housing First program, as well to end chronic homelessness. We expect funding applications for at least four Housing First properties to be awarded this spring as scheduled. I'm also proud to say that my budget dedicates \$3 million in one-time funding for the very successful Mobile Home Park Preservation Fund that we created last year. That fund has already preserved housing and prevented eviction for hundreds of people across Maine. Zach Walker, who lives at Blueberry Fields Cooperative in Brunswick, which was recently purchased by the residents, says he's been, quote, "basking in the security that we'll never have to worry about what's going to happen in the future," end-quote. These folks can now stay in their homes, continue to pay rent, keep their jobs in the community. It's money well spent.

The budget also invests in public safety. After the tragedy of October 25th in Lewiston, we established a Commission of distinguished experts, as you know, to determine the facts surrounding that horrific event. Following their report, we authorized an independent after-action review of the law enforcement response as well. That review recommended measures to improve communications and coordination in the event of another such tragedy. We are requesting in the budget some additional positions to meet those recommendations and to strengthen our response to future emergencies.

As an aside, the Lewiston Commission also noted that Maine's Extreme Risk Protection Law, the so-called Yellow Flag Law, could've been used to remove the perpetrator's guns before that tragedy occurred. And last year, we strengthened that law to clarify and streamline the process further. Last week, advocates submitted signatures to force a referendum that would directly undermine our current law. Opponents of the current law argue that family members should be allowed to petition the court for removal of a weapon, not just law enforcement, and that a mental health assessment is not necessary and that maybe it stigmatizes people with mental health issues. While I agree that all people who have mental health issues are not violent, and our law does not require a diagnosis or lengthy exam, it simply asks a medical provider to understand a person's frame of mind and determine whether that person poses a threat to themselves or others. Now, think about this. The words 'suicide' or 'suicidal' were used more than 300 times by law enforcement to describe the state of mind of the individuals whose weapons have been removed by court order in recent months. This law is not a burden. These are folks who are in crisis. And now, thanks to the mental health assessment, they are now being connected, perhaps for the first time, to Maine's mental health system.

The law provides due process and it will survive legal scrutiny. And I don't believe a private citizen should have to navigate what can be a complex and confusing court procedure by themselves, especially when they're in the middle of already difficult circumstances. I believe it's the government's responsibility, not that of a private citizen, to protect the public from gun violence. Right now, law enforcement officers across Maine are taking this law seriously, they've been trained, they're using the law on a daily basis to remove firearms from those who should not have them; 672 times as of yesterday. As York County Sheriff William King put it, quote, "people are getting

used to it. Spurwink put out a step-by-step process that's awesome for us, and very clear about what to do and when to do it. It's becoming easier for us to implement the law," end-quote. I stand by our current law, which was passed with a near-unanimous support of the Legislature. It's working. It's saving lives every day.

Another problem that continues to threaten our health and public safety is substance use disorder. With your support, my administration, with the leadership of Gordon Smith, has partnered with people across the State of Maine to increase prevention, treatment and recovery. We have widely distributed the overdose prevention; reversal drug naloxone. We have strengthened prevention in our communities and our schools. We've increased the number of treatment beds all across Maine. And at the same time, law enforcement is doing its job. They've taken nearly 200 pounds of illegal drugs off the streets last year alone, nearly 40 pounds of methamphetamines and 35 pounds of fentanyl. Pounds, ladies and gentlemen. The problem remains, but Maine saw a 16% decline in fatal overdoses in 2023, one of the nation's largest decreases. And last year, overdose deaths declined by another 19%; 116 lives saved. We are saving lives, and we won't rest until this problem is solved.

The Legislature last year approved my request for \$4 million to expand medication-assisted treatment in our county jails, and those funds are giving residents a chance at new life as they reenter their community. One young woman named Amanda who got MAT while she was at the Somerset County Jail, said, quote, "I felt like I was living, not just an addict. It made me feel like a regular person," end-quote. So, let's keep that program going with a continued funding for MAT in my budget. The budget also includes \$1.5 million to continue our Mobile Crisis Response Teams; specially trained behavioral health responders dispatched 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to de-escalate mental health and substance use crises, to assess needs and to provide an appropriate level of care in the least restrictive setting. Last year, we also authorized more crisis receiving centers, modeled on the successful center in Portland, to offer prompt and appropriate care for any person experiencing a mental health crisis, instead of that person suffering alone or languishing in an emergency department or at a jail, which happens all too often. We aren't able to fund all of the centers that were authorized or requested, but my budget does fund two new crisis receiving centers in Lewiston and in Penobscot County. So, when taken with the one in Portland, these will provide improved geographical balance and better access to crucial services for more people.

Now, it's worth noting here, there are some things you're going to be asked about for which we are not proposing major increases. The budget of the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services, for instance, has quadrupled already, from \$11 million to \$44 million in recent years, and next fiscal year, it will be more than \$50 million. And yet, though we have poured more and more tax dollars into this agency, more and more people than ever are going without legal counsel when facing criminal charges or child protection proceedings. The number of criminal defendants who lack representation reportedly skyrocketed by 658% in one year alone between 2022 and 2023. That doesn't make sense when there are about 4,000 lawyers practicing in Maine, that only 130, according to the report, are rostered to take new cases. Many individuals are facing domestic violence charges, and the criminal defense bar is asking that these unrepresented and potentially violent people just go free. Well, I agree with the Chief Justice and others who have said that this is a crisis. And because it's a crisis, the Public Defense Commission must do a lot more to find lawyers

immediately for people charged with crime. And that means getting rid of arbitrary caseload limits, restrictions, rules, rostering requirements; none of which is constitutionally required. It means accepting help from the Judiciary in finding capable lawyers to take cases, rather than resisting that help. And it means allowing the newly created public defender offices; which have shown some promise here in Kennebec County; to handle the volume and the type of cases that need to be handled. The current system has become a disastrous example of the perfect becoming the enemy of the good, you know? Because just a few years ago, we had all the lawyers we needed but not enough accountability. Now, we have a system that's so focused on rules that it has driven away the lawyers. The Commission wants 10s of millions of dollars more in the budget, but first, the Commission must change.

Now, my administration spent months carefully developing this budget, a budget to protect the programs that you have embraced and to protect the long-term fiscal health of the State. Ultimately, we took a balanced approach, one that made some investments, that proposed some savings and that made some targeted revenue increases. To reduce spending, we are proposing changes to programs primarily within the Department of Health and Human Services. Listen, those decisions have not been easy to make. Believe me when I say that, despite having invested more than \$56 million just in child care, I do not like having to reduce the stipends that were doubled just last year. Despite having invested more than half a billion dollars into improving MaineCare rates, I do not like having to suspend upcoming cost of living increases for health care providers. Despite expanding pre-K options all across the State, I do not like having to propose scaling back the increases in State funding for Head Start. Despite having stood up shelters and provided other subsidies, tax credits and loan programs for housing, I don't relish the idea of scaling back the General Assistance payments that go to housing. Despite having increased the pension deduction for retirees threefold in three years, I don't like having to modify it for anyone, even if only for higher-income retirees. But we did not set out to achieve savings in a careless way. Instead, we've tried to be purposeful. Wherever possible, I've proposed amending programs that have not yet been implemented, so, to make these changes less disruptive. Or I've proposed scaling back programs that have become more expansive in recent years, or scaling back State dollars where federal dollars are available. All of these are worthwhile investments I wish we could continue at higher levels, but we simply cannot sustain all of them.

Now, just as I don't like proposing cuts to programs, I also don't like proposing revenue increases, even targeted ones. But if I had to consider a revenue increase, I decided that I wanted it to be specific and purposeful, rather than broad-based. And I wanted it to provide some social benefit in return. That's what the cigarette tax achieves. You know, Maine has the highest adult smoking rate and the second-highest youth smoking rate in New England. We also have the cheapest cigarettes of nearly every state in New England, and we haven't raised the cigarette excise tax in two decades, unlike every other New England state. When cigarettes are a leading cause of cancer, heart disease and stroke, and when more than one-third of Maine cancer deaths each year are caused by smoking, our current policy just doesn't make sense. Recognizing that a higher cost to cigarettes can dissuade some people from smoking, especially young people, my budget proposes a one-dollar increase to the cigarette excise tax. A one-dollar increase for a total of three dollars, which puts us in the middle of our New England neighbors, which is still relatively low.

Now, I've heard some of my Republican friends criticize this proposal. Republicans oppose all tax increases, I heard some folks huff and puff; no pun intended. Remember how earlier, I said that Republican-led Nebraska is facing their own budget problems? Well, their Republican Governor, like your Democratic Governor, has proposed an increase in their cigarette tax, too. So, not all Republicans oppose an increase in cigarette taxes, just to be clear. And look, I understand your concern about the impact on low-income people and that, really, you would like to make it as cheap as possible for people to smoke. If that's the case, I would simply ask in return that you also not try to cut the very health care services that those same folks are going to need due to smoking, because that's what you do when you look at cutting Medicaid. You should also know smoking-related medical care costs the MaineCare program more than \$281 million a year, and that smoking also reduces productivity in the workforce; absenteeism and an inability to work, which causes an estimated \$1.5 billion loss to our State's economy every year. That's something. That's taxpayer money that could be saved and productivity that would certainly add value to our economy.

Well, you know, on another subject; in 2016, Maine voters legalized adult use cannabis by referendum. Despite that, the program was not implemented until I took office. And since retail sales began in 2020, Maine's cannabis market has changed a lot. It's time to change our cannabis taxes, too. That's why I am proposing to lower the excise tax and increase the sales tax, adjustments that will put Maine in the middle of the pack among states for cannabis taxes. And while we're talking about cannabis, I want to say the time has come to better regulate the medical market with testing and tracking requirements, so that those consumers, just like the recreational users, can be confident that those products are safe. If you're ingesting cannabis for medical reasons, you ought to want to know that you're not consuming pesticides or other contaminants that are going to make your health worse. We cannot continue to encourage the Wild, Wild West of medical cannabis, which is contributing also to the illicit market that has emerged and that needs to be fought across rural Maine.

My budget also proposes an assessment on non-municipal ambulance and on pharmacy prescriptions. Now, I know you're apprehensive when you hear the words ambulance, pharmacy and assessment in the same sentence, but let me explain. First, it's important to note that these are not charges that ought to be assessed or passed along to consumers. Here's why. Creating this new stream of revenue will allow us to draw down additional federal funds along with it. We take that new federal funding, turn around, and invest much of it back into higher reimbursement rates for both those ambulances and pharmacies, so, they're basically made whole for that cost to begin with. These targeted increases, I think, all told, are reasonable. They raise revenues while leaving the wallets of most Maine families untouched.

Look, I have to say, it's not been fun or easy to put this budget together; something you're beginning to understand, I hope. And again, over all of this is the unpredictability of the federal government, whose actions may directly affect our State appropriations and expenditures and the welfare of Maine people. When I introduced my budget two weeks ago, I could hear the collective groans of both Democrats and Republicans echoing in the Chambers upstairs. Oh, yes. This is the same pain and frustration my Commissioners and I have felt over the past several months as we put this budget together. I know there's a strong desire amongst some of you to just, quote, "tax the rich," or quote, "end corporate welfare." I hear you. But I

have opposed changing our tax rates, much to the dismay of some of my Democratic friends, because stability and predictability for our people and for entrepreneurs and investors looking at Maine cannot be overstated. Changing our income or sales taxes in order to raise revenue would discourage investments we very much need to keep our economy on track. Investors are looking for a stable fiscal climate, and they, in turn, will bring high-paying jobs, raising the standard of living and growing our economy. In the long run, that's the best way to expand our economy, support all of our people; raising revenues consistently. In that same vein, when you say corporate welfare, what I hear you say is you want to do away with incentives that attract technology, manufacturing or life sciences, for instance, the wave of the future and the producers of future jobs. Well, that, too would be short sighted. To raise broad-based taxes and to cut economic development tools are not winning strategies.

Look, to my Democratic friends, I know you don't want to see programs cut. I know many of you would prefer to see us raise more money through tax increases to avoid any reductions whatsoever. But you also know your Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't want to do that, do you? And to my Republican friends, some of you say you don't want to raise any revenues, even in a targeted way. I know you'd prefer to cut more programs and to bridge the gap and avoid any and all tax increases. But you also know your Democratic colleagues on the other side of the aisle generally don't want to do that, do you? Thank you. So, where do we go from here?

I've put forward a budget that does not rely entirely on either revenue increases or cuts to programs. Instead, it does both to bridge the gap and continue to invest in things we all support; education, revenue sharing, public safety, higher ed, school meals. Now, I've already heard some of you criticizing the budget before it was even printed. No tax increases, some said. No program cuts, others say. It's easy to stand in front of a TV camera and say no. It's easy to fire off a social media post and feel the good as the likes roll in. But I encourage you to reserve judgment and not create barriers to compromise. Look, I mean, even Old Orchard Beach isn't big enough for all the lines in the sand some of you have already drawn. But it's so much harder to do the work of sitting around the table; or the horseshoe; putting forward your own ideas and your constituents' ideas, hearing what folks on all sides have to say and then coming to consensus to enact balanced public policy. Whether you're a Democrat, Republican or Independent, that's how I hope you approach these conversations: in good faith, with good ideas, with civility, with an open mind and, ultimately, with a commitment and courage to make hard choices.

Tonight, I've shared with you a clear account of where the budget stands, so that our discussions may commence with a common understanding of the challenges we face. While it's true we have some tough decisions to make in the coming weeks, we also shouldn't lose sight of the strengths of our State and the strengths of our people. I mean, what other place is home to people who can make a living off the unpredictable and uncontrollable elements of life as we do? The fishermen who greet the ebb and flow of the tides, farmers who meet the rise and fall of the seasons, loggers and mill workers who remake the bounty of our forests. What other place is home to scenic downtowns, award-winning food and drink and vibrant small businesses, thought-provoking art and literature and music that move the soul, pristine beaches, granite coves and breathtaking fields and mountains always within reach? What other places produce stars like Cooper Flagg and his talented brothers from Newport, Maine? These young guys, Cooper and his brothers,

they make all of life's achievements seem like a slam dunk. I love them. Or singers like Julia Gagnon, who capture the charm and spirit of our State with her beautiful voice.

Clean air, clean water, good schools and, yes, safe streets. Healthy forests and farms, clear lakes and fish-filled rivers, sturdy waterfronts. A strong economy with rewarding jobs and a State that people want to visit in every season. We know these aren't little things, my friends. We're lucky. We have them all. Let's use this session to protect those things that make us special and keep our State on a stable fiscal course. When we hear anger and acrimony, we should stop and remember the words of our dear friend, Dave Mallett, who told us that things, especially things in Maine, are better than that.

You know, it's this time of year that the early morning sun confronts the face of the Capitol, breaking through the east-facing façade, crowning it with light. It makes me feel hopeful when I see it. Hopeful about the progress of the day and the course of the year. I see faces and I hear voices across every county, town and city, every corner of the State, all looking to us to manage the finances of the State, to work with civil purpose, to solve problems, to create hope and prosperity, to keep people safe and to preserve that which makes our State so special. We've demonstrated in the past that Democrats, Republicans and Independents can put their heads together and we can get good results. I'm ready to work with you in the coming months on a budget that is balanced, that is fiscally responsible, that strengthens our economy and that lifts up our greatest asset of all: the people of Maine. Thank you, and God bless the State of Maine.

At the conclusion of the address, Governor Janet T. Mills withdrew amid the applause of the Convention, the audience rising.

The purpose for which the Joint Convention was assembled having been accomplished, the Chair declared the same dissolved.

The Senate then retired to its chamber.

(After the Convention)

The House was called to order by the Speaker.

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

On motion of Representative BOYER of Cape Elizabeth, the House adjourned at 8:21 p.m., until 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 4, 2025, or until the call of the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, respectively, pursuant to the Joint Order (S.P. 132).