

Crystal Robinson
Hope
LD 3

I urge you to vote "NO" on the almost half a billion dollar Emergency Maine Legislative Bill LD 3, "An Act to Provide Funding for Winter Emergency Energy Relief and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program." The \$40 plus \$10 million in Part A of LD3 is likely justified to help the most vulnerable although I have to ask why now and why not last spring, when fuel prices skyrocketed, or even this summer or fall?

This isn't just about the money, which is significant. This is about the chronic abuse of emergency legislation and of our Constitution since COVID. We had plenty of warning, which is cited in the preamble to LD3. This so-called emergency was caused by government policies which created inflation, fuel shortages, and an unsustainable influx of illegal immigrants. It was caused by government's reaction to COVID, shutting down the economy and destroying small businesses while enriching certain large businesses.

Maine's normal legislative process would have been completely bypassed if it were not for the Republicans in the Senate but don't think that I am happy with the Republicans in general.

They took a bad bill, LD 1, and made it even worse with LD3. The entire process was held behind closed doors. LD 1 did not go through committee for debate and fact finding. No public hearing was planned. Now there is a public hearing but there is too little notice to get the word out and it is almost Christmas Eve. There was a complete lack of transparency.

LD 3 is confusing, making it appear as if there will be zero net cost to the State of Maine, but that isn't true. When you take money from one and give it to another, there is always a cost.

This bill does nothing to solve the root of the problem. All it does is redistribute our money from the working class to the non-working class and exacerbates inflation.

Section A3 Transfer from General Fund unappropriated surplus; Emergency Housing Relief Fund has been increased to 21 million dollars 90% of which is to pay for hotels for illegal immigrants. I don't blame them for breaking our laws, I blame our government for incentivizing them to do so. Maine is complicit for agreeing to host them here. What about all of the elderly people who stay in hospitals for up to two years because they have nowhere else to go? There are many long-term and unfunded needs in this state that deserve first priority.

Maine's government caused our housing shortage. Maine is one of the worst states in the country for doing business. Our taxes, based on percentage of income is one of the highest in the country. Maine's emergency measures, taken during COVID, exacerbated both of these problems and caused many other problems. It was difficult to find employees before COVID, now it is nearly impossible. Eighty percent of the overdoses in our state are caused by fentanyl brought in by drug cartels who are not stopped at the border. Government policies are literally destroying our state.

Sec. B-1. Winter Energy Relief Payment Program Fund Other Special 24 Revenue Funds account established. \$398,000,000 will be appropriated to send \$450 to everyone making \$100,000 or less as an individual or \$200,000 jointly. It was the Republicans who wanted to increase the income from \$75,000 or less for an individual or less than \$150,000 for a married couple. I am completely disgusted with the Republican party, first for voting overwhelmingly in the House to pass this bill and now for taking a bad bill and making it worse.

A large chunk of that money will go to process the checks that people won't receive until March. Those who are already getting fuel assistance will presumably also get \$450 each. All of this spending is driving up inflation, which is a hidden tax on everyone, especially the poor. People making \$100,000 each are not going to be hurt by the increase in price as much as those making much less.

There is a projected surplus but we don't have the money in hand. We will have to borrow the money if that surplus doesn't materialize. What are we going to do next year? There is no reason to think that fuel prices will go down or that salaries will go up. In fact, it is very likely that we will find ourselves in a deep recession. Wouldn't it be better to use any actual surplus to eliminate the fuel tax, which would provide immediate relief for everyone with no money wasted on administration?

Your job is to spend our money wisely and thoughtfully and to follow the Constitution, to which you swore an oath. This bill does neither.