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LD 928

To members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

I am writing in support of LD 928, a “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment.”

It is (or should be) clear to all Maine people that they have certain political and civil rights—freedom of speech, to write what they believe, to practice whatever their beliefs thru religion/no religion or in other ways, to be treated fairly by our legal system, and not to be discriminated against for who they are. Well, at least in theory and sometimes in practice.

It should be clear to all Maine people that they also ought to have certain economic rights—the right to adequate food (now in the Maine constitution), the right to a place to live, to a job or income, to an education, to decent clothing which provides warmth or coolness (depending on what our crazy weather gives us that day), and to other resources that enable them to meet their basic needs. If we ain’t got them, we ain’t got much. Sadly, these basic rights are not always assured by our society or government, but they ought to be. That’s what our society should be for.

And, if we have basic civil and political rights and economic rights, or ought to have them, it follows that we should also have a right to a clean and safe environment, because if we don’t have that, our other rights are worth less or worthless. This is especially true now when our current environment is deteriorating—going off the rails, like in East Palestine, so to speak. If we don’t protect it now, we’re up a dirty, drought-stricken creek with not even a piddly paddle.

Having the right to a clean and safe environment is not the same as having a clean and safe environment. But, it’s a start. It’s a goal—a conclusion to what we will have to be doing for a century, a millennia, or for millions of years to reclaim what we are losing now, ‘cause that’s how long it will take. It’s where we get our breathable air and drinkable water, our soil to grow some of our food, our trees that give us oxygen and provide us with heat and building materials, the inanimate things like rocks and things we make, and the creatures—the ones we like and the ones we need for nature’s balance—that we share this planet with. If we take them away, and some of them are starting to disappear, we’re screwed. Time to appreciate what we’ve got and to save it for our next seven, or seventy, generations.

If we can’t agree to “Establish a Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment,” for ourselves and other Mainers, we’re in deep manure. After all, a catastrophic climate out of control is a threat to our very existence on this planet. The rats may survive (they did the last time), but we may not. All those time capsules will have to be dug up by some extra-terrestrials. There is no Planet B for us. It’s our one and only. (Maybe a few billionaires might wind up on Mars. If so, good riddance!) Sure, there may be negatives. No right is perfect. Free speech means seeing the drivel from Nazis and Q-anon conspirators as well as sensible statements for and against different legislative bills or how to reduce our ecological footprint..

If we’re going to survive on Earth, we have to start somewhere. LD 928 can be a beginning. Not perfect, but at least a way to start cleaning up our mess and making a half-way decent bed to lie in. Let’s commit to making this place more livable for the seven generations to come. It’s the least we can do for those who come after us.

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