

Good afternoon,

My name is Ben James and I am writing in support of LD 1998 "An Act to Transfer the Arch Hangar at the Former Loring Air Force Base to the Loring Air Museum"

I am a county native and currently the Wind Power Technology Coordinator at Northern Maine Community College. Like many people from the county Loring Air Force Base has had a great impact on my life. My grandfather Chester Williams was born into extreme poverty in the panhandle of Florida in the 1930's. At age sixteen he lied to recruiters about who he was to join the newly formed Air Force. After training this led him to Northern Maine where at nineteen he met a woman from Fort Fairfield who he would later marry, my grandmother. A 20+ year military career could have taken them anywhere but he loved Northern Maine and wanted his children to be raised there. After multiple deployments to East Asia his last years of service were spent working at Loring. He raised a family, was a member of the community and spent 66 years of his life in the County all because of "the base."

There have been many different efforts at development since its closure, some more successful than others. Obviously utilizing such a vast piece of infrastructure is important and prudent, but there are some things more important than mere economic development projects. The Arch Hangar at Loring and its historical significance is one of those things. The hangar is a unique piece of architecture that carries the story of a fraught time in human history. A story of a country's elation in winning the greatest war in human history immediately being followed by a new, far more destructive threat and the Cold War it triggered. A story that led a farming and lumber backwater community in Northern Maine into discussions in world capitals about the fate of humanity's future.

We owe it to everyone who was affected by this story and this building to be its stewards. Transferring the Arch Hangar to the Loring Air Museum is one small step in making sure this story isn't forgotten and we can preserve it for future generations. I ask the Maine legislature to please be a part of it.