

**(L.D. 1075) Bill "An Act to Promote Economic Growth Through Increased Film Incentives" (SP0444)  
(Presented by Senator DAUGHTRY, M. of Cumberland) (Cosponsored by Representative ROEDER,  
A. of Bangor, Senator INGWERSEN, H. of York, Representative GERE, T. of Kennebunkport)**

Hello Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation:

My name is Devon Platte, and I am a freelance film & television writer/producer originally from Los Angeles, but now married to a Maine girl and living on Portland's Munjoy Hill for going on twenty years now. So Maine is now my adopted home, for sure!

(And in the spirit of full disclosure, I am also a current member of the Maine Film Commission, where I and a handful of other volunteer Maine media professionals were appointed to meet in Augusta periodically to help/advise Steve Lyons and the Maine Film Commissioner [formerly Karen Carberry Warhola] however we can regarding Maine's media industry.)

Well, that is, when I CAN be home in Maine. Unfortunately, most of the work I and my fellow media professionals do does NOT take place in Maine. Which is a shame, because the exploding "entertainment industry" is so good for Maine. It attracts new, clean, tech-savvy business that spends in state. It provides good jobs to locals in all sectors of the process – development, pre-production, post-production, behind the camera, in front of the camera -- to both seasoned veterans like myself, and the next generation coming out of college. It promotes Maine nationally and internationally on screens around the world. And ultimately, it boosts Maine's economy. Which is probably why any state's film office is typically a wing of a state's tourism department – because the work we do across all screens, from television to film to the Internet to video games to cell phones to laptops to living rooms, generally promotes the state's tourism sector via what's called "screen tourism."

But unfortunately, Maine is still a little fish in the big pond of media production, and the bigger fish (MA, GA, NM, etc.) are eating our lunch. But certainly not for lack of effort on our end. Indeed, I and my Maine media colleagues like Erik Van Wyke are doing everything we can to improve things. Oh, we're WILLING, for sure. But we can't do it alone ... not against states that have a head start, and the support of their state government. So what would help? Simple. An improved state media incentives package like the one you are considering now. And while I really WISH I could attend this public hearing in person in Augusta to show my whole-hearted support for improved media incentives in Maine for (LD 1075), sorry, but I'm on the road again. Yep, if you are reading this anywhere near 1 PM on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, I'm LITERALLY back on an airplane to Los Angeles ... again.

As I do so often when it's time for me to "go to work," my wife drops me off at the bus station in Portland ... Concord Coachlines bus down to BOS (Logan Airport) ... BOS-LAX ... Like the shampoo bottle says, "Lather, Rinse, Repeat." Chuckle, "The Long Commute," we call it. And, more often than not, I see someone else I know from the production community on the bus down to Logan, doing the same thing as me for the media work. The last time it was Joe Brunette, a veteran cameraman and fellow Munjoy Hill resident, headed down to Logan himself to fly to another media job NOT in Maine.

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And yes, as a freelance content developer/creator/executive producer, I HAVE managed to convince/cajole/sell a few big projects to come up to Maine over the years. Yep, as a Producer, that's pretty much what I do: I imagine things that COULD happen, and then I make them happen. A few examples: Remember "North Woods Law" featuring the Maine Warden Service, which ran for seven seasons on Animal Planet? Yep, that was me (and eventually a nice, big team that I assembled – including Cameraman Joe Brunette, and several other Portland neighbors). Oh, in the beginning it was certainly touch and go between Alaska, Texas and Maine, when the NYC prodco was looking for a "home/location" for a fledging outdoor law enforcement series concept originally titled "Backwoods Law." But because of the NYC-based production company wanted me to run their project, Maine ultimately won. So seven seasons – and one significant name change – later, "NWL" became a big success for Animal Planet, Engel Entertainment in NYC, the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and Maine Warden Service, all the crew members we employed for those seven years, and all of the money the production spent all over the state (at all times of year) during those years (office space, hotel rooms, restaurant meals, vehicles, gas, outdoor gear and clothing, camera gear, production supplies, etc.). And in the end, NWL was so successful it even spawned direct spinoff series in New Hampshire and Texas for Engel Entertainment, and even launched a "mini genre" of other, knock off outdoor law enforcement programs.

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how Maine “lost” the premiere episode of NBC’s “Treasure Hunters” to Hawaii. Literally in the baggage claim area of PWM, next to that mural of the Portland skyline. Lack of state media incentives ... plain and simple. And yes, while I DID make it work on Maui, it would have been SO much better at Fort Gorges!

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But be it a television show or documentary or small feature film or TV commercial or video game, all of these “visual stories” showcase the state of Maine in one way or another across screens large and small around the world. All of these projects put Mainers to work on the production team, and spend a lot of money here during the process. Indeed, with the advent of the Internet, the explosion of hand-held devices, and now the proliferation of streaming services like YouTube, AmazonPrime, Hulu, etc., the world’s “appetite for content” only becomes more voracious. And certainly beyond just your average living room. Heck, my phone rings all the time from someone looking to develop a project/content. And this is why “big fish” states like Mass and Georgia and New Mexico and Colorado fund strong state film offices, and have developed strong state media incentives -- to ATTRACT big entertainment business projects to come and film in their state, to spend lots of money filming in their state in all sorts of ways, to put their local citizens to work in all aspects of production (and surrounding cottage industries), and to keep their young college graduates from fleeing for the bright lights, big cities of New York, Hollywood, etc. (And to that latter point, I do hope you get a chance to also hear from one of my fellow volunteer Maine Film Commissioners, Prof. Corey Norman, who does amazing work in this space with the New Media program at SMCC in SoPo.)

So, yes, we’re trying. I’m trying. Erik van Wyke is trying. Prof. Corey is trying. Cameraman Joe is trying. The other members of the Maine Film Commission are trying. We’re all TRYING. But ultimately, we can’t build an entire industry alone. So we need a little help to compete with those other “big fish” states (and neighboring countries like Canada), all of which we lose projects to every single day. Plus now we’re losing that next generation of young college grads, too. “Brain Drain,” Prof. Norman calls it. So beyond the current generation of media professionals, and with no one on deck ... eesh.

Oh, I’ll keep doing my part ... until I retire. As a matter of fact, History Channel keeps calling me about “Alone 2025,” which they might be considering filming up in The County, if we can put the deal together. And while every little bit helps, the primary reason that Maine isn’t competing on a legitimate level is that our state still lacks that one tool that’s become vital to this process in recent years: a strong state media tax incentive program. Now the actual nuts and bolts of such a package I’ll leave to other talented Mainers like Erik van Wyke, who’s much better versed at the legislative details/numbers than I am. Like I said, my role is more to imagine things that COULD happen, and then, MAKE them happen. And along the way, assemble and manage the team to accomplish the mission. Yep, “Showrunner” is my slang title. But the overall MISSION is called Show BUSINESS for a reason. Yes, television and film and video games ARE creative, but it’s absolutely a business. And while many of us are working hard to bring more of that big, beautiful, tech-savvy business to Maine, we need a little more help doing it, to make the math work for all involved. After all, it takes a village, right?

So to quote Jerry Maquire: “Help us (“us” being the fledgling media industry of Maine). Help US help YOU (“you” being the entire state of Maine).” Because that’s what improved media tax incentives would do here in Maine: Build a new, tech-savvy industry that WANTS to run into this new, connected era. All of the pieces are right there! And more like the high-tech Roux Institute in that old B&M Bean Factory are coming as we speak. Yep, this is a golden opportunity to do something forward-thinking for an aging Maine where EVERYONE wins for decades to come. Uh, LobsterWood?! Ha, cheesy ... but something like that. 😊

Ultimately, imagine something that COULD happen, and MAKE it happen. And THAT’S why we’d kindly appreciate your support for LD 1075. Appreciate your time, and if anyone ever has any follow up questions or comments for me, my email address is [devonplatte@gmail.com](mailto:devonplatte@gmail.com). Call any time! And thank you!

Devon Platte  
Portland  
LD 1075

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