

Kat Taylor

Testimony Opposing [LD183](#) - *An Act to Cap Publicly Owned Land Area at No More than 50 Percent of Any County*

Thursday, February 6, 2025

Esteemed Members of the *Agriculture, **Conservation** and Forestry Committee*:

My name is Kat Taylor and I am a resident and property owner in Argyle Twp. located about 20 miles north of Bangor along the Penobscot River.

I am writing to **oppose LD183**.

This bill seems to be an attempt to **block conservation efforts in all counties solely by representatives, and one senator, in Washington County** and brings up all sorts of questions.

The bill itself is very minimal, almost a concept draft, which **should exclude it from having a public hearing at this time due to lack of information**.

The **public can't weigh in** without **knowing more** about this bill such as:

- What is the **intended purpose** of this bill?
- What is the **Public Benefit**? This bill seems to thwart attempts to acquire publicly owned land.
- Washington County (pop 31,095 / 3,258 sq mi / **pop density of 9.5 ppl/sq mi**) seems unlikely to be saturated by conservation or public acquisition efforts. **Why should districts, exclusively in WA County**, with the exception of a sliver of District 18 that borders the Penobscot River across from my neighborhood, **determine what is appropriate land conservation for the entire state?**
- Is there a reason why **only WA County representatives** are sponsoring this bill?
- Is there a reason the representatives of **all contiguous districts** in WA County are sponsoring this bill?
- **Where does the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) fit into this conservation quota** since their mandate for **Unincorporated Townships (UTs)** is to **protect the land from inappropriate uses**?
 - **All sponsors except Rep. Faulkingham serve UT's.**

- Would **UT's be earmark for development** if the county's conservation quota has been reached?
- **Requiring a 2/3 majority in both houses makes exemptions for land conservation difficult to achieve**, possibly including the state's *Land for Maine's Future* program.
- **How much land** in each county is **currently, or planned to be**, put into **conservation or public ownership** that would **be affected** by this bill?
- **Without knowing** how much land will be affected **the public cannot decide if there is an imbalance in land use.**
- Will there have to be a **committee established** to report biannually to DACF?
- Who will **fund: collecting data on current conserved or publicly owned land, establishing quotas, rulemaking, reporting, enforcement and exemption proceedings?**

LD 183 caps the amount of **conserved or publicly owned land** in any county in Maine to no more than **50%**. But as counties differ in population density and available land for development, **this is not an equitable division of potentially impacted land.**

Collectively the sponsors control all land east from the Penobscot River, east to the Canadian border, from north of Island Falls and south to the ocean following the coast from just east of Bar Harbor and all along the Maine/Canadian border.

All the sponsors are Republican and **serve on influential committees** on Taxation, Engrossed Bills (2), Criminal Justice and Public Safety, Energy, Utilities and Technology, Marine Resources (2), Health and Human Services, Joint Select Committee on Joint Rules.

We should consider LD 183's sweeping change to all counties could be an attempt to screen the sponsors' true designs for WA County. That the **sponsors represent all the contiguous districts that completely encompass WA County** is most likely not a coincidence.

Knowing their intent is essential for the public to weigh in.

The Downeast region is a unique and special place that cannot be replaced. It is a **natural focus for environmental protections**. Developers would like nothing more than to place more obstacles in the path of land conservation so they can capitalize on the area.

If passed, **this bill would hamper environmental and land trust groups** from preserving land from development. **Any exception would require a 2/3 majority in**

both houses.

In addition, the **Unincorporated Towns (UTs)** (Unorganized Townships, Plantations and TRs) **are most vulnerable to development** having no local municipal government that can block efforts that have an undue detrimental effect on the environment and residents. **The UT's make up about half of all land in Maine.** All the sponsors, with the exception of Billy Faulkingham, have UT's in their districts. *(See attached Excel sheet)*

The Land Use Planning Commission has authority over UT's and determines land use for over half the land in the State, encompassing more than **10.4 million acres, and includes the largest contiguous undeveloped area in the northeast.**

The unorganized and deorganized areas **include several coastal islands and portions of Downeast Maine** that stretch across the western mountains and up to the Canadian border.

Vast tracts of **Northern Maine** are available for conservation with little impact on residents. *(See land per person in UT's in Excel sheet)*. The population density is **roughly 1100 acres of land per person**. If **conservation efforts are capped** then those **forestlands that capture Co2 and filter air and water** will be at **risk for development**.

The **Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC)** would be **restricted from approving land conservation** if there is a quota **making their mandate unattainable**. They would be given the responsibility of determining what lands are worth preserving more than others. **Could we decide between the next Baxter State Park or Acadia National Park, if we could only have one, because Piscataquis or Hancock Counties (with a population density of 3.8 and 24 people /sq mile respectively) have reached their cap?**

How much land is in, or planning to be put in, **conservation or public ownership** in the entire state? **Cataloguing those areas would help determine how each would be affected by this bill's passing.** However, **this would be a daunting task** and most likely very expensive.

This bill should not be passed since there is **not enough information** on the **impact**, what **current rules** would be in **conflict**, how this law would be **implemented**, and **costs** associated with that **implementation** and financing of whatever **authority** would be in **control of development and enforcement of the law**.

Respectfully,

Kat Taylor
Argyle Twp.

Attached:
Map of sponsors' districts
Spreadsheet on each UT and sponsors' committee
LD 183 bill

Representative QUINT, T. of Hodgdon, (R)

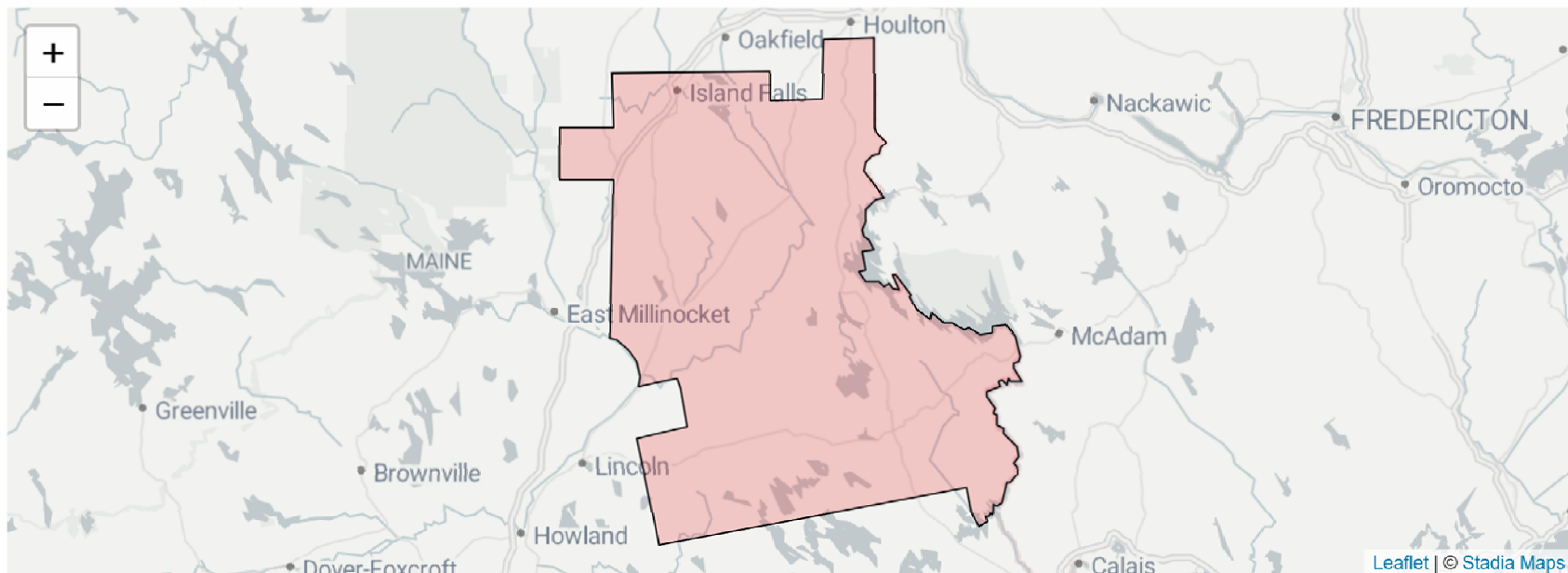
House District: 8

Town(s): Amity/ Bancroft **Township**/ Benedicta **Township**/ Block **4293** of **Tract 952900**/ Cary **Township**/ Crystal/ Glenwood **Plantation** / Haynesville/ Hodgdon/ Island Falls/ Macwahoc **Plantation** / Orient/ Reed **Plantation** / Sherman/ South Aroostook/ Weston/ Forkstown **Township**/ Molunkus **Township**/ Silver Ridge **Township**/ Drew **Plantation** / Kingman **Township**/ Mattawamkeag/ Stacyville/ Carroll **Plantation**/ Lakeville/ Lee/ Prentiss **Township**/ Springfield/ Twombly Ridge **Township**/ Webster **Plantation** / Whitney (Pukakon) **Township**/ Codyville **Plantation** / Danforth/ Talmadge/ Topsfield/ Vanceboro/ Waite/ Forest **Township**/ Brookton **Township**/ Forest City **Township**/ Kossuth **Township**/ Lambert Lake **Township**/ North Washington (Part)

Committee (s)

Taxation

District map



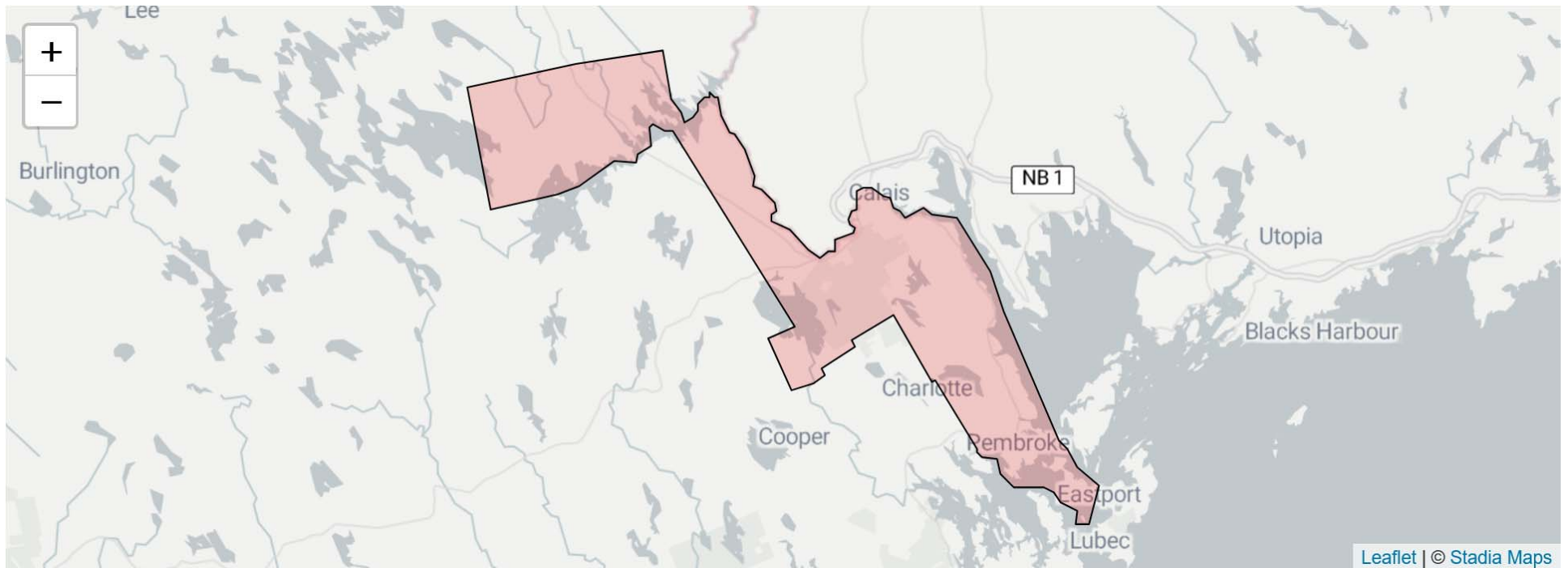
Representative MINGO, A. of Calais, (R)

House District: 9

Town(s): Baileyville/ **Baring**/ Calais/ Eastport/ Grand Lake Stream/ Meddybemps/ Passamaquoddy
Pleasant Point/ Perry/ Robbinston/ Passamaquoddy Indian **Township**

Committee(s)

Housing and Economic Development



Representative TUELL, W. of East Machias (R)

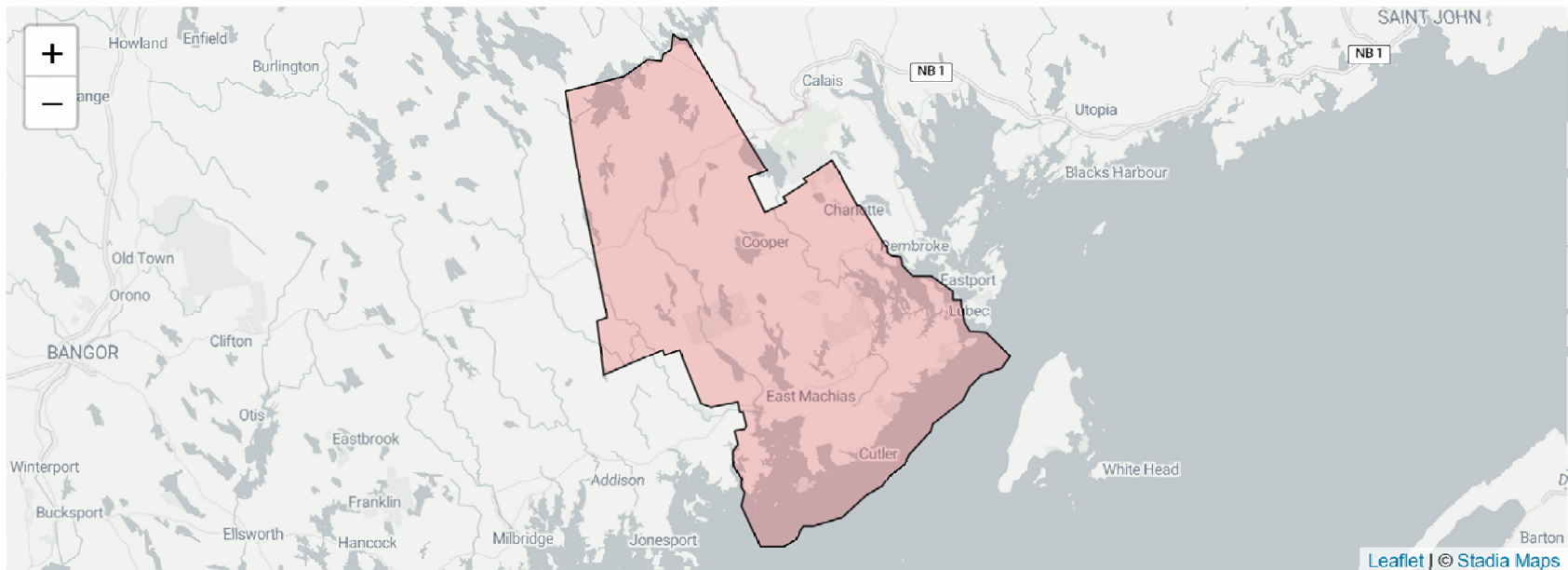
House District 10

Alexander/ Charlotte/ Cooper/ Crawford/ Cutler/ Dennysville/ East Machias/ Lubec/ Machiasport/ Marshfield/ Northfield/ Pembroke/ Princeton/ Wesley/ Whiting/ Berry **Township**/ Big Lake **Township**/ Cathance **Township**/ East Central Washington/ Edmunds **Township**/ Greenlaw Chopping **Township**/ Marion **Township**/ North Washington (Part) / Trescott **Township**

Committee(s)

State and Local Government

District map



Representative STROUT, T. of Harrington, (R)

House District 11

Addison, Beals, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Machias, Milbridge, Roque Bluffs, Whitneyville, Centerville **Township**, and part of North Washington

Committee(s)

Marine Resources

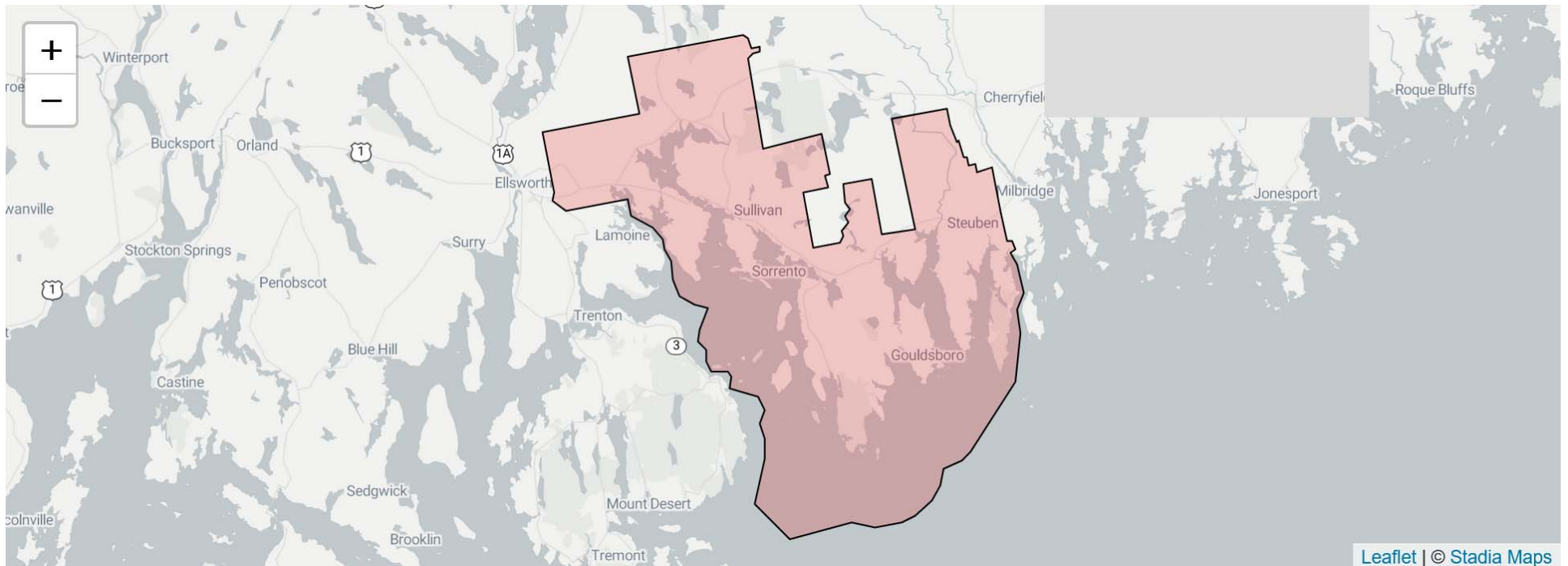
District map



Representative FAULKINGHAM, B. of Winter Harbor (R)
District: 12

Town(s): Franklin/ Gouldsboro/ Hancock/ Sorrento/ Sullivan/ Winter Harbor/ Steuben

Committee(s):
Joint Select Committee on Joint Rules - Ranking Member



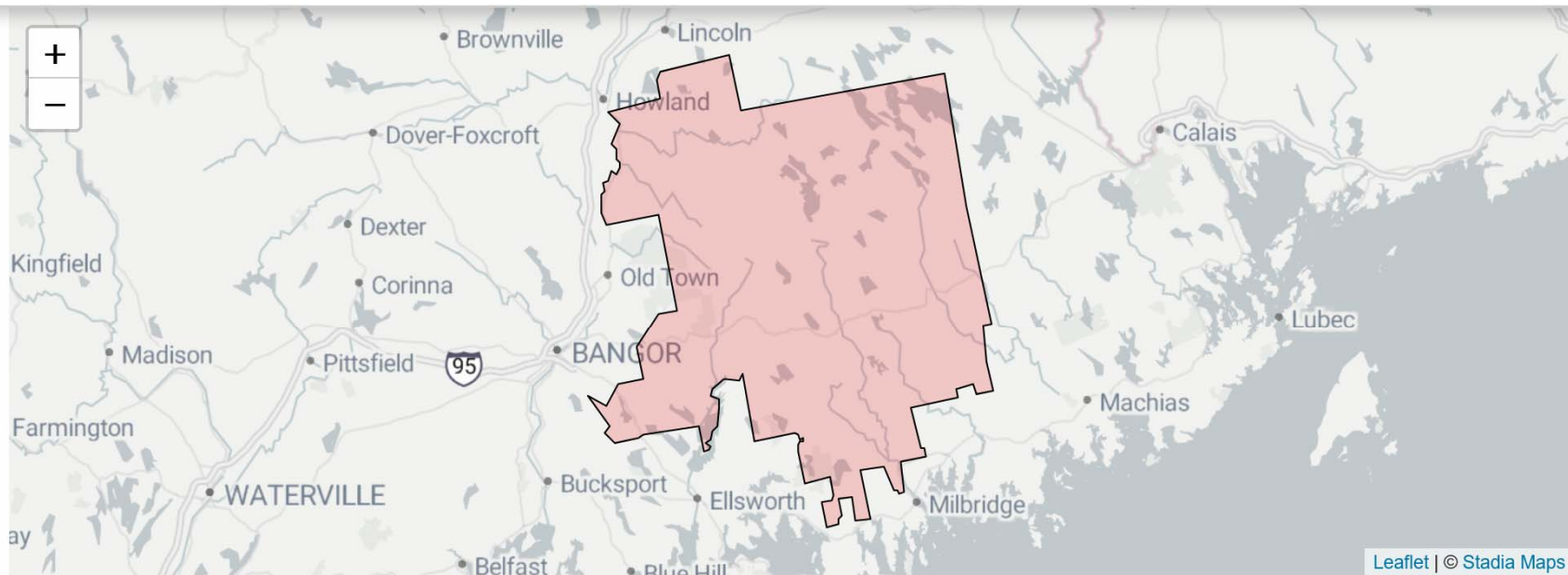
Representative MCINTYRE, M. of Lowell, (R)

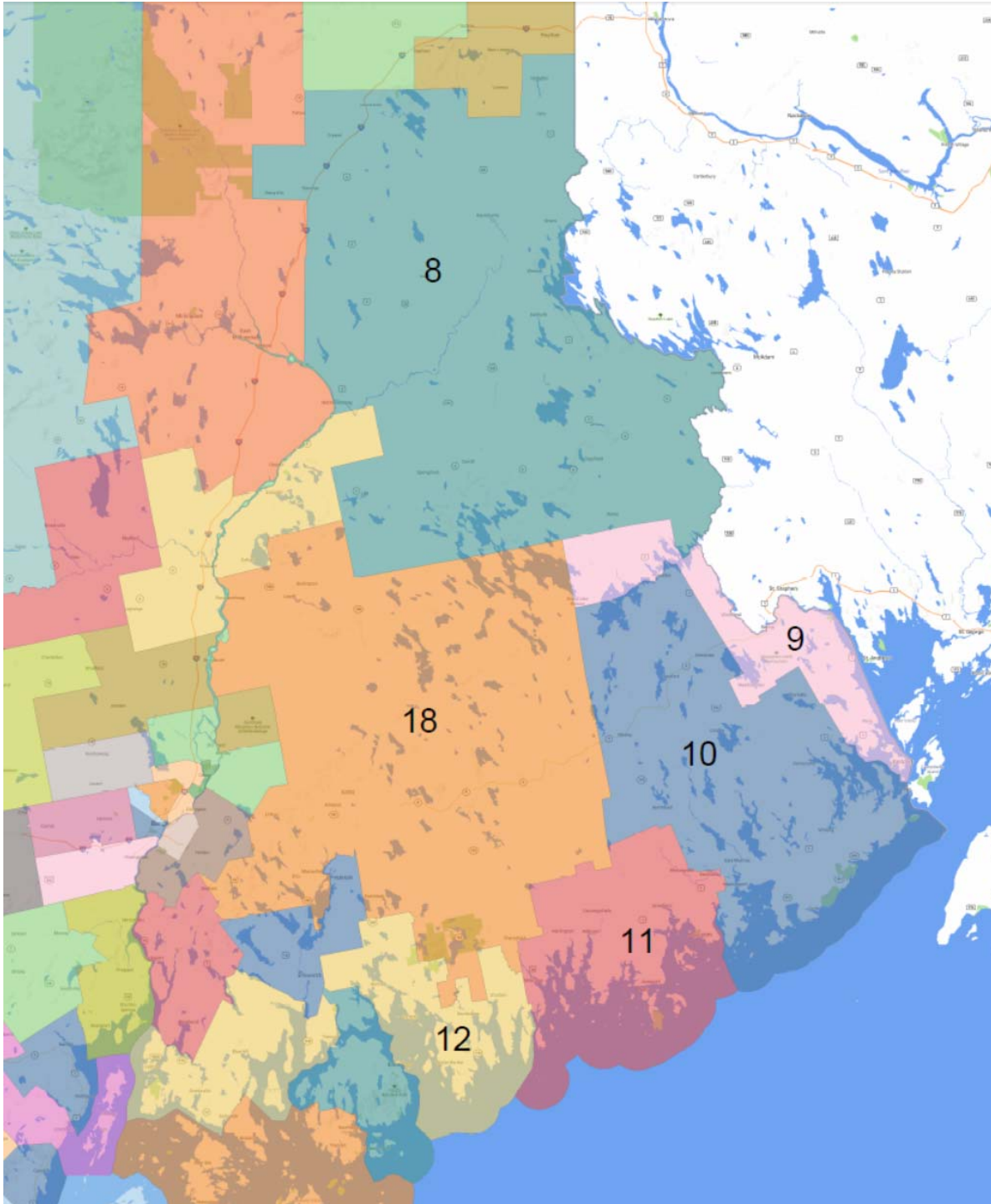
House District: 18

Town(s): Amherst/ Aurora/ East Hancock/ Eastbrook/ Great Pond/ Mariaville/ Northwest Hancock/ Osborn/ Dedham/ Otis/ Burlington/ Greenbush/ Lowell/ Passadumkeag/ Clifton/ Grand Falls **Township**/ Greenfield **Township**/ Summit **Townships**/ Beddington/ Cherryfield/ Deblois/ Day Block **Township**/ Devereaux **Township**/ Sakon **Township**/ East Central Penobscot/ North Washington (Part)

Committee(s)

Engrossed Bills - Ranking Member
Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Energy, Utilities and Technology





Maine House Districts Sponsors of LD 183

The sponsors serve districts that encompass all of Downeast Maine, from the Penobscot River to the Canadian border.

Senator Moore serves District 6 which include all of Washington County and almost all of the sponsors' districts.

Senator MOORE, M. of Washington, (R) Senate District 6

In Hancock County: Amherst; Aurora; Central Hancock **UT**; East Hancock **UT**; Eastbrook; Franklin; Gouldsboro; Great Pond; Hancock; Mariaville; Northwest Hancock **UT**; Osborn; Sorrento; Sullivan; Waltham; and Winter Harbor.

All of Washington County

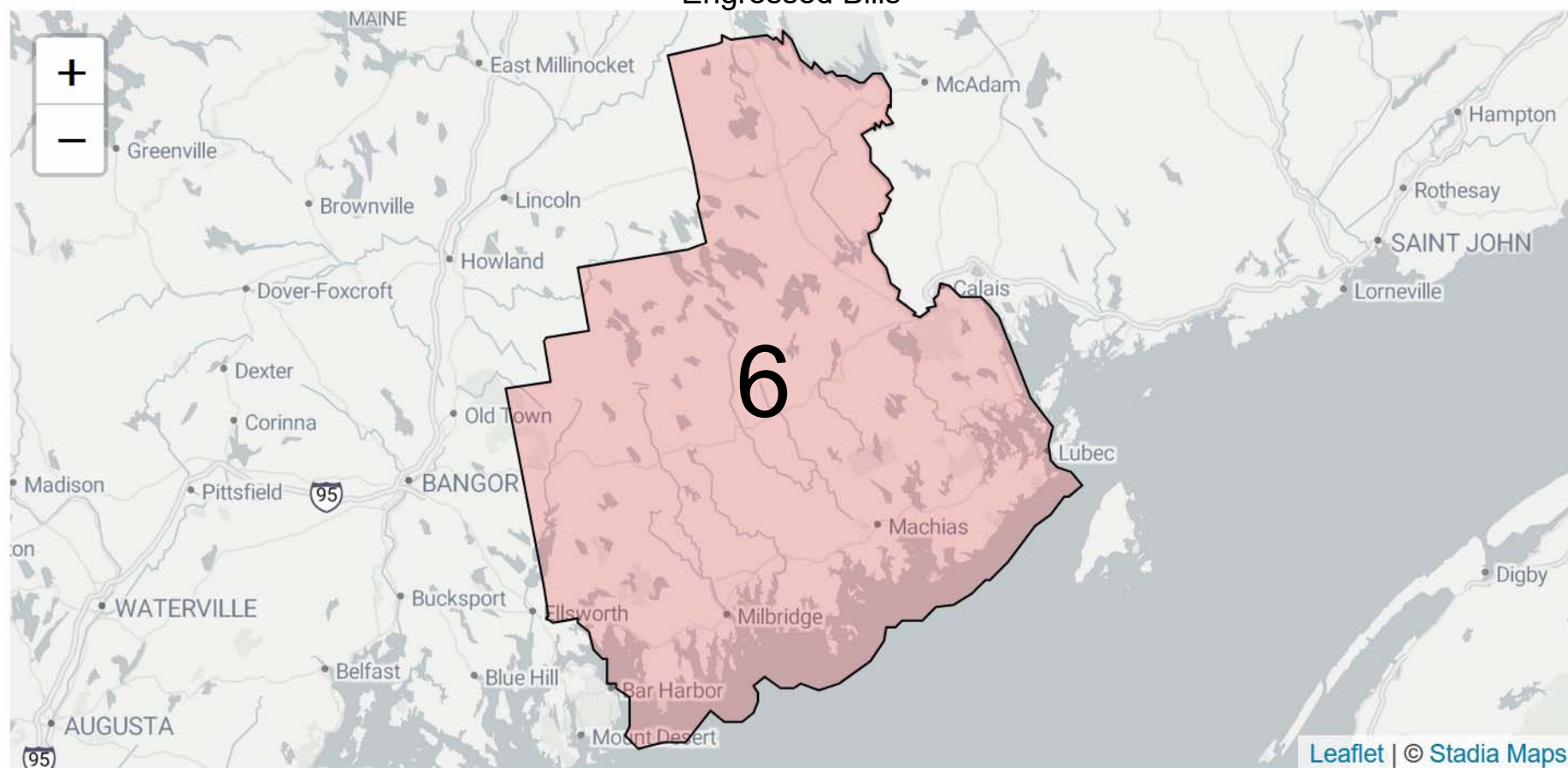
Committee (s):

Health and Human Services

Marine Resources

Engrossed Bills

District map





132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 183

H.P. 116

House of Representatives, January 14, 2025

An Act to Cap Publicly Owned Land Area at No More than 50 Percent of Any County

Reference to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT

Clerk

Presented by Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor.
Cosponsored by Senator MOORE of Washington and
Representatives: MCINTYRE of Lowell, MINGO of Calais, QUINT of Hodgdon, STROUT of
Harrington, TUELL of East Machias.

1 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

2 Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §1829-A is enacted to read:

3 **§1829-A. Limitation on publicly owned land**

4 **1. Public ownership limited.** Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary,
5 publicly owned land in this State may not exceed 50% of the land area of a county. For
6 purposes of this section, "publicly owned land" means land in which the Federal
7 Government, the State, a county or a municipality holds property rights, including
8 easements, development rights, trust rights or other ownership interests.

9 With the approval of 2/3 of each House of the Legislature, the State, a county or a
10 municipality may exceed the limits of this subsection.

11 **2. Report.** The department shall, beginning April 15, 2026, report biannually to the
12 joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over public lands matters
13 on the percentage of publicly owned land statewide and by county. Does such a committee exist?

14 **SUMMARY**

15 This bill limits publicly owned land in the State to no more than 50% of the land area
16 in any county. The bill also allows the State, a county or a municipality to exceed the limits
17 with the approval of 2/3 of each House of the Legislature.

18 The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is required to report
19 biannually beginning April 15, 2026 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature
20 having jurisdiction over public lands matters on the percentage of federal, state, county and
21 municipal property ownership statewide and by county.