

Testimony in Opposition to LD 870  
An Act Regarding the Membership of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission  
Peter Triandafillou  
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Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry committee, my name is Peter Triandafillou, and I live in Orono. I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 870.

Maine's Unorganized Territory (UT) is managed as a very large town, with the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) acting as the planning board for this vast territory. In organized towns, residents, landowners, and business owners are the primary participants in the planning process. The UT is different in that many interest groups, some of which have no ownership or business in the territory get a chance to weigh in on planning decisions.

The 125th Legislature in 2011 enacted changes to the Land Use Regulation Commission as recommended by the Commission on Reform of the Governance of Land Use Planning in the Unorganized Territory. The result was a new name and a new structure to the LUPC Commission.

The changes that created LUPC were driven by a need for greater participation and a stronger voice for the residents, landowners, and businesses in the UT. Most of the Commission seats were appointed by officials from the eight largest counties in the UT. The counties were directed to actively seek Commission members who reside in or near the UT, and who have experience in the UT's economy. In addition to the members appointed by county officials, the Governor also appoints one member to the Commission. The result has been more local engagement and interest in the planning process. The public at large still has an important role to play, but the reforms help guarantee that the constituents with arguably the most at stake are at the table.

LD 870 reverses and undermines these much needed reforms. It increases the number of gubernatorial appointments, changes term limits, and reduces the time that counties have to appoint new members. The result would be a dilution of much needed local participation. With the proposed change in size of the Commission, decisions could be made with no county or local input at all.

The reforms enacted by the 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature were necessary and successful. Everyone has a seat at the table, and local voices as well as those from other parts of the state are heard. The reform of the UT's planning process has been a success, and LD 870 does not address or solve any problem. It does, however, concentrate decision making and power to the executive branch and interests with little or no economic ties to the UT. It disenfranchises local interests whose voices are critical to the proper planning of a vast region. I urge you to reject this power grab and vote ought not to pass on LD 870. Thank you for your time.