

However, through a series of events, the City of Auburn has made it nearly impossible for the county to occupy the building placing multiple moratoriums on building and occupancy. They recently passed an ordinance that gave the City Council the ability to veto any occupancy effort by the county – beyond the approval of the zoning committee. In fact the City specifically zoned the county out of going anywhere outside of where they currently reside and a few blocks around them. Planning for the future has become impossible.

After being contacted by members of the commission and watching the process play out I have presented the following bills on their behalf. The bills in front of you today would do two things:

1. Give the county the ability to locate outside of Auburn. If the City of Auburn does not want to work with the County, they need the ability to locate elsewhere. Dealing with this in the normal process through referendum does not give the County time to deal with the very real crisis going on with the building and puts them in the untenable position of campaigning against one of their own cities. The County does not want to leave Auburn, but does need the ability to make decisions that are best for their employees and the county as a whole.
2. Revoke the City's enforcement of its new process around government buildings. The City has done a lot of work to inject uncertainty into the process. The County purchased a property that was correctly zoned and in an ideal location for their purposes. They worked with a willing seller on the open market and were punished by the city after the fact. This private and special law would apply only to this situation to better account for any unintended consequences. We have done the best we can to narrowly apply this law to this specific situation.

County government is a unique creature in Maine's governmental structure. They have no power over their own property and are the guest of the County seat they occupy. They have no redress except for the Legislature or the courts. The County has chosen to go to the Legislature because they are the creation of the Legislature. The Courts would be much more costly for both the County and the City of Auburn. The big loser in that situation is the taxpayer.

Androscoggin County simply wants to use a building that they purchased for a constitutionally required role that they play – hosting the sheriff's office. The County played by the rules and were punished for unspecific reasons. This has left deputies literally in the dark, out in the cold, and up to their ankles in filth. Our Sheriff's department deserves more.

A representative of Androscoggin County will be here to answer specific questions, but I would be happy to try to answer questions you may have.

Thank you and I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on these bills.