

**Testimony of MSLEA Executive Director Kevin Anderson in support of LD 794 An Act to Include Judicial Marshals in the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement**

Good Morning Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and distinguished members of the Labor and Housing Committee.

My name is Kevin Anderson, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine State Law Enforcement Association.

I am here to ask for your support on **LD 794 An Act to Include Judicial Marshals in the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement**

First and foremost I would like to thank Senator Hickman, Representative Hasenfus, Representative Greenwood and Representative Fredette for sponsoring and cosponsoring this bill.

MSLEA Represents all State Law Enforcement in Maine except Maine State Police and State Law Enforcement Supervisors of the Executive Branch. MSLEA represents over 70 sworn members of the Maine Judicial Branch employed by the Judicial Marshals to include Judicial Marshal Sergeants and Corporals and Deputy Judicial Marshals. Judicial Marshals are tasked with the very important task of providing safety for the employees, judges, and civilians inside the courthouse all over Maine from Kittery to Caribou.

Courthouses have seen an uptick in violence in recent years across the country. It is the perfect environment for emotions to boil over. The courts handle matters from some of the worst criminal conduct to the very emotional family matters where emotions run high.

Maine courts cannot hold court hearings without the presence and safety provided by the Judicial Marshals. There are numerous days nearly every month that courts are closed due to a lack of staffing, adding to an already backlogged list of cases in the courts. The struggle experienced by the Judicial Marshal to attract and retain new employees is real although not unique to this group of law enforcement officers. Numerous recent surveys of law enforcement indicates that retirement benefits are a major consideration for potential candidates.

A recent report presented to the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee on March 10 by the Stakeholders Group to Improve Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers in the State of Maine, outlined what kinds of changes law enforcement officers in the state of Maine felt might improve their job satisfaction. Two of the top four recommendations centering around the improvement of retirement benefits for law enforcement. Of the 736 respondents to a survey conducted of Maine law enforcement by the stakeholders group, an astounding 66.1% admitted to considering leaving their career in law enforcement.

The Judicial Marshals are the forgotten law enforcement arm of the Judicial Branch when it comes to law enforcement retirement. The vast majority of law enforcement falls under the

executive branch and all the executive branch members are covered under a special retirement plan. We are asking that you add the Judicial Marshals to the 1998 special retirement plan by supporting this bill. To my knowledge this action will mean that all state law enforcement officers will be covered under a special retirement plan and rightly so.

Thank you in advance for your support. It would be my pleasure to try to answer any questions you may have at this time.