

TESTIMONY OF MATT DUNLAP, CIA

STATE AUDITOR

IN SUPPORT

LD 1052 RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish the State Auditor as a Constitutional Officer

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government; my name is Matt Dunlap of Old Town, and I have the honor of serving as Maine's state auditor.

I would like to thank Rep. Salisbury for sponsoring this important legislation. If approved, first in this committee, the full Legislature, and finally by the voters, this legislation would establish in bedrock the independence of the Office of the State Auditor. The nature of the work and the position of the State Auditor has changed greatly since the Legislature first established a three-person audit committee in the 1870's, followed by the creation of the State Auditor in 1907, and its current disposition in the 1930's.

However, while everything seems to hum along nicely, it is a statutory office. There have been bills contemplated in the past to eliminate the office and farm out the work on a contract basis; that has not been pursued, simply because it is not cost-effective. There is, however, the risk that the office could be simply written out of the budget or a threat of such be leveraged to influence the work of the office, which would be much to the detriment of the public trust.

We have amended the Constitution something like 177 times, and have in turns created and eliminated the State Land Agent, taken the Attorney General from a cabinet appointment to a constitutional office, and converted the Adjutant General from a constitutional office to an appointment of the Governor; so such actions are not without either precedent or value.

I am happy to answer any questions now or at the work session at the pleasure of the Chair.