

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Ron Russell of Verona Island. I'm here today to testify in support of LD762, "An Act to Support the Maintenance, Preservation and Promotion of State Historic Sites.

I grew up in Castine surrounded by the rich history of our state and our country. Fort George was literally in my back yard. I think I played on every nook and cranny of the place. In seventh grade at the Adams School on the town common, I studied Maine History, which was my favorite subject. I had my first job working for the State of Maine in the summer of 1964 when I was 14 turning 15 at Fort George. I worked the sifter on a state archaeological dig. I uncovered redcoat soldiers' brass buttons, clay pipes, British coins, musket balls, and lots of other cool things. The pay wasn't great, but the work was incredibly interesting, satisfying, and meaningful. I was proud to be working for all Mainers in preserving our history and that remains one of my favorite jobs I ever had

In 2023, I once again found myself working for the State of Maine by serving in the 131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature. Pretty much the same story. The pay still wasn't great, but doing the people's work this time was incredibly meaningful and for sure the best job I ever had. In Title 20-A: Education, Part 3: Elementary and Secondary Education, Chapter 207-A: Instruction, Section 4706, item 2. it reads: **Maine studies**. Maine history, including the Constitution of Maine, Maine geography and environment and the natural, industrial and economic resources of Maine's cultural and ethnic heritage... **must** be taught.

Our Maine history is important, we teach all our children about it in school. Yet part of learning is seeing, doing, touching what we are learning. Preserving our historic sites is important to our children and their children to come. Can you imagine going to our Statue of Liberty or our White House or our Independence Hall and finding them in disrepair or our sacred ground at Gettysburg or Pearl Harbor and finding those hallowed grounds filled with alders and trash. I don't think so.

Our sense of pride and honor to those before us would be shaken. The same applies for our great State and our historical sites. Where would our pride in who we are and have been be. I don't believe any of us want to see the embankments of Fort George washed away or the roof of the Fort Kent blockhouse caved in. The time is now to move this bill, pass it by 2/3rds, and give the people of Maine the chance to make this investment. Thank you.

Ron Russell, Verona Island

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