



Mike Tipping
Senator, District 8

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier and valued colleagues of the Taxation Committee,

My name is Mike Tipping. I represent Senate District 8 in Penobscot County, and I'm proud to present LD 1493, along with an amendment, to limit certain uses of Maine's Visual Media Production Credit. As amended, it would prevent Maine's film credit from being used to subsidize commercials and internal corporate videos.

We all recently received a copy of the Maine Film Office Incentive Report for 2024. It has a long list of filmmakers the Office is reaching out to, the amounts spent on film incentives and the information that "fewer than 10" productions qualified for the credits last year.

What the report didn't list is the actual projects that were funded with the visual media production wage reimbursement and income tax credit. I followed up with DECD and it turns out there were eight in total:

Production Company	Project Title	Project Type	Distribution
Lone Wolf Media	Wild Crimes: Season 3	Streaming Show	Hulu
Timber + Frame	Maine: Rural Revitalization & Resilience	TV Show	Maine Public Broadcasting & Online
Rove Labs LLC	Google Omni Unpacked	Video	Online
Rove Labs LLC	Google Omni Use Cases	Video	Online
Rove Labs LLC	Google Omni How To	Video	Online
Lone Wolf Media	Wild Crimes: Season 4	Streaming Show	Hulu
Samuel Dunning	Canoe Dig It?	Independent Feature Film	Film Festivals
Vagrants LLC	Amway	Commercial	Online and Broadcast

Some of these sound great and in line with the intent and goals of the credit. I'm particularly looking forward to watching Canoe Dig It?, a mockumentary filmed in the Allagash.

Half of the list, however, is videos for Google that you can't find on the open internet and a commercial for Amway.

The Amway ad is a pitch for buying magnesium supplements through a multi-level marketing scheme. It features some dubious pseudoscientific health claims voiced over shots of waves crashing on the coast. And we all helped pay for it.

I have broader concerns about the Visual Media Production Credit, many stemming from the 2023 OPEGA report on the program.¹ The headline on that report - right on the front page - reads “Maine’s Visual Media Incentives Have Had Limited Effect and Have Not Been Adequately Administered.”

I believe this program needs significant reform. We’re never going to win a race to the bottom with states like Georgia that highly subsidize their visual media industries. Nor do we want to - studies of more generous programs in other states have found limited positive effects for their high costs.

Nor is the limited program we have working well. According to OPEGA, record keeping and administration of this program has been terribly lacking. There is also no data on the effect on jobs or tourism, and productions have even been subsidized that have had no shooting days in Maine and don’t feature the state in any way. I urge every member of this committee to review the findings of that report.

As we contemplate broader reforms, however, I believe we can at least all agree that a credit meant to benefit TV and filmmaking and to showcase the best of our state shouldn’t be used to fund commercials instead. This bill as amended places a limit on those uses, similar to restrictions in other states.

Especially when programs like Head Start and housing assistance are on the chopping block this budget year, I believe we shouldn’t be spending state funds subsidizing product videos for Google and commercials for Amway.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9940>