

130th Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 12

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Testimony Presenting

LD 1680

An Act To Amend Legislative Expenses Reimbursement and Allowances

Good morning Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Matlack and distinguished colleagues of the State and Local Government Committee

My name is Dave Miramant, and I proudly represent all of the people of Appleton, Camden, Criehaven, Cushing, Friendship, Hope, Isle au Haut, Matinicus, Muscle Ridge Islands, North Haven, Owl s Head, Rockland, Rockport, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston, Union, Vinalhaven and Warren in the Maine Senate.

I am here today to present LD 1680, An Act To Amend Legislative Expenses Reimbursement and Allowances

While it is always difficult to vote to increase the expenses of our state government, it is essential that the pay and reimbursement keep up with our broader economy. Even though the suggestions I am making will make it better for those who are elected to serve, this proposal falls far short of compensating for the time and expenses incurred while doing this job. That's ok. This is and should remain a commitment that is done as a passion to serve our state and the people who live here.

These increases as proposed seek to make it possible for a wider range of our residents to be able to run for office. It means that a young person who will not be supported by an employer may still be able to give up half of the year for what amounts to more than full-time work, and the other half that includes numerous duties that make it at least a 30 hour a week job.

I want every elected legislator to be able to at least pay the rent and eat when doing this job, I believe the numbers I propose minimally meet that goal but also respect the taxpayers and the challenges they face.

Because of the nature of the present form of doing our legislative business due to COVID-19, I was not able to determine what legislators are in strong support already, and which of them would like to work toward a goal of fair compensation.

I will include the summary below:

SUMMARY

This bill makes changes to the laws governing compensation, reimbursements and allowances for Legislators.

1. Beginning with the 131st Legislature, it increases the salary of Legislators from an estimated \$15,954 in the first year and \$11,125 in the 2nd year of a biennium, after adjustment for inflation, to \$20,000 in each year of the biennium.
2. It increases the mileage allowance for Legislators from 44¢ per mile to the lower of the federal mileage rate and 56¢ per mile.
3. Beginning with the 131st Legislature, it changes the lodging rate for Legislators. Currently, the lodging rate is \$38 per day; this bill changes the rate to an amount determined annually by the Legislative Council, which must be no less than the lower of the average nightly rate of lodging in the Augusta area and the federal per diem rate for lodging.
4. Beginning with the 131st Legislature, it provides a weekly allowance of \$250 for any week during a period of national emergency or civil emergency in which a Legislator is required to work remotely, attends an authorized committee meeting and does not otherwise travel to the State House.

I didn't make these numbers up. In the 129th Legislature, a bipartisan committee worked on this issue and came up with these suggestions. They were still in the process when the session was shut down due to COVID-19. While there has been a slight increase in the annual pay over the last 20 years, the buying power of that pay is less than half of what it was when the rates were last established. That was not the intent at that time, it was assumed that it would be periodically adjusted as they were doing then, not kicked down the road for fear of an outcry that will not come.

Thank you for your consideration, I will try to answer questions if I can.