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2008 Legislative Update



State Representative
**Linda
 Valentino**

2008 Legislative Update

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Dear Neighbor,

It has been an honor to serve as your state representative during a very challenging year for our state. An unexpected budget shortfall, reduced federal funding and more mandates from Washington, and the challenge of reorganizing government services to improve efficiency meant the Legislature needed to make many difficult choices this year. As your representative, I always carefully considered the impact that the decisions we made would have on our community as we worked on these critical issues.

While a handful of items took up much of our time and the public's attention, we passed a number of laws this year that will continue to move Maine forward in the critical arenas of health care access, consumer protection, energy, public safety and transportation.

This Legislative Update contains just a few of the many items that were considered and approved by the Legislature. For more information I encourage you to contact me. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your representative in Augusta.

Sincerely,

 Linda Valentino

Property Tax & Rent Rebate

Applications for the 2008 Property Tax and Rent Refund Program will soon be available. You may be one of more than 200,000 Maine households entitled to up to a \$2,000 rebate on property taxes or rent paid during 2007.

You May Qualify If:

- You do not have a spouse or dependent(s) and your 2007 household income was \$60,000 or less; or
- You have a spouse or dependent(s) and your 2007 household income was \$80,000 or less.

Applications will be available for the 2008 program in August.

Contact me to reserve an application, or if you have questions about the program.

New laws passed in 2008

Health care access, new consumer protections, clean energy and the environment, support for working families

How to apply for tax rebates and refunds

Your tax dollars at work
 a summary of the state budget



House District 134 - Part of Saco



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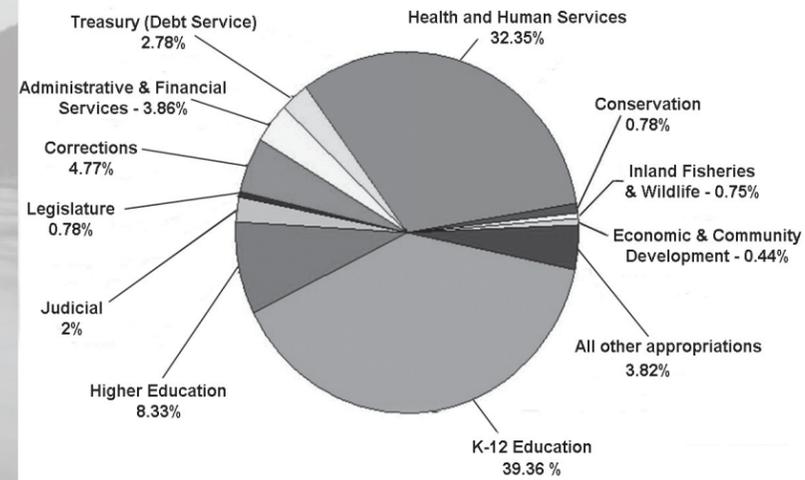
Linda Valentino is serving her second term representing part of Saco in the Maine House of Representatives. She currently serves on the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and is a past member of the Legal and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Rep. Valentino is a former Commissioner of the Maine Liquor and Lottery Commission and was elected for three terms to the Saco City Council, where she served as deputy mayor and chair of the Finance Committee.

She and her husband, Curtis Scamman, live on Boom Road in Saco. They have three grown children and two grandchildren.

Rep. Valentino and Sen. Hobbins with Justin Chenette, new member of the State Board of Education

State Budget Expenses



Faced with an unexpected \$190 million shortfall, the Legislature was forced to make many difficult decisions to bring the budget into balance without increasing taxes or dipping into the rainy day fund. The supplemental budget:

- Cut state spending by nearly \$150 million, spending less money in FY09 than in FY08
- Reduced Health & Human Services spending by \$65 million
- Cut the legislative budget by \$2.2 million
- Rejected proposals to cut health care and prescription drug coverage for the poorest Mainers, cuts to domestic violence prevention, mental health and retardation services, and higher education
- Funded a new tax credit for redeveloping historic buildings and also funded school breakfast for low income families

Continued to improve access to affordable health care

- Prohibited hospitals from charging patients to correct medical errors
- Enacted insurance reforms that will reduce private insurance rates by up to 40 percent and bring more healthy young people into the market
- Stabilized affordable health care for thousands of Maine families and businesses and protected efforts to reduce health care costs for everyone
- Authorized a veterans' campus in Bangor to provide housing, a community-based outpatient clinic, a hospice facility and other crucial services to Maine veterans

Enacted important new consumer protection laws

- Prohibited predatory lenders from taking homes through "equity stripping" and protected people selling their homes from having to pay undue property taxes
- Prevented prepaid calling card providers from changing the value of cards after purchase
- Allowed consumers to get a cash refund on most gift cards with less than \$5 of value
- Established a statewide model building and energy efficiency code for new home construction, remodeling and substantial renovation
- Prohibited lead in children's products, boosted lead inspection and enforcement, and created the voluntary lead-safe housing registry

Encouraged clean energy and environmental preservation

- Created low-interest loan programs for geothermal heating units to encourage renewable energy use and reduce energy costs
- Streamlined the process for approving wind turbines
- Suspended construction of new coal-fired power plants until the state establishes guidelines to minimize emissions
- Required state agencies to ensure that there is no net loss of acreage open to hunting on state lands



With Maine Attorney General Steven Rowe

Restored proposed cuts to Maine's elderly

- Retained \$2.2 million for personal care services for Maine's elderly and disabled
- Maintained \$1.2 million for adult day care and homemaker services for seniors
- Retained more than \$700,000 in independent living services for the elderly



With Charlene Thompson at the Maine Ombudsman Senior Luncheon

Boosted road and bridge repairs, improved license security

- Boosted funding to repair and replace old and outdated bridges, fix roads in the state and create thousands of new jobs
- Supported alternative transportation without raising costs by dedicating funds from existing accounts to support transit, aeronautics and rail transportation, including expansion of the Downeaster train service
- Required a person to prove they are a Maine resident in order to qualify for a driver's license

Supported working Maine families and the economy

- Reduced county property taxes and prison overcrowding by consolidating state and county jail services
- Allowed towns to reduce property taxes for seniors who provide volunteer services for the town
- Added flexibility and corrected flaws in the school district consolidation law



Recognizing Celeste Kimball and other seniors at the State House