

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

To update you on the Legislative Session, I wanted to reach out to you in this special 2-page newspaper section. If I had only one word to describe this session the word would be – busy!



As a first-term Senator, representing the 38,000 people of Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Buxton, Dayton, and part of Biddeford, my time was spent between Sessions and serving on three different committees.

As the Senate Chair of the Judiciary Committee, I work closely with the Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Court and the Judiciary branch of government. I also serve on the Transportation Committee which allows me insight and input into their budget. In January, a special Joint Select Committee of Maine's Workforce and Economic Future was formed to address the gap in finding skilled workers for jobs available in Maine. I was privileged to be appointed to this special committee that created meaningful legislation.

It has been an honor to serve you and I look forward to catching up with many of you!

Linda

Judiciary Committee

As Senate Chair of Judiciary, I was deeply involved in many bills concerning "privacy" issues.

- LD 345 - "An Act To Ensure the Confidentiality of Concealed Weapons Permit Holder Information." Final bill provided that a concealed handgun permit is confidential, except for the municipality of the permit holder, date the permit issued, and date permit expires. It only allows confidential information to be disclosed for criminal justice purposes or permitting purposes to law enforcement officers or issuing authorities. By working closely for weeks with all stakeholders, we were able to address concerns of citizen privacy. My floor speech in urging Senators to vote for this compromise version of the bill was reproduced in its entirety by the Sportsmen Alliance of Maine in their newsletter and can be read in full on my website.
- LD 415 "An Act To Require a Warrant To Obtain the Location Information of a Cell Phone or Other Electronic Device" Required a government entity obtain a warrant for the location information of a cellular telephone user and notify the user that they had obtained this information. Bill was opposed by law enforcement. I opposed. Legislature passed. Governor vetoed. Veto overridden.
- LD 1377 - "An Act To Protect Cellular Telephone Privacy" Unlike LD 415 which only dealt with "location" data, this bill dealt with cell phone "content" data. Warrants and notification are required for content data. A compromise was worked out



with stakeholders at the committee level. I supported. Legislature passed. Became law without Governor's signature.

- LD 236 - "An Act To Protect the Privacy of Citizens from Domestic Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Use" Very controversial bill. I supported the committee majority to have a one year moratorium on drones by law enforcement, allow for Maine businesses to continue to manufacture them, and have Criminal Justice Academy



Veterans/Military

Continuing with my strong, previous support for veterans and the military, I introduced LD 1504, a "Resolve Directing the Adjutant General of the State to Ensure the Maine Code of Military Justice Addresses Sexual Trauma in the Military." The idea for the bill was brought to me by Lt. Col. Terry Moore, Ret., who I worked closely with during my previous bill to create a plaque and coin to honor all Maine women veterans. By working collaboratively, with the Adjutant General, the National Guard sexual response coordinator, and the Military Rape Crisis Center, the bill received unanimous support from the Veterans Committee, the Senate, and the House. The Governor did not veto the bill, but did not sign the bill, so the bill became law without his signature.

Another bill that I voted to support was LD 1503, an "Act to Ensure Student Access to Postsecondary Military Options." This bill required publicly supported secondary schools and secondary public charter schools to provide uniformed recruiters for the Armed Forces or the National Guard the same access to students



as other postsecondary and career recruiters. Although every member of the Senate voted for the bill, the bill was not enacted. It did not get a 2/3 majority vote in the House, which was needed for any bill containing a Mandate for municipalities.

write proposed rules to come back to Judiciary next session. This version was supported by law enforcement. Instead, the minority report was passed by Legislature. Governor vetoed. Veto sustained.

- LD 851 - "An Act To Require the Return of Excess Funds by a Municipality That Forecloses on Real Estate" This was one of several foreclosure bills that brought many local bankers and attorneys to Augusta to testify. It would have allowed municipalities to return proceeds from the sale of tax-acquired property to the former owner after first paying all back taxes, interest, costs and other unpaid municipal expense. Procedures were written to ensure that the interests of the taxpayers of the municipality are protected. I supported. Legislature passed. Governor vetoed.
- LD 872 - "An Act to Improve the Quality of Guardian ad Litem Services for the Children and Families of Maine" This bill was sponsored by Sen. Dutremble and worked on for months by the committee. The new law will address complaints, rostering, caseloads, criminal background checks, appointment process, code of conduct, and billing. I supported. Legislature passed. Governor signed.

Maine Economy and Workforce Future Committee

As a committee member, we held extensive public hearings, work sessions, and brought the entire committee to tour businesses and conduct hearings in both Biddeford and Belfast. We focused on three areas:

- Addressing the workforce **skills gap** to better connect workers and businesses.
- Investing in places like our **downtowns and Main Streets**—the economic engines of our state.
- Strengthening our **small businesses** by helping them compete in today's economy.

LD 90 was crafted by the committee and passed into law. It had broad support from Labor, Education, and Business. "In my 25 years of working with the Legislature, this is some of the most impressive and thoughtful work I've seen come out of Augusta."

—Community College President John Fitzsimmons.

A few of the highlights of LD 90 include:

- Removes backlog of student applications for 14 high-demand, high-wage programs at the Community College system, to enroll an additional 500 students annually.
- Implements a credit transfer agreement between UMS and Community colleges to help over 200,000 Mainers finish their degrees with less cost and time.
- Creates a Maine Incumbent Worker Program to provide training for workers to upgrade their skills.
- Partners with Maine Chamber of Commerce on a statewide internship program that links employers, students, and colleges.



Transportation

The Maine Department of Transportation - 3-year Work Plan - Total Expenditures \$1.8 billion
For complete listings of all town projects visit: www.mainedot.gov

- **Biddeford and Biddeford/Saco line:**
 - Fencing construction at the Biddeford Municipal Airport - \$288,400
 - Pedestrian Bridge (shared with Saco) - Located at Factory Island - \$426,000
 - Highway resurfacing - On Route 111 east bound. - \$783,855
 - Bus Shelters - Purchase and installation of two bus shelters. - \$100,000
 - Highway reconstruction - Route 1 to Railroad Avenue. - \$1,250,000
 - Safety improvements - Ten traffic signals. - \$1,211,251
 - Bridge rehabilitation - Elm Street Bridge over the Saco River. - \$200,000
 - Highway resurfacing - Other roads. - \$1,986,762
 - Bus replacement - shuttle bus replacement vehicle. - \$200,000
 - Bridge replacement - Bridge over Saco river at Pine St. - \$4,300,000

- **Dayton/Buxton**
 - Intersection improvement at Route 35 and Route 5. - \$775,000
 - Bridge replacement - Bar Mills Bridge over the Saco River. - \$8,300,000

- **Old Orchard Beach**
 - Intersection improvements with signal - Located at the intersection of Saco Avenue, Emerson Cummings Boulevard and Union Avenue. - \$585,000

- **Saco**
 - Highway resurfacing - Off Interstate 95 Ramp and extending easterly 3.03 miles. - \$1,820,000
 - Guardrail - Install median cable and W-beam. - \$340,000
 - Municipal Pier - Camp Ellis fendering, cargo handling aprons, ladders, and gangways. - \$115,000
 - Highway resurfacing - Ferry Road to Timber Oakes Lane. - \$225,250
 - Highway resurfacing - Bradley Street to Lincoln Street. - \$137,760

- Highway resurfacing - OOB/Saco town line- extending northwest 0.65 of a mile. - \$532,028
- Highway resurfacing - New County Road to Bartletts Bridge Road in Lyman. - \$1,333,040

Transportation Bonds

As a new member to the Transportation Committee, I aggressively delved into the issue of bonds. Bond bills were not voted on in June because when testifying before the committee, MDOT repeatedly told us that the governor not issuing the bonds approved by the voters in 2012 would not affect jobs and the economy, since MDOT works on a 3-year plan and those projects have already been funded and scheduled for completion.

I asked for a complete list of bonds authorized by the voters in past years and was provided with lists of bonds from 2003, 2007, and 2009. It showed that some bonds were never issued for projects and some bonds were issued and the projects still have not been completed.

There were multiple bonds submitted by Legislators and the Governor this session. In September, the full Legislature will be meeting to discuss and/or vote on sending any bonds to the voters. In the meantime, I have requested that the Transportation Committee meet jointly with the Appropriations Committee to have the MDOT and the State auditor give us a comprehensive update on the status of all bonds previously authorized that have not been spent or issued.

Speed Limit Changes

I co-sponsored legislation with Rep. Justin Chenette to ensure our public safety on the state's Interstate system. LD 654 transferred jurisdiction of speed limit increases from political leaders to the engineers who use traffic studies and science to determine the appropriate speed.

The Transportation Commissioner, who currently is an engineer, will be able to determine increases or decreases in speed on Interstate 95 up to 75 miles per hour in certain areas. The bill passed both the House and Senate unanimously and became law without the Governor's signature.

Business Capital

I sponsored a bill to help Maine businesses secure financing by extending and improving the successful Maine Seed Capital Tax Credit Program which is administered through FAME. This is a critical time for Maine's economy. Many Maine startups owe their success to FAME financing and extending it will support more small businesses, which are crucial to strengthening our economy and creating new jobs.

In the past year, \$4.67 million was invested in a dozen Maine companies. Since the creation of the program, 128 Maine companies have received capital. It requires businesses to certify that investment is necessary to create and/or retain Maine jobs. The program has a proven track record of creating and retaining Maine jobs, from 2004 to 2011 nearly 1,900 jobs were created, and an additional 5,000 were retained. For every dollar the program spends, it yields \$8 of investment.

The bill received unanimous support from the Taxation Committee, passed both the House and Senate, and was funded by the Appropriations Committee. The Governor has indicated that he would not veto the bill, but he has not yet signed the bill. He has until January to decide.

Thornton Academy

I sponsored LD 1505 to restore critical funding to Thornton that was cut in 2008, under the promise the reduction was only for 2 years. After 5 years, the funding was never restored. LD 1505 as enacted by law will ramp up the funding over a period of time to bring it back to the 2008 levels. Through the hard work of the Headmaster and staff, by attending all Education Committee and Appropriations meetings, we were successful in passing this bill.

UNE Dental School

I sponsored LD 249 to allow the University of New England to have their 4th year dental students practice under the supervision of a Maine licensed dentist. Students would benefit because they are seeing real life patients in clinical settings, and patients could benefit from reduced rates and greater access to dental services in rural areas. LD 249 as enacted directs the Board of Dental Examiners to report back to the Legislature on its findings and ways to implement the program.

Hearing Aid Insurance

I sponsored LD 523, "An act to require health insurance coverage for hearing aids for adults" at the request of a constituent, Connie Gobeil. She works in the health care field and sees the negative impact of adults not being able to afford these devices. Current Maine law provides that insurance companies only cover the cost until a person is 18 years old. Ms. Gobeil came to Augusta to testify, along with many other people. The Insurance Committee carried the bill over until next session and we hope that it will pass.

Medicaid Expansion

Under the Affordable Care Act, the federal government has agreed to pay 100% of the cost for covering all newly eligible people for the first three years, and then gradually lowers payment to no less than 90 percent of the cost by 2020. Maine is projected to save \$690 million in the next 10 years if it accepts the federal dollars, according to the nonpartisan Kaiser Foundation and the conservative Heritage Foundation. Maine is also one of 10 states that will see Medicaid expenditures go down over the next 10 years.

Nearly 70 percent of Maine people supported accepting federal health care dollars to increase access to health care, according to the nonpartisan Maine People's Resource Center. According to the Maine Hospital Association, both bad debt and charity care cost \$450 million last year, an increase of \$32 million from the previous year. The Maine Hospital Association has gone on record for its support of accepting federal health care dollars.

The bill, LD 1066, "An Act To Increase Access to Health Coverage and Qualify Maine for Federal Funding," was amended to ensure savings and would have expired after three years. This meant Maine would not be committed to any program expansion after the 100% federal funding stopped. I supported the bill. It was passed with bi-partisan support in the House and Senate. Governor vetoed. Senate overrode, but House failed to override veto, so bill died.

House and Senate Approve Bipartisan Balanced Budget

On February 26th, I held a town hall style budget forum alongside Rep. Hobbins and Rep. Chenette at Saco City Hall. The forum was designed to give local residents an idea of some of the initial proposals in the governor's budget.

Here are some of the highlights of the two-year budget that was unanimously approved by the Appropriations Committee from Democrats and Republicans:

- Ensures full funding to the Drugs for the Elderly program
- Closes corporate tax loopholes
- Continues property tax relief programs to keep people in their homes
- Temporarily increases the sales tax by half a penny and increases meals and lodging by 1%, these increases expire on June 30, 2015.
- Creates a path to reach 55% of the state share of education funding through
- Restores almost two-thirds of the cuts recommended in the Governor's budget proposal to municipal revenue sharing

Bills I sponsored that became law:

- LD 503 is an act to amend the limited liability company laws
- LD 744 is an act to extend the Statute of Limitations on certain civil professional negligence suits
- LD 1038 is an act to make the state's uniform commercial code compatible with the Federal Electronic Fund Transfer Act
- LD 1505 is an act regarding Insured Value Factor payments for public tuition students attending a private school
- LD 1504 is a resolve directing Adjutant General of the state to ensure the Maine code of Military justice addresses sexual trauma in the military
- LD 743 is an act to extend and improve the Maine Seed Capital Tax Credit Program (Legislature passed but pending Governor action.)
- LD 249 is a resolve directing the Board of Dental Examiners to amend its rules to improve access to oral health care in Maine

New Appointment

On July 24, 2013, I was appointed as chair of the state's Right to Know Advisory Committee. Government transparency is critical to ensuring accountability and responsibility, and this committee is dedicated to maintaining that transparency. We need to be vigilant about public access to the workings of government while still safe-guarding the public's personal privacy.

The committee is made up of one Senator, one representative, and 14 appointed members of the public. Created by the Legislature in 2006, it is tasked with providing recommendations to the three branches of state government and local governments. Advice is given on how to best ensure public access to records, proceedings, and other documents. The Right to Know Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet four times this Fall.