

# Hearing in Brewer on Proposed State Budget

## History Made and Passions on Display

Several hundred municipal officials, state employees and members of the general public gathered at Jeff’s Catering in Brewer on Monday this week to partici-

pate in a public hearing hosted by the Appropriations Committee. The purpose of the hearing was to gather more input from the people of northern and eastern Maine

about the impact of Governor LePage’s state budget proposal at the community level. A list of the Governor’s proposals impacting property taxes is provided in a sidebar to this article.

The meeting was historic because it is the first time in memory that the Appropriations Committee has scheduled a public hearing outside of Augusta. Several hundred people attended and 65 testified over the course of 5 hours to the receptive and ever-patient Committee members. To a person, those testifying expressed deep appreciation for the Committee’s willingness to make access to the Legislature easier. It was a clear case of outreach to the citizens in Hancock, Washington, Aroostook, Piscataquis and Penobscot counties.

As well as being historic, the Brewer hearing could also be categorized by its “passion quotient”. The people giving testimony generally fell into one (or sometimes two) general categories:

- Municipal officials (33)
- Active or retired state employees (22)
- Members of the public opposed to swapping income tax relief for greater property tax burden (10)

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### Taxation Committee’s Work Session Schedule on the State Budget

(All meetings are scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. in Room 128 of the State House)

**Tuesday, April 2**

- Board of Property Tax Review – baseline budget
- Part O – Relates to “sudden and severe” disruption of valuation statute
- Part K – Sunsets BETR, changes BETE eligibility and adjusts municipal reimbursement rate

**Friday April 5**

- Part Q – Income tax changes
- Part L – Amends the Maine Residents Property Tax and Rent Program (Circuitbreaker)
- Part M – Replaces current homestead exemption with one limited to homeowners 65 or older

(Other items to be determined)

**Tuesday April 9**

- Part J – Suspends municipal revenue sharing for the 2014-15 biennium

(Other items to be determined)

**Friday April 12**

Deliberations and voting

**Monday April 22**

Taxation Committee recommendations to be provided to the Appropriations Committee



*Municipal officials and others gather in Brewer to oppose Governor LePage’s property tax proposals.*

## Brewer Hearing (cont'd)

One person spoke in support of the Governor's proposal.

The municipal testimony was delivered by selectmen, councilors, town and city managers, budget committee members, and other municipal officials from at least 22 municipalities (see sidebar).

The municipal passion was delivered in fact-based explanations of the deep cuts in local services or major increases in property taxes that would have to be made if the Governor's proposals are enacted. This isn't just about municipal revenue sharing. After assembling the impacts of all seven gubernatorial proposals aimed at the property tax, the municipal officials delivered the bottom line results in terms of percentage of total budget, impact on the property tax rate, impact on the average homeowner's tax bill or the scope of service reductions that would likely result. The Committee

### Municipalities represented at the Brewer Public Hearing

(According to MMA's notes)

Bangor  
Belfast  
Blue Hill  
Brewer  
Brownville  
Carmel  
Dexter  
Easton  
Eastport  
Ellsworth  
Gouldsboro  
Hampden  
Houlton (and the Southern Aroostook Development Corporation)  
Liberty  
Machias  
Madison  
Mars Hill  
Millinocket  
Old Town  
Orono  
Sangerville

members politely took in the information but there was also some impassivity, a tiredness perhaps, a sense of having heard it all before. Numerical impacts that to town leaders are shocking and extremely serious in their consequences can become abstract in the telling. 21.8 mills, a \$321 increase, 18% of the total municipal budget...mere numbers.

The other municipal concern passionately delivered was the insult felt on the messaging municipal officials are receiving from certain political quarters about the need for municipalities to operate more efficiently and the claim that deep cuts in intergovernmental financing will help municipalities learn how to tighten their belts.

Two former presidents of the Maine Municipal Association, Hampden Town Manager Sue Lessard and Orono Town Manager Sophie Wilson, referenced a letter they recently received from Governor LePage that included the following gubernatorial observation:

*"If towns need flexibility from the State to reduce their own budgets, we are happy to help. If there are proposals to reduce administration and overhead by sharing services between towns, we will support them. However, if every municipality wants to keep everything – public works, assessors, managers, police, schools, fire, and other services – to themselves, then the voters of that municipality can make that decision. But those local decisions have price tags and we can no longer hide from that reality."*

Woven into this paragraph are several messages that concern municipal officials with respect to the Governor's apparent impression of municipal government. There is the implicit message that if municipalities were only willing to share services, large amounts of taxpayer dollars would be saved but municipal officials don't want to share services and achieve those cost savings. The apparent belief is that at some unspecified municipal level, the municipal leaders and/or employees and/or citizens want to "keep those services for themselves". Furthermore, the truth about this unfortunate reality is apparently being kept hidden.

Jason Savage, the Executive Director of the Maine Republican Party, buttressed the Governor's messaging when he told WCSH News on the day of the

Brewer hearing, *"The local levels are the place where there are efficiencies and savings to be found, and it's time to get serious about finding them."*

None of this was passing muster to the municipal officials on the receiving end.

Jim Gardner, the Town Manager of Easton, a town that would be ripped inside out by the proposal to make all the taxable property in the BETR program suddenly tax exempt, said that the insinuation that the towns were not focused on cost effective service delivery was "hard to swallow".

Machias' Town Manager Chris Loughlin said that the consolidation rhetoric "runs hollow" in Washington County.

Belfast's City Manager Joe Slocum touted the efficient ways municipalities are able to get the job done, and said that the state could obtain no greater bang for the buck by dedicating just 5% of sales and income taxes to local government to help finance the broad range of services provided locally.

Sophie Wilson augmented the observation by identifying all the registrations and other fees that are processed and collected each month by Orono on behalf of the state, and dutifully forwarded to the state treasury, along with all the other local functions that substantially benefit the state generally, such as elections, road repair and maintenance, solid waste disposal, safety-net welfare, a range of public safety functions, etc.

Sue Lessard explained how unrealistic it was to suggest that the Governor's proposal to cut over \$1.5 million of dedicated resources to Hampden could be

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### Legislative Bulletin

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# Governor's General Assistance Proposals Get Hearing

On Thursday of this week, the jointly convened Appropriations Committee and Health and Human Services Committee heard four hours of public testimony on the elements of Governor LePage's FY 2014 – FY 2015 General Fund budget that impact the state/municipal General Assistance (GA) program.

As proposed in the printed bill (LR 1046) and amended by a "change package" offered by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Governor's GA proposals:

- Do away with the enhanced reimbursement formula that supports regional service center communities, thereby limiting state reimbursement to municipalities for direct GA benefits to 50%;
- Make ineligible for GA all households triggering the 5-year lifetime limit on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits;
- Make ineligible for GA all households sanctioned for a TANF program violation;
- Make permanent the currently temporary 9-month limit on housing assistance; and
- Make permanent the currently temporary 10% reduction in the maximum levels of assistance.

Many organizations and interest groups, including Maine Equal Justice Partners, Pine Tree Legal, and the Maine Municipal Association opposed the entire package of proposed changes. The testimony offered by these groups raised concerns with shifting additional burdens on those that can least afford it, increasing GA program funding burden on the property taxpayers in the service center communities, and ignoring the cost-saving measures developed by the GA Work Group that was charged with developing those cost-saving measures by the Legislature last year.

The testimony provided by the municipal GA administrators was largely uniform, with a little difference of opinion regarding the proposal to make any household categorically ineligible for GA that has either reached its 5-year TANF limit or been sanctioned for TANF

program violations.

## Limiting State Reimbursements.

Since the inception of the state-local General Assistance partnership created 40 years ago, it has been recognized that the property taxpayers in the municipalities where the demand for public assistance is especially concentrated deserve a "circuitbreaker" in the reimbursement formula.

Under existing law, municipalities that spend more than .0003 of state valuation in benefits issued receive 90% reimbursement for every dollar spent after the trigger is reached. As actually implemented, none of the "above threshold communities" have 90% of their total cost covered. Instead, like all other municipalities, these service center communities receive 50% reimbursement until the state valuation trigger is hit. Currently, Portland and Bangor, which trigger the threshold in November, receive approximately 75% in state reimbursement. Lewiston, which historically triggers the threshold in May, receives 58% of its direct benefits in state reimbursement.

Catherine Conlow, Bangor city manager, Ben Sprague, Bangor councilor, Robert Macdonald, Lewiston mayor, John Anton, Portland councilor, and Doug Gardiner, Portland social services director, provided testimony in opposition to the proposal to limit the state's share of direct GA benefits to 50%. The testimony focused on the public policy propriety of the enhanced reimbursement because it acknowledges the additional burdens experienced by communities that serve as the hubs for the multiplicity of services (i.e., shelters, housing, clinics, hospitals, social services, food kitchens, etc.) that GA recipients need. It should be pointed out that the 90% reimbursement "circuitbreaker" was the original municipal reimbursement system established 40 years ago when the modern GA program was created out of the state's "pauper laws". It was not until 1983 that the 50% reimbursement program for all municipalities was established.

Although not directly impacted by the

proposed 50% reimbursement proposal, Bill Stokes, mayor for the city of Augusta and Karen Heck, mayor for the city of Waterville, provided testimony in opposition to the Governor's entire package of GA proposals. They expressed grave concerns with shifting additional burdens onto the property taxpayers of Maine's largest communities, pointing out that limiting access to programs does nothing to eliminate need.

## Linking TANF Ineligibility to GA.

Dorothy Meagher, Auburn welfare director, Sue Charron, Lewiston welfare director and Stacey Parra, speaking on behalf of the town of Rockport and the Maine Welfare Directors Association (MWDA), provided testimony in support of the Governor's proposal that makes those households that become ineligible for TANF because they reached the 5-year lifetime limit also ineligible for GA.

Although supportive, the proponents made it clear that it was out of a need to limit the property taxpayer exposure and to put an end to the shift in burden from the state to the municipalities. The level of discomfort associated with supporting the GA ineligibility proposals was best summarized by Sue Charron, Lewiston welfare director, "*We understand that making the timed-out TANF families ineligible for GA is distasteful, and it is a difficult proposal for the municipalities to support. However, there are alternatives. DHHS has publicly admitted that they could have done a better job preparing these families for self-sufficiency, and they are now using some of the TANF 60-month savings to develop an improved ASPIRE program so that existing families will obtain independence within the 60-month time limit.*"

GA Work Group Recommendations. Voices were unified once again when addressing the absence of the GA Work Group recommendations as part of the Governor's cost-saving proposals. Nearly every person providing testimony on the GA elements of the budget urged the Committees to review and adopt the recommendations from the GA Work

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# MUBEC – Who Knows Best?

There is a tremendous amount of we-know-better in the world of MUBEC advocacy. “MUBEC” stands for the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code, and a public hearing was held on Thursday this week to make the MUBEC apply throughout the state whether the voters in Maine’s smaller communities want the building code to apply in their communities or not. It’s for their own good, or the greater public good, or both, so say its advocates.

Since under current law every town meeting community in the state with a population of less than 4,000 is entirely free to adopt and enforce the state building code if it so wishes, MMA’s Legislative Policy Committee saw no need to mandate the application of MUBEC as a State fiat. Thursday’s public hearing demonstrated how little the local voters’ point of view means to the builders, architects, insurance companies, heating and air conditioning engineers, insulation contractors, environmental groups, energy efficiency groups, and other industry interests and associations. A veritable wall of interest groups are seeking to impose MUBEC as a building code that will apply in every nook and corner of the state for our own good, whether we know it or not.

LD977, *An Act To Restore Uniformity to the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code*, is the bill and it was presented to the Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development Committee by its sponsor, Rep. Anne Graham of North Yarmouth. Rep. Graham believes the MUBEC legislation enacted in 2011 was a mistake that needs to be corrected. That legislation scaled back the original enactment of MUBEC so that the building code would only automatically apply in communities over 4,000 in population. The correction is to make MUBEC apply throughout the state without exception, and make all municipalities over 2,000, rather than 4,000, enforce the code.

There are 80 municipalities in Maine with populations between 2,000 and 4,000 but not all would be meaningfully affected by LD 977 because some of those 80 towns and cities have already adopted MUBEC voluntarily, which is

an option for all municipalities. Making MUBEC apply in the 325 municipalities under 2,000 in population without any overt system of enforcement raises additional questions.

The first wave of proponents of LD 977 included the Maine Real Estate Development Association, several members of the Maine Contractors and Builders Alliance, the American Institute of Architects, a registered engineer specializing in heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, the Maine Indoor Air Quality Council, the Maine Association of Building Efficiency Professionals, the Maine Association of Insurance Companies and the U.S. Green Building Council. There were probably at least a dozen additional proponents representing other interest groups whose names MMA was unable to gather.

MUBEC is the only allowable building code in Maine as a matter of law, but the major themes of the proponents’ testimony were that LD 977 created uniformity, predictability, consistency, and establishes a level playing field between competing contractors. It was not made clear how a single allowable building code in the state frustrates those goals. Another claim was that strong building codes are good for the property owners that must abide by them, both financially (in the long term, at least) and for reasons of health and safety, if those property owners only knew it. To be sure, strong building codes are also good for the companies that insure those property owners.

Only two groups testified in opposition to LD 977. MMA’s Legislative Policy Committee voted to oppose the bill in deference to the current right provided to the voters in over 400 municipalities throughout the state that are under 4,000 in population to choose whether to adopt and enforce MUBEC. Maine’s municipal leaders tend to trust the voters in their communities to decide for themselves whether the ostensible benefits of MUBEC make its adoption the right choice for their community. MMA rarely endorses overriding a local decision-making option in favor of a state mandate.

MMA’s other request to the Legislature was to stop rototilling these public policy concepts and using the municipalities in Maine as guinea pigs to test alternative variations. A short list of laws directly involving municipal government that have been hashed and re-hashed by the Legislature in recent years includes the school consolidation law, the Informed Growth Act, and MUBEC. A re-hash of the consumer fireworks law may be in the wings. It is time for the Legislature to let some changes to enacted law settle-in before changing them yet again.

The Maine Association of Realtors also testified in opposition to LD 977, citing the significant increases in regulatory costs associated with implementing MUBEC. According to the realtors’ testimony, the mandatory implementation of MUBEC throughout the hundreds of communities in Maine in 2013 will not serve to encourage construction activities in the short term because of the multiple inspections (6 to 10) and potentially significant permitting costs that MUBEC compliance entails, even for the modest single family home. No one at the public hearing seemed to know whether there was anywhere near an adequate cadre of certified “third party inspectors” available to assist the communities over 2,000 in population with their enforcement obligations under LD 977.

The work session on LD 977 is scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup>.

## GA Proposals (cont’d)

Group that was charged by the Legislature to find savings of \$1 million per year in state GA costs. Although the members of the Work Group, which included representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, accomplished the task in December of 2012, only a few of those recommendations were included as part of the Governor’s budget.

The Health and Human Services Committee will now be reviewing the Governor’s proposals in light of this public testimony and making its recommendations to the Appropriations Committee.

## Brewer Hearing (cont'd)

offset by “sharing services”. She pointed out that the easy political rhetoric linking “consolidation” to “efficiency” fueled the school consolidation law of 2007, which turned out to be an unproductive skein of tangled yarn that has been unraveling since its enactment.

Other elements of the municipal testimony that were presented to the Appropriations and Taxation Committees at the earlier public hearing held in Augusta on March 13 were reiterated at this public hearing. The term “tax shift” was in the air ubiquitously, as was the observation that the Governor was proposing to aggressively appropriate property tax resources to pay for state services, only to turn around and accuse the towns of excessive spending.

As far as alternative proposals were concerned, there was no shortage of suggestions. From all quarters, the message was to re-think the state’s tax code. The suggested alternatives to the massive property tax raids included:

- Repeal the income tax reductions enacted in 2011
  - Forever, or
  - For at least 2 years to let the economy get stronger, or
  - Until the entire tax code can be restructured in all dimensions
- Redesign Maine’s sales tax policy to
  - Expand the sales tax base by repealing exemptions so that tax revenues from

the consumption tax will contribute equitably to revenues derived from income and property taxation.

- Recognize that Maine is a vacation destination state by increasing the sales tax rate for goods and services that are consumed disproportionately by tourists and other non-residents to the state, such as the lodging tax.

**Next steps.** The Taxation Committee is now in the process of reviewing the Governor’s proposals related to taxation. For that purpose, the Committee is holding work sessions every Tuesday and

Friday afternoon. The BETR-to-BETE conversion will be the subject of the Committee’s attention on Tuesday next week, and the Homestead exemption and Circuitbreaker program will be the focus on Friday. The revenue sharing proposal will be taken up by the Committee on the following Tuesday. Details on the Committee’s work schedule is provided in a sidebar to this article. Municipal officials are encouraged to attend the Committee’s work sessions on these important topics, or listen-in on the Committee’s deliberations over the Internet.

### Governor LePage’s Proposals Negatively Impacting Property Taxes

- Eliminate the municipal revenue sharing program
- Eliminate the Homestead property tax exemption for non-elderly households
- Eliminate the “Circuitbreaker” property tax relief program for non-elderly households and significantly restrict the program for elderly households
- Convert several billion dollars worth of industrial and commercial taxable property to tax exempt status (BETR to BETE conversion)
  - Push onto the school systems the requirement to pay the “normal cost” of the Teachers’ Retirement premium, which has been covered by the state since the Retirement System was created
  - Eliminate a General Assistance reimbursement formula designed 40 years ago as a circuit breaker to protect the property taxpayers in regional service center communities with large GA programs
  - Take \$4 million of motor vehicle excise tax revenue each year from the municipalities for state spending programs

## LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS

Note: You should check your newspapers for Legal Notices as there may be changes in the hearing schedule. Weekly schedules and supplements are available at the Senate Office at the State House and the Legislature’s web site at <http://www.state.me.us/legis/senate/Documents/hearing/ANPHFrame.htm>. If you wish to have updates to the Hearing Schedules e-mailed directly to you, sign up on the ANPH homepage listed above. Work Session schedules and hearing updates are available at the Legislative Information page at <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/ljo/>.

### Monday, April 1

**Education & Cultural Affairs**  
**Room 202, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Tel: 287-3125**

LD 439 – An Act To Improve Maine’s Charter School Laws.

LD 533 – An Act To Eliminate the Requirement That Local Funding Follow a Pupil to a Charter School.

LD 889 – An Act To Adjust Funding Forwarded from School Districts

to Charter Schools.

LD 1056 – An Act To Require Local Voter Approval for Charter Schools.

LD 1057 – An Act Related to Public Funding of Charter Schools.

**Labor, Commerce, Research & Economic Development**  
**Room 208, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Tel: 287-1331**

LD 1041 – An Act To Modify the Mandatory Enforcement of the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code for a Municipality without a Building Code.

**State & Local Government**  
**Room 214, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Tel: 287-1330**

LD 80 – An Act To Change the Schedule for the Beginning of the Biennial Budget Cycle.

LD 805 – An Act To Require Notice to and Input from Municipalities in Which Certain Group Homes Are Located.

## LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS (cont.)

LD 1021 – An Act To Establish as a Public Record the Performance Evaluation of a Municipal Employee.

LD 1084 – An Act To Amend the Androscoggin County Charter.

### **Taxation**

**Room 127, State House, 10:00 a.m.**

**Tel: 287-1552**

LD 401 – An Act To Provide Local Sales Tax Increment Disbursements.

LD 562 – An Act Related to Service Charges in Lieu of Property Taxes on Tax-exempt Property.

LD 936 – An Act To Authorize Municipalities To Impose Service Charges on Tax-exempt Property Owned by Certain Nonprofit Organizations.

LD 998 – An Act To Provide Consistency in the Application of the Property Tax Exemption for Religious Organizations.

### ***Tuesday, April 2***

#### **Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry**

**Room 206, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-1312**

LD 745 – An Act To Promote Sustainable Food Policies.

#### **Education & Cultural Affairs**

**Room 202, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-3125**

LD 961 – An Act To Ensure Safe School Grounds.

#### **Judiciary**

**Room 438, State House, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-1327**

LD 1040 – An Act To Prohibit the Placement of Cameras and Electronic Surveillance Equipment on Private Property without the Written Permission of the Landowner.

#### **Labor, Commerce, Research & Economic Development**

**Room 208, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-1331**

LD 1072 – An Act To Provide Accountability in the Handling of Affordable Housing Tenants' Security Deposits.

### ***Wednesday, April 3***

#### **Criminal Justice & Public Safety**

**Rm. 436, State House, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-1122**

LD 685 – An Act To Require Investigation and Prosecution of Assaults by Law Enforcement Officers against Unarmed Individuals.

#### **Energy, Utilities & Technology**

**Room 211, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-4143**

LD 441 – Resolve, Directing the Public Utilities Commission To Develop a Plan To Reform Water Regulation.

LD 1004 – An Act To Clarify Voting Procedures for Standard Water Districts.

LD 1026 – An Act To Amend the Charter of the Ashland Water and Sewer District.

#### **Environment & Natural Resources**

**Room 216, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-4149**

LD 674 – An Act To Clarify the Natural Resources Protection Act.

LD 794 – An Act To Amend Setback Requirements and Standards Related to Species Migration under the Laws Regulating Development near Vernal Pools.

LD 824 – Resolve, Directing the Department of Environmental Protection To Develop a Rural Land Use Development Process.

#### **Veterans & Legal Affairs**

**Room 437, State House, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-1310**

LD 31 – An Act To Increase Gaming Opportunities for Charitable Fraternal and Veterans' Organizations.

### ***Thursday, April 4***

#### **Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry**

**Room 206, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-1312**

LD 500 – An Act To Permit Tribal Members To Have Access to Wood Fiber for Fuel, Shelter and Traditional Woodcraft Production.

#### **Environment & Natural Resources**

**Room 216, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.**

**Tel: 287-4149**

LD 966 – An Act To Clarify an Exemption to the Municipal Subdivision Laws.

### ***Friday, April 5***

#### **Transportation**

**Room 126, State House, 9:00 a.m.**

**Tel: 287-4148**

LD 918 – An Act To Remove the Provision That a Motorcycle Operator May Prove a Motorcycle Muffler Does Not Exceed Specific Noise Standards.

LD 919 – An act Concerning the Monetary Amount of Damage That Defines a Reportable Motor Vehicle Accident.

LD 943 – An Act To Amend Provisions of the Law Pertaining to Motor Vehicles.

LD 945 – An Act To Amend Provisions of Law Pertaining to Motor Vehicles.

(The bill summaries are written by MMA staff and are not necessarily the bill's summary statement or an excerpt from that summary statement. During the course of the legislative session, many more bills of municipal interest will be printed than there is space in the Legislative Bulletin to describe. Our attempt is to provide a description of what would appear to be the bills of most significance to local government, but we would advise municipal officials to also review the comprehensive list of LDs of municipal interest that can be found on MMA's website, [www.memun.org](http://www.memun.org).)

### Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 1183 – An Act To Prohibit the Enforcement of Federal Law Placing Restrictions on Firearms or Ammunition. (Sponsored by Rep. Johnson of Eddington; additional cosponsors.)

This bill attempts to exempt from federal regulation firearms, firearm accessories and ammunition that are owned by residents of Maine and kept exclusively in the state. The bill also attempts to prohibit the enforcement of any law, statute, rule, regulation or order of the federal government related to firearms, accessories and ammunition, including any restriction on the ownership of semi-automatic firearms or any requirement that a firearm has to be registered in any manner.

### Environment & Natural Resources

LD 1147 – An Act To Protect Maine's Scenic Character. (Sponsored by Rep. Hayes of Buckfield; additional cosponsors.)

This bill makes several changes to the scenic impact provisions of the laws governing expedited permitting of grid-scale wind energy development enacted in 2008. Among the changes, the bill offers the possibility of protecting scenic resources that have been identified as significant by municipalities in their comprehensive plans.

### Labor, Commerce, Research & Economic Development

LD 1150 – An Act To Require Prevailing Wages To Be Paid on All Public Works Projects Receiving State Funding. (Sponsored by Rep. DeChant of Bath; additional cosponsors.)

This bill amends the laws requiring the payment of prevailing wages in state public works contracts to remove the exemption under those laws for contracts in amounts less than \$50,000.

LD 1156 – An Act To Update a Reference Contained in the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code. (Sponsored by Rep. Russell of Portland.)

This bill amends the law establishing the residential basement wall insulation standard under the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC). Current law requires that standard to be the standard established in the 2006 edition of the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). This bill requires the standard to be the pertinent standard of the IECC, as that international code may be amended.

LD 1195 – An Act To Protect the Privacy of Job Applicants. (Sponsored by Rep. Jones of Freedom; additional cosponsors.)

This bill prohibits employers from obtaining consumer reports that contain information regarding the creditworthiness, credit standing, credit capacity, debts, check-writing experience or insurability of an employee or prospective employee.

LD 1221 – An Act To Preserve the Dynamic Status Quo Pending Expiration of Collective Bargaining Agreements. (Sponsored by Sen. Cain of Penobscot Cty; additional cosponsors.)

This bill amends the laws governing public sector labor relations to establish the "dynamic status quo" system. Dynamic status quo requires that during the negotiations of a new labor contract, all increases in pay or benefits that were part of the most recent collective bargaining agreement, or were provided as a matter of practice, must be continued throughout the negotiation period.

### State & Local Government

LD 1122 – An Act Allowing Municipalities To Enact Firearms Policies in Local Government Buildings. (Sponsored by Rep. Moonen of Portland.)

This bill provides a municipal legislative body with the authority to adopt an ordinance that restricts the carrying of firearms in the municipality's essential municipal offices and places of legislative assembly just as the state imposes those restrictions on its capitol area.

LD 1133 – An Act Concerning the Removal of Municipal Employees. (Sponsored by Sen. Cleveland of Androscoggin County.)

This bill specifies that municipal employees who are not appointed pursuant to general law, charter or ordinance may only be removed for cause.

LD 1139 – An Act To Allow County Law Enforcement To Participate in Mutual Aid Agreements. (Sponsored by Rep. Graham of North Yarmouth.)

Current law allows municipal officers, unless prohibited by municipal charter or ordinance, to authorize the chief of police for that municipality to allow police officers to assist other municipalities when requested, or to request the assistance of police officers from other locations. This bill allows the same authorities and allowances to be provided among county governments and also specifies that the shared service applies to all law enforcement officers, not just police officers.

LD 1177 – An Act To Implement the Recommendations from the Discontinued and Abandoned Roads Stakeholder Group. (Sponsored by Sen. Saviello of Franklin Cty; additional cosponsor.)

Current law governing the discontinuation of a town way provides that unless the discontinuation order adopted by the voters expressly extinguishes a public easement over the town way, the public easement is retained. This bill would reverse that policy and require the discontinuation order to expressly retain the public easement. If the public easement is not expressly retained, then it would be extinguished by the vote to discontinue the town way, except all property owners landlocked by the discontinuation would have to be given an easement. The bill also requires any abandonment of a town way, which occurs automatically under current law after 30 years of municipal non-maintenance, to be accomplished by an affirmative vote of the municipal legislative body. Finally, the bill mandates all municipalities to prepare a list by January 1, 2016 of all roadways in their jurisdiction that the municipality intends to keep in repair with public funds, and all roadways not on that list on January 1, 2016 that are not on that list are automatically discontinued with no public easement.

### Taxation

LD 1164 – An Act To Allow Cooperative Housing Owners Who Are Blind To Qualify for the Property Tax Exemption. (Sponsored by Sen. Goodall of Sagadahoc Cty; additional cosponsors.)

This bill extends the \$4,000 homestead-type property tax exemption for persons who are blind to residents of a cooperative housing corporation.

LD 1207 – An Act To Expand the Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Are 100% Disabled. (Sponsored by Rep. Crockett of Bethel; additional cosponsors.)

This bill creates a 100% property tax exemption for the homestead of a veteran who is disabled by injury or disease incurred or aggravated during active military service in the line of duty and is receiving any form of pension or compensation from the U.S. government for total, service-connected disability. The bill provides the municipality granting the exemption reimbursement for 90% of the property tax revenue lost as a result of the exemptions that exceeds 3% of the total municipal property tax levy.

LD 1218 – An Act To Amend the Law Regarding Affordable

## **HOPPER (cont.)**

Housing Tax Increment Financing. (Sponsored by Rep. Moonen of Portland; additional cosponsor.)

This bill amends the law governing municipal tax increment financing agreements to allow the costs of case management and support services to be included as an allowable program cost within the agreement.

LD 1226 – An Act To Improve Maine Veterans’ Property Tax Exemptions. (Sponsored by Sen. Cleveland of Androscoggin Cty; additional cosponsors.)

Current law provides the veteran’s property tax exemption to veterans who served during a federally recognized war period or were disabled during active military service. This bill expands the veterans’ property tax exemption to cover all veterans.

### **Transportation**

LD 1075 – An Act To Allow Motorists To Proceed through an Intersection after Stopping for a Red Light. (Sponsored by Rep. Lockman of Amherst; additional cosponsors.)

This bill allows a vehicle to proceed straight through or turn right or left after stopping at a red light if conditions allow and if there is no sign indicating it is prohibited.

### **Veterans & Legal Affairs**

LD 767 – An Act To Limit Contributions to Candidates for Maine Offices to Maine Residents. (Sponsored by Rep. MacDonald of Boothbay.)

This bill requires all contributions to candidates seeking to be elected Governor, a member of the Legislature or to a municipal office to be made by Maine residents.

LD 981 – An Act To Allow Candidate Name Tags on Election Day. (Sponsored by Rep. Casavant of Biddeford; additional cosponsors.) (By Request)

This bill allows a candidate who stands outside the polls, but within the designated 250 foot area around the polling place, to wear a name tag while greeting voters.