Legislative BULLETIN
MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION
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Municipal Revenue Sharing on Shifting Sands

"Change Package" #1 and "Change Package" #2

Last week, Governor Baldacci advanced a "change package" to the proposed supplemental state budget which recommended a partial restoration of funding (that is, a reduction in the originally proposed level of cuts) for a range of programs supported by state government. That change package was based on approximately $78 million of new-found state revenue provided in a combination of re-projected state revenue ($51 million) and previously unexpected federal Medicaid support ($27 million)

On Thursday this week, the Administration outlined the framework of yet another "change package" being developed, which will recommend more restorations to state-supported programs. This new change package is based on approximately $94 million in newly-available revenue that comes almost entirely from additional federal Medicaid support.

Here is an update on how each change package will impact municipal revenue sharing, and how the Governor's most recent recommendations made yesterday will affect school subsidy.

Change Package #1. In last week's change package, the Governor recommended that the original proposal to take $31 million out of municipal revenue sharing during the current fiscal year (FY 2010) be reduced so that $25 million would taken out instead…a $6 million restoration.

At that time, the Governor proposed no change to the proposed cut to municipal revenue sharing for next year (FY 2011) of $40 million.

The Appropriations Committee asked MMA to survey the municipalities to see whether the $6 million restoration should be provided for the current fiscal year, or whether it would be preferable to provide the $6 million restoration in the FY 2011 fiscal year. If that was done, $31 million would be taken out of the revenue sharing program for this year (instead of $25 million) and $34 million would be pulled out of the distribution throughout FY 2011 (instead of $40 million).

MMA sent out a survey to the key officials of all municipalities. The approximately one hundred municipalities that responded in the quick turn-around time were split down the middle as to which fiscal year to apply the $6 million restoration. After reviewing the even split, the Appropriations Committee voted to apply the $6 million restoration to the current fiscal year's distribution (FY 2010) as initially recommended by the Governor. The Committee's reasoning was that the towns and cities that said they wanted the $6 million restored during this fiscal year probably really needed it distributed that way, whereas the municipalities that indicated the restoration should be provided next year could effectively achieve that same result by carrying over the restored

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The School Consolidation "Fix-up" Bill

LD 570, *An Act to Improve the Laws Governing the Consolidation of School Administrative Units,* was filed over a year ago and from the beginning its intentions were to pick up the pieces after the vote last November regarding the school consolidation law of 2007.

If the voters had chosen to repeal the school consolidation law, legislation would have been needed to reconcile that decision with everything that had occurred on the ground over the last couple of years as result of the school consolidation mandates.

If the voters decided against outright repeal, it was clear to most legislators that the existing consolidation law would still need some significant amendment.

Observation #1. After the voters' decision in November not to repeal the consolidation law, the most immediate political problem was how to implement the financial penalty system for "noncompliance", which was ripping the state into two along an urban/suburban vs. rural fault line. Imposing a financial penalty on some of the most rural parts of the state because they were unable to meet certain consolidation standards just wasn't cutting it, especially when the financial penalty would effectively be incurred by the school children. As one school superintendent described it, the public policy rationale amounted to "punishing the students according to their zip code".

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CONSOLIDATION (cont'd)

Observation #2. The chief administrative problem with the school consolidation law of 2007 was its design as a one-time event. It was a chunky, ill-fitting law, awkwardly inserted into the flow of school statute, completely lacking in both follow-through and follow-up, giving over to both the Department of Education and the private law firms that specialize in school law a special interpretive insight into the rules of the game that left lay-people in the dark. To underscore its one-time characteristic, much of the 2007 school consolidation law, including the 2008 "fix-up" amendments, was accomplished through a legislative device known as "unallocated language".

A law that is enacted through the device of "unallocated language" is still a law like any other, but the verbiage of the law does not get "allocated" or written into the 38 volumes of red law books. The reason laws adopted as unallocated language don't get codified into the law books is because they are typically one-time directives requiring a state agency or other entities to do something within a prescribed period of time. Similar to legislative "resolves", if these one-time directives were allocated into the law books, they would quickly become stale and the law books would get clogged-up with outdated verbiage.

When you combine these two observations, the legislative pathway to fix-up the school consolidation law is revealed.

Step #1. Instead of eliminating the penalties, why not make it possible for all school systems to achieve compliance?

Step #2. In order to make it possible for all school systems to achieve compliance, pull the "Alternative Organizational Structure" language out of the dark corners of unallocated language where it was parked in 2008, dust it off and dress it up a little bit, and enshrine it in the red law books for all to see.

That, in a nutshell, is LD 570, which was reported out of the Education Committee with a unanimous "ought to pass" report on Friday last week.

More specifically, LD 570 achieves or allows the following:

• An "Alternative Organizational Structure", or AOS, is enshrined in statute as a "school administrative unit" that can meet the requirements of school consolidation law. An "Alternative Organizational Structure" is a modified school union-type system where independent school systems share a superintendent; a consolidated administration of special education, transportation, and back-office business functions; a common core curriculum and student assessment system; common school policies and calendar; and "consistent" collective bargaining agreements.

• Allows the number of students attending a school from the unorganized territories to be counted as students "served by the school system" for the purpose of meeting consolidation threshold standards.

• Expressly allows a regional school unit (RSU) or AOS to be formed that serves just 1,000 students (as opposed to the original 2,500-student threshold) if the proposed RSU or AOS:

– comprises three or more school units that were in existence prior to July 1, 2008, or

– the member municipalities of the proposed RSU/AOS are surrounded by already approved RSU or AOS systems and there are no other school systems available to join the proposed RSU/AOS, or

– the member municipalities of the proposed RSU/AOS include two or more "isolated small schools" as that term is defined in law.

• Allows an RSU/AOS designation to be granted to a one or more school systems even if the 1,000 student threshold is not achieved if the applying school systems can demonstrate and otherwise convince the commissioner of the Department of Education that all reasonable and practical means of satisfying the various RSU standards have been exhausted and approval is warranted based on the unique or particular circumstances of those school units.

• Allows for the purpose of school subsidy distribution the individual school systems within an AOS to have their subsidy calculated and remitted as individual school systems, unless the participating schools systems decide in their reorganization plan for the AOS to be treated as a single school system for school subsidy distribution purposes. The governing bodies of existing AOS systems, which were not provided this option, would be given the opportunity to effectively change their reorganization plan in this respect if they wish to.

• Establishes the procedures for a municipality to withdraw from a RSU by essentially reinstating the procedures that used to be available for a municipality to withdraw from a School Administrative District (SAD). Under the terms of the withdrawal process, neither the withdrawing municipality nor the remaining RSU would be subject to the financial penalties for being noncompliant with the standards of consolidation for a 2-year period after withdrawal. If either the remaining RSU or withdrawing municipality are noncompliant with the standards of consolidation at the end of the 2-year period, the penalties would kick-in.

•Provides an authority for the RSU school boards to place an article before the voters that would permit the school board to establish a single common date for the beginning term of office for elected board members, who may be elected at different times at their municipal elections.

Legislative Bulletin

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Tree Growth "Notification Process" Resolved

On Thursday last week the Taxation Committee finally resolved the Tree Growth notification issue that had confounded the Committee for several weeks.

The bill is LD 1635, *An Act to Avoid Unnecessary Removal of Land from the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law Program.* The details of the printed bill and the circumstances that caused the legislation to be submitted were described in detail in the February 12th and February 19th issues of the *Legislative Bulletin*.

In summary, a law was enacted in 2007 that requires assessors to provide a 60-day written notice to landowners with property in the Tree Growth program before that property is withdrawn from the program, and the withdrawal penalties applied, because the owner failed to file the necessary 10-year certifications that the owner has complied with the property's forestry management plan over the preceding 10 years and that the plan has been updated. That notification law was poorly written but strictly applied by Maine Revenue Services with respect to the Tree Growth properties in the Unorganized Territories (UT). LD 1635 was submitted in response and had two goals. The first goal was to rewrite the notice requirement so it made more sense. The second goal was to undo at least two Tree Growth withdrawals that occurred in the UT because of Maine Revenue Services' strict application of the 2007 law. MMA's focus was on the first goal.

The chief proponent of LD 1635, the Small Woodlot Owners Association of Maine (SWOAM), was striving to accomplish the first goal by significantly reducing the financial penalty for withdrawing a Tree Growth parcel for failing to provide the 10-year updating certifications in a timely manner. SWOAM's claim was that the financial penalties for that type of administrative failure are excessive, and if the financial penalties were not so onerous, the small lot landowners would be less concerned about the extent of the notification procedures.

MMA opposed reducing those penalties unless the same legislation also addressed a number of serious public policy issues that are associated with small-lot waterfront Tree Growth enrollments, including the integrity of the forest management plans that allow those enrollments to exist. As most everyone knows, very well-heeled waterfront landowners are sticking their residential property into the Tree Growth program in order to dodge their fair share of property taxation. For many years, municipal officials have identified this issue as a significant tax equity problem, but SWOAM and the Maine Forest Products Council, environmental organizations such as the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and the Maine Forest Service have all resisted municipal attempts to effectively penetrate that issue. Until there is a willingness to address that problem, MMA will not be able to support relaxing the penalties facing landowners who are unable to account for their continuing eligibility for the tax break they are receiving on a regular and fixed 10-year basis.

As a result, LD 1635 in its final form rewrites the assessors' notification procedures in the following way:

1) The existing 60-day notification procedure (which as written does not allow the notification to be issued until the landowner has already failed to meet his or her 10-year deadline) is repealed and replaced with a more flexible, pre-deadline notification procedure.

2) For any Tree Growth landowner whose 10-year deadline is approaching and who has not filed the necessary certifications, the assessor must issue a written notice, sent by regular U.S. mail, that includes the following information:

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Fixing the Tree Growth Abuse Issues Delayed For Yet Another Year

Throughout the course of this legislative session, and in the context of the significant cuts to Tree Growth municipal reimbursement, MMA attempted to advance a number of changes to the Tree Growth program that would address the issue of inappropriate Tree Growth enrollments. The particular focus is on small-lot, waterfront Tree Growth enrollments and the standards (or lack of meaningful standards) in the "forest management plans" that allow those enrollments to exist.

The Taxation Committee has concluded that there is not enough time this session to process those changes into a bill for the full Legislature's consideration.

Instead, the Tax Committee is going to direct Maine Revenue Services to convene the primarily interested parties for the purposes of developing recommendations for the newly-elected Legislature to consider in January. Two years ago, the previous Taxation Committee issued a similar directive to the Maine Forest Service, charging the working group to, among other tasks, determine whether data supports the perception that some land is being classified under the Tree Growth program that does not meet the statutory requirements or the purpose of the Tree Growth tax law. The report of that working group never really saw the light of day.

Ocean Energy Task Force Legislation Reviewed

In 2008, 21 days before the end of the 123rd legislature, a long and complex bill was printed to "*Implement Recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Wind Power Development*".

This significant piece of legislation was printed, heard, worked, and enacted by the legislature in two weeks. Conspiracy theories about legislator-lobbyist-state-environmentalist-industry collusion have spun in the wind ever since.

Fast-forward two years later.

With a few weeks to go before the adjournment of the 124th Legislature, LD 1810 "*An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Governor's Ocean Energy Task Force*" has been released by the Governor. This 36-page bill was heard by the Utilities and Energy Committee on March 11.

The bill follows an extensive report by the State Planning Office (SPO) issued in December 2009 outlining the research and recommendations of the Ocean Energy Task Force. Information about the Task Force can be found on the SPO website here: http://www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/OETF/index.htm

In essence the Task Force and LD 1810 recommend that the state aggressively pursue the private development of offshore wind power and tidal power projects.

The public policy rationale for this stance is articulated in the rhetorical preambles of the bill that serve to justify its "emergency" enactment. Namely, that oil prices have spiked to unsustainable levels in the recent past and will undoubtedly do so again; that oil is largely a foreign product the use of which results in the export of American dollars; that oil is a non-renewable and non-clean source of energy that contributes to greenhouse gas emissions; that Maine's coastline provides very good wind and tidal resources; and that while technology is emerging to harness tidal and ocean wind energy, markets are such that they are not competitive with oil or coal without governmental support.

The bill amends five titles of law, Title 12 (Conservation) to amend the submerged land leasing provisions and LURC oversight; Title 30-A (Municipalities and Counties), to clarify/preempt municipal zoning authority over ocean-based projects; Title 35-A (Public Utilities) for obvious reasons; Title 36 (Taxation), to provide tax exemptions for the ocean energy-based personal property; Title 38 (Waters and Navigation), to amend the state's environmental permitting laws such as the Natural Resources Protection Act and Site Location of Development Act; and several "unallocated" sections of law that will not be indexed to a particular title.

These several titles encompass the jurisdictions of different legislative committees. However, it is not unusual for a single, complex issue involving multiple areas of law to be assigned to the predominant committee of jurisdiction, which in this case the Utilities and Energy Committee.

Because the general thinking is that these wind power projects will be developed offshore, typically miles offshore, the municipal impacts from this legislation are presented as limited or simply issues of clarification.

Coastal municipal officials should be aware of this legislation and the following municipally-relevant provisions.

1) Policy: The bill not only seeks to articulate the state's policy, two different sections purport to establish municipal policy with respect to offshore energy projects. It reads: "*The Legislature directs its political subdivisions, agencies and public officials, in accordance with pertinent legal authorities, to take every reasonable action to encourage the attraction of appropriately sited development related to tidal power…*"

We're not aware of what pertinent legal authority authorizes the Legislature to direct public officials to encourage a particular kind of development. It is certainly fair for the Legislature to set state policy, but one would think local communities should be allowed to establish their own perspectives.

2) Uses of the Renewable Ocean Energy Trust: This trust is established to receive the lease payments made by an offshore developer to the state for occupancy of the state's submerged lands. The bill dedicates the uses of the trust to monitoring and mitigating the impact from the development on wildlife and fisheries. The Legislature might consider including land-side impacts on shorefront property owners and businesses.

3) Property tax exemption: The bill exempts all renewable ocean energy-generating machinery, equipment and related components from municipal property taxation to the extent the property is on/over state submerged lands or in transit to those locations. Ocean-energy related personal property located within the boundaries of municipality is not exempt.

4) Municipal boundaries: For purposes of both taxation and land-use regulation the bill presumes that the boundaries of a municipality in the coastal area do not extend below the mean low-water line. For purposes of taxation, the law merely states that this is a rebuttable presumption but does not limit the municipality in terms of evidence it may introduce to rebut that presumption. For purposes of land-use regulation, a municipality may not exert jurisdiction without showing that its "legislative charter" expressly includes the submerged land area within its boundaries.

5) Land-use Control: LD 1810 circumscribes municipal land-use regulation of these projects, although it's a bit ambiguous in this regard. The bill expressly prohibits exclusionary zoning that would simply disallow the

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Mandatory Paid Sick Leave - Update

The Labor Committee continues to review LD 1665**,** *An Act to Prevent the Spread of H1N1,* sponsored by the Senate President, Elizabeth Mitchell (Kennebec Cty.). This bill was heard on January 14th and reviewed in the January 22nd *Legislative Bulletin*. The goal of this bill is to require employers to provide employees paid sick time. A final Committee vote on the bill is scheduled for next week.

At last week's work session, an amendment was offered by Senator Mitchell and presented by the Maine Women's Lobby, the primary advocate of the bill.

The amendment makes the following four changes:

Employers Covered: The original bill included employers of all sizes. It had different sick time accrual rates for employers with more or less than 25 employees. As amended, the bill excludes employers with less than 50 employees. All employers with 50 or more employees will be obligated to provide paid sick leave.

Accrual rate: The original bill provided workers with one hour of sick leave for every 40 hours worked (for employers with 25 or more workers) and one hour for every 80 hours worked (for employers with less than 25 workers).

As amended, the bill provides one hour of sick leave for every 80 hours worked.

Workers Covered: The original bill covered all workers: full-time, part-time, stipend and seasonal workers.

As amended, the bill still covers all workers. However, there is 180-day waiting period such that an employee does not begin to accrue sick leave until the 180th calendar day of employment. The apparent intent of this provision is to exclude seasonal workers (e.g., those who only work in the summer at amusement parks or campgrounds or in the winter at ski resorts). To be clear, the waiting period is not equal to 180 working days. The worker can work one day per month and qualify after six months as long as the worker was "employed" for that entire period of time.

Use of Sick Leave: The original bill allowed a worker to use sick leave for his or her own medical needs or those of his or her extended family, including grandparents, grandchildren and siblings.

As amended, the bill allows the use of sick leave for the employee, and for the employee to tend to his or her spouse, parent or child.

Municipalities opposed the original legislation and continue to oppose it as amended. While the amendment mitigates the impact, there are impacts nonetheless.

The first municipal concern is that the bill appears to cover all workers. Most full-time municipal workers have access to paid sick days. In fact, according to sources cited by proponents of LD 1665, 98% of full-time state and local government workers nationwide have access to paid sick days.

However, these same sources indicate that only 42% of part-time state and local government employees have paid sick days nationally and there is no reason to believe Maine is different on this point.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Maine local governments employed approximately 26,000 part-time workers in 2008, of which 9,000 were in education and the remaining 17,000 were in non-education local government.

These part-time positions include seasonal workers like summer life guards at public beaches or maintenance crews on public golf courses. It would appear that the amendment has removed these seasonal workers from the benefits of the bill (as long as they are employed for less than 6 months). However, there are many other part-timers such as weekend staff at a public library and stipend positions such as some code enforcement officers, building inspectors, animal control officers, harbormasters and others. Other non-full time municipal workers include board members such as planning or zoning board members, or elected officials (clerks, tax collectors, treasurers, road commissioners, selectboard members) who set their own hours.

While MMA asked for some clarification of the impact of this legislation on municipal employers, none was provided at the work session. In casual conversations with an employee of the Department of Labor, it appears that in order to determine if a worker is covered by the law the Department will consider such issues as: (1) did the worker receive a W-2 (employee) or a 1099 (not an employee) for tax purposes; and (2) is the worker covered by the municipality's workers' compensation policy? If this is in fact how a worker's eligibility is to be determined, it would appear that most municipal part-time workers will be covered by the law.

A second difficulty for municipalities in extending benefits under the terms of LD 1665 is that the hours of many of these municipal workers are not tracked. Obviously, the part-time workers who are paid hourly have their hours tracked. But the hours of certain elected officials or those that are given an annual stipend are not. It would be expensive from an administrative standpoint to begin tracking the hours worked by these individuals simply for purposes of granting 1 hour of sick leave for every 80 hours worked (or 45 seconds of paid leave per hour worked). Under the bill, the accrued sick leave carries-over from year to year and so the municipal tracking system would need to keep these hours on the town's books indefinitely.

Furthermore, one of the benefits of part-time employment opportunities is the flexibility it provides to workers to handle personal issues such as medical care. If one only works on the weekend at the local library or transfer station, there would appear to be plenty of time to manage routine doctors visits.

Obviously, an illness can strike at any time. However, there is no convincing argument that the taxpayers should be forced to pay a sick worker to stay home. While it may happen occasion-

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TREE GROWTH (cont'd)

• The specific date of the deadline;

• The statutory citation that describes the landowner's responsibilities, which is 36 MRSA §574-B; and

• A statement that the consequences of failing to meet the deadline could result in substantial financial penalties being assessed against the owner.

3) This particular notice must be mailed within 185 days, or 6 months, of the deadline.

4) If the notice is mailed between 185 days and 120 days of the deadline, then the specific date of the deadline is the final deadline, and if the landowner fails to provide the necessary certifications by that day, the property is removed from the Tree Growth program and the penalties are applied.

5) If the notice is mailed within 120 days (4 months) of the deadline, the notice must:

• Inform the owner that he or she has a full 120 days from the date of the notice to provide the assessor with the documentation to achieve compliance. In that case, the 120-day period expressly trumps the specific date of the deadline.

As amended in this way, LD 1635 was given a unanimous "ought to pass" recommendation of the Taxation Committee. Assuming enactment, this new notification procedure will replace the existing 60-day notice procedure 90 days after the Legislature finally adjourns.

OCEAN ENERGY (cont'd)

development of an offshore project or its on-shore accessory structures. One section of the bill seems to preserve the ability to regulate these on-shore structures, short of prohibition. The next section of the bill seems to limit the municipal regulatory authority to the exact limits of the state statutes on Site Law and NRPA and LURC. It is unclear how this proposed limitation of municipal regulatory authority applies to mandatory shoreland zoning or other aspects of local regulation of on-shore accessory structures, such as roads and buildings, not covered by Site Law or NRPA.

6) Public Notice and Involvement: It is unclear the extent to which municipalities and the public are notified of a development. The Ocean Energy Task Force identified public and municipal involvement as a key component of a successful program. The Committee should explore whether that recommendation is carried through in LD 1810, particularly in the threshold issue of where the project is to be located pursuant to a submerged lands lease.

7) Local Benefit: The Ocean Energy Task Force also reviewed an analysis of successful European off-shore wind projects. [No projects have yet been developed off the coast of the United States; but several have been developed in Europe.] That analysis pointed to four factors, one of which was "*public support for wind energy in local communities generated either by participation in ownership of wind farms or through tax revenues paid to local authorizes for tangible benefits to communities*." It is difficult to identify any local benefits consistent with the European experience in this bill.

Off-shore energy production is going to be primarily the responsibility of state regulators since these projects are located on state (submerged) lands. Nevertheless, depending on the size and location of an offshore project, there may be significant on-shore impacts. Coastal municipalities will want to closely monitor the further development of this legislation.

SICK LEAVE (cont'd)

ally, there was no testimony at the 6-hour public hearing that municipal employers are firing workers for staying home sick once or twice per year.

Finally, it is very clear that the proponents of this legislation believe that all workers in all employment settings should be provided paid sick leave. Although LD 1665 is being watered-down, most legislative observers agree that once the concept of mandatory sick time gets enacted into law, attempts will be made to expand the mandate on employers every subsequent legislative session.

REVENUE (cont'd)

revenue sharing into their next year's budget through their undesignated fund balance.

Change package #2. Of the $94 million most recently made available to the Legislature's appropriators, about $68 million should be used to support programs under the Department of Health and Human Services, according to the Governor's recommendations. Of the $25 million remaining, the Governor is recommending:

• The restoration of $5 million in municipal revenue sharing to be applied to FY 2011, so that the "legislative transfer" out of revenue sharing for the next fiscal year would be $35 million rather than $40 million.

• The elimination of the proposal to further scale-back the Circuit Breaker property tax and rent rebate program, which if implemented would have further cut that program by $5.6 million in benefits.

• The restoration of an additional $5 million to General Purpose Aid to Local School for FY 2011. This restoration would be on top of the $20 million restoration recommended last week as part of Change Package #1, and will result in an entirely new GPA distribution spread sheet being developed. It is not yet known whether this additional $5 million would be distributed according to the EPS-based distribution formula or according to a more targeted formula.

• The distribution of $1.12 million to eradicate the school consolidation penalty for one year for those communities that voted to consolidate into a Regional School Unit even though their partnering communities voted against consolidation in sufficient numbers to prevent the consolidation from occurring.

• Placing over $7 million in the state's Budget Stabilization (or "Rainy Day") Fund.

Municipal officials in the process of developing their budgets will find on the home page of MMA's website (www.memun.org) a new spreadsheet showing the re-projected FY 2011 revenue sharing distribution based on this most recent "change package".

IN THE HOPPER

(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.)

Appropriations

LD 1816 – An Act To Authorize a Bond Issue for Ratification by the Voters for the June 2010 Election To Create Jobs in the State. (After Deadline) (Sponsored by Sen. Mitchell of Kennebec County; additional cosponsors.)

This bill sends out to the voters a $99.17 million bond proposal that includes:

$47.5 million for the MDOT highway maintenance program;

$20 million to purchase and upgrade the train track of the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway;

$5 million for a passenger rail connector between Topsham and Lewiston-Auburn;

$3.05 million for the state's wastewater revolving loan fund program;

$2.12 million for the state's drinking water revolving loan fund program;

$20 million for the Efficiency Maine Trust energy program for the purpose energy conservation improvements to K-12 and higher education facilities;

$500,000 for the overboard discharge assistance program;

$500,000 for the underground oil tank remediation program; and

$500,000 for culvert replacement for fish passage.

Utilities & Energy

LD 1813 – An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability Regarding Emergency Communications Services. (Reported by Rep. Hinck of Portland for the Government Oversight Committee.)

This bill implements recommendations of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA) regarding PSAP (Public Safety Answering Points) services. The bills assigns the Emergency Services Communication Bureau within the Public Utilities Commission with the responsibility of monitoring PSAP compliance with certain communication standards, and it also charges the Bureau with funding training courses for PSAP personnel focused on fire and law enforcement dispatch protocols, quality assurance practices, etc. The Bureau is further charged with making those training courses available to dispatch agency personnel on a fee basis. The bill also makes the Maine Communications System Policy Board, rather than the Public Utilities Commission, responsible for setting the PSAP services rates for the state-owned PSAPs.

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://www.state.me.us/legis/.

Tuesday, March 16

Utilities & Energy
Room 211, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-4143

LD 1813 – An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability Regarding Emergency Communications Services.