

Legislative BULLETIN

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February 23, 2007

Monday – Open Mike on Tax Reform

The Taxation Committee has been talking-the-talk on tax reform for the last week or two. Starting on Monday, February 26, it will begin walking-the-walk. For at least Monday, and possibly spilling into Tuesday, the Committee will entertain an open-mike opportunity for legislators (first) and then lobbyists and the general public to give the Committee some ideas about what should be included in a tax reform package.

During the last two days of the week, the Committee will hold marathon public hearings on dozens of bills thematically organized in categories of “current use” taxation, including the Tree Growth and Open Space programs (Thursday afternoon), local option taxation (Friday morning), revenue sharing and the homestead exemption (Friday early afternoon) and motor vehicle excise taxes (Friday later afternoon).

By way of highlights within the public hearing marathons:

- A bill developed by MMA’s Legislative Policy Committee and sponsored by Rep. Tom Saviello (Wilton) will be given its public hearing on Thursday afternoon. The bill is LD 543, Resolve, *To Establish the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law Review Committee*. The purpose of LD 543 is to put a committee together of Tree Growth stakeholders (municipalities, land owners, Maine Revenue Services) to study and possibly make recommendations regarding the mechanics of the two fundamental Tree Growth formulas controlled by statute: the formula that determines the required per-acre Tree Growth valuations, and the formula that determines municipal reimbursements.

- A veritable slew of “local-option” bills will be given public hearing on Friday morning, including local option sales tax, local option

meals and lodging tax, and local option real estate transfer tax pro-

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Clam Flats: Leveling the Playing Field

The Marine Resources Committee heard extensive testimony Wednesday on LD 403, *An Act to Encourage Municipalities to Abate Coastal Pollution*. This bill would increase the ability of a municipality to manage and protect coastal flats for licensed shellfish diggers.

Many municipalities are actively managing their coastal flats pursuant to local shellfish ordinances. These shellfish ordinances are governed by state law, must be approved by the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the local shellfish wardens who enforce the ordinance must be certified by DMR.

The state promotes local shellfish conservation programs as a key step in protecting these important natural resources. Local communities are often in a much better position than is the state to identify and solve the problems that threaten the water quality in tidal flats.

Under current law, DMR is responsible for determining if the water is clean enough to allow licensed shellfish diggers to harvest. In the event DMR “closes” a particular flat, local licensed diggers are prohibited from harvesting in that area.

However, a depuration digger (Dep-digger), which washes its harvest by a depuration process, is al-

lowed to continue harvesting the site. There is one certified Dep-digger in Maine under current law. DMR is supposed to consult with a municipality before it authorizes a Dep-digger to harvest in an otherwise closed flat. However, DMR retains ultimate authority regarding the ability of a Dep-digger to harvest in a closed flat.

LD 403 would transfer ultimate authority to open a flat to Dep-diggers from the state to a local Shellfish Committee.

Recently, the state closed some coastal waters in the Yarmouth and Freeport area to all licensed diggers but allowed a Dep-digger to harvest the area. The towns were not consulted. Yarmouth and Freeport have shellfish ordinances and very active shellfish committees. These committees bring together local officials and diggers in a collaborative effort to protect the local resource. They spend a great deal of time and money on their flats.

DMR’s unilateral decision to allow a Dep-digger to harvest an area that was being managed and protected locally caused many area residents to question why they should bother spending time and money pro-

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CLAM FLATS (cont'd)

tecting a resource, hiring a warden, getting volunteers for conservation committees, monitoring water quality and licensing harvesters if a Dep-digger can just come-in and deplete the resource during a "closed" period. The current law and DMR's administration of it are clear disincentives to local conservation efforts.

The bill would get rid of this disincentive. It would "put municipalities in the driver's seat" according to the bill's sponsor, Rep. Stan Gerzofsky (Brunswick). Giving municipalities the authority to close the flats to Dep-diggers means the flats will be available to local diggers once the problem has been abated. This authority gives municipalities the incentive to find and abate the cause of the water quality violation.

Marine Resources Committee members seem interested in finding some balance between the need to promote local shellfish conservation programs and state interests. Several members expressed a willingness to transfer ultimate authority from DMR to a municipality. However, there were two concerns expressed with the transfer.

First, several committee members appeared uncomfortable with an open-ended transfer. That is, they did not like the thought of a municipality keeping Dep-diggers out of a local flat forever. There are some flats that will not be reopened for a very long time and for which Dep-digging is not only appropriate but

the only viable means of harvesting. Thus, the Committee will probably only grant municipalities a temporary transfer of authority. The duration of this transfer must be commensurate with the issues of identifying, abating, and retesting closed waters. From the testimony, a maximum period of 10 years seems reasonable.

The second concern expressed by committee members is that municipalities should be forced to qualify for this authority – it shouldn't be given to every coastal municipality. The qualifications seem fairly straightforward. For ex-

ample, a municipality will probably be required to have a shellfish ordinance. This single criteria would immediately eliminate at least a third of the coastal municipalities. Other possible requirements might be that a municipality have a shellfish committee, a warden and a minimum annual budget. Qualifications beyond these minimums would appear to be obstructionist.

The work session is scheduled for Monday, February 26, 2007. Municipalities interested in enhancing their ability to manage local flats should contact their legislators.

Highway Fund Budget Preview

The FY 08-09 biennial Highway Fund budget bill, LD 781, was printed last week. As drafted by the Baldacci Administration, the bill appropriates and allocates \$587.7 million in FY 08 in state, federal and other-source revenues and \$596.4 million in FY 09. The \$1.2 billion biennial Highway Fund budget package funds, in part, the services provided by the Departments of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS), Environmental Protection (DEP), Public Safety (DPS) and the Secretary of State (SOS). In addition, the Highway Fund supports all of the services and functions of the Department of Transportation (DOT).

The revenues used to fund the budget come from three sources: 1) Highway Fund sources, including fuel taxes, motor vehicle registration fees, fines, investment income, etc.; 2) federal grants; and 3) other-source revenues used to fund particular programs such as ferry services, marine ports, fleet services, etc. Federal sources, which are appropriated as part of the federal budget, account for 33% of the revenue necessary to fund the state's biennial budget. Other special-source revenues are projected to account for

9% of the biennial budget.

The lion's share (58%) of the budget will be funded through Highway Fund sources. The excise tax assessed on gasoline and diesel fuel is the largest source of Highway Fund revenue. In FY 08/09, the Revenue Forecasting Committee estimates that the fuel taxes will generate nearly \$480 million, which will account for well over two-thirds of the total Highway Fund's own-source revenues. Over the last ten years, reliance on fuel taxes has grown from 66% of total Highway Fund revenue in 2000 to 70% today. On average, fuel tax revenue has accounted for 68% of Highway Fund revenue collected.

The second largest source of Highway Fund revenue is the motor vehicle registration fees collected by the Secretary of State. According to the Revenue Forecasting Committee, in the next two years, motor vehicle registration fees will account for 25% of the total Highway Fund revenue. (Inspection fees, fines, forfeits and investment income round out the Highway Fund source revenues.)

Over the last five years (2003-

Legislative Bulletin

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Editorial Staff: Geoffrey Herman, Kate Dufour, Jeff Austin, and Laura Veilleux of the State & Federal Relations staff.

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Committee Divided on Weight Limit Exemption

On Thursday this week, the Transportation Committee held a work session on LD 299, *An Act to Aid Municipalities Concerning Plowing Efficiency* and voted “ought not to pass” on the proposal by a margin of 6 to 4.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Wesley Richardson of Warren, would exempt trucks modified to plow snow on state and municipal roads from weight limits on public ways. Vehicles modified for plowing snow require additional infrastructure to be attached, which contributes to the overall weight of an empty truck. The additional equipment limits the weight of the load a public works truck can carry when not engaged in plowing roads.

At the February 13th public hearing, Warren town manager Grant Watmough provided testimony in favor of LD 299. The Town of Warren believes that the change in law will enable the community to maximize the use of its equipment, which is used year round. The same trucks used to plow snow in the winter are used to perform emergency road maintenance tasks in the spring and road repairs in the summer and fall. By enabling municipalities to maximize the use of existing equipment, Watmough believes that savings will be realized and passed on to the property taxpayers.

The Department of Transportation provided testimony in opposition to LD 299. DOT is concerned that as drafted the exemption to the weight limits would not only apply to municipal and state trucks, but also to the vehicles used by private contractors that plow municipal roads. DOT officials are concerned that the exemption will have a negative impact on the condition of the state’s roads and bridges.

At the public hearing, MMA pro-

vided testimony “neither for nor against” LD 299 because the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) had not yet reviewed the bill. Since the public hearing, the LPC has met and voted to oppose the bill for three reasons. First, municipal officials are concerned that the exemption proposed in LD 299 will have an adverse effect on road and bridge conditions. Second, as worded, the bill not only provides a year-round weight limit exemption to municipal and the state plow trucks, but also extends the exemption to any private sector contractor that provides snowplowing services to a municipality. This broad application extends the weight limit exemption to private sector contractors that may or may not provide services to municipalities during the spring, summer and falls months. Finally, municipal officials are concerned that even if LD 299 is amended to provide the exemption only to municipal and state-owned trucks, the Legislature will be under increasing pressure to provide a similar exemption to others. Property tax exemption law teaches us that once a class of users is provided an exemption, further requests for similar exemptions are inevitable.

While sympathetic to the issues raised by the proponents of the bill, the members of the Transportation Committee that opposed the bill believe that weight limits are established to protect the public by ensuring that trucks are properly loaded and to protect state roads from unnecessary damage.

While mindful of the public safety and damage concerns raised by the opponents, the members of the Committee that voted to support an amended version of LD 299 did so because they believe the exemption will enable municipalities to maxi-

mize existing resource and the reduce property taxpayer burden. As amended by the minority report, the bill would limit the exemption from the weight limits to municipally owned trucks.

ATV Travel

At its Thursday work session, the Committee also voted unanimously that LD 160, *An Act to Provide Safety All-terrain Vehicle Access on Public Ways* “ought to pass as amended”. As amended by the Committee, the bill provides municipalities and the Department of Transportation more flexibility to determine where within the public way an ATV can travel. The amendment also specifies that ATV operators must travel in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic when traveling within the public way.

HIGHWAY (cont'd)

2007) fuel tax revenue has grown at an average rate of 4.3%, while motor vehicle registration fee revenue has grown at an average rate of 0.8%. The sluggish trend in the growth in motor vehicle registration fee revenues is projected to worsen, as the Revenue Forecasting Committee estimates that in FY 08/09 registration fee revenue will actually decrease by .3% over the FY 06/07 biennium. As a consequence, increasing pressure is being applied to the fuel tax to produce the necessary revenues.

It is expected that the Transportation Committee debate over the FY 08/07 Highway Fund budget will focus on these troubling trends. Although Highway Fund revenues account for a portion of the total budget, it is these sources of revenue that are entirely within the Legislature’s jurisdiction to either restrict or broaden. Finding more sustainable sources of revenue, as well as securing a Highway Fund bond, will be an underlying theme throughout the Committee’s debates on the budget bill.

OPEN MIKE (cont'd)

posals. The various local-option proposals are offered for purposes running from property tax relief to land conservation to affordable housing to transportation projects.

- In the municipal revenue sharing category on Friday afternoon, Sen. Joe Perry (Bangor) is proposing to repeal municipal revenue sharing and create some sort of large but as yet undefined homestead exemption with what were formerly revenue sharing funds (LD 600, *An Act to Improve Revenue Sharing*); and

- Several bills will be offered on

Friday afternoon to cut very significant amounts of municipal excise tax revenue. For example, LD 79, *An Act to Repeal the Excise Tax on New Motor Vehicles*, would cut municipal excise tax revenue statewide by over \$45 million a year (approximately 20%) so that the owners of new cars could be absolved of any excise tax obligations.

For municipal officials interested in testifying to the Taxation Committee on the broad subject of tax reform during the day on Monday, February 26, here are the details that were provided in a memo (excerpted) from the Tax Committee Chairs to all interested parties:

TO: Persons representing groups interested in tax reform

FR: Sen. Joseph C. Perry, Senate Chair, Taxation Committee

Rep. John F. Piotti, House Chair, Taxation Committee

As you have no doubt heard, the Taxation Committee is working hard to try to prepare a tax reform package for the Legislature's consideration within the next 6 weeks.

It's clear that we will not be able to hear all the bills that relate to tax reform before we need to pull together a final package. In addition, we suspect that many ideas for tax reform are not necessarily included in pending bills.

For both these reasons, we invite those of you who would like to convey your ideas for tax reform directly to us to do so by presenting your ideas to the Committee on **Monday, February 26**, when the Taxation Committee will devote a day to hearing ideas for tax reform from legislators and (later in the day) from lobbyists.

We think it will prove an interesting day. If you plan to attend, we encourage you to arrive at 10 AM, when we will "set the stage" with some background information. Although we will be giving time for legislators to speak first, we suspect that you'll appreciate hearing what they have to say.

The major ground rule for the day is to focus on possible solutions, not problems. We don't need a recitation of all that is bad with our tax system. Rather, we need your input on how to make it better. Another point: If many people wish to speak, we will need to limit your time at the podium. So please come prepared to be as concise as possible. One page with bullet points is much more informative than four pages of typed testimony. If you bring written materials, please bring at least 25 copies.

If we run out of time on Monday, we will return to this topic on Tuesday, February 27 at 1 PM. We'll make an announcement during Session on Tuesday if this is the case.

These presentation days are not the only ways to provide the Taxation Committee with your ideas. Please feel free to send us written comments, or to talk with any member of the Committee. If you send written materials to the entire Committee, it will be most efficient to send 25 copies to our Committee Clerk, Beth St. Pierre, who will make sure they are distributed.

Excise Rebates

The February 2nd *Legislative Bulletin* reported on the public hearing of LD 227, *An Act To Allow the Reimbursement of Motor Vehicle Excise Taxes in Certain Cases*. LD 227 would have changed the structure of the motor vehicle excise tax credit system in two substantive ways. The way the credit system works currently, when a person seeks to transfer the registration from one vehicle to another, the full excise tax paid on the original vehicle is credited toward the excise tax owed on the new vehicle for most of the duration of that registration year, except that during the last four months of the registration year, the 100% credit drops down to a 50% credit. The excise tax credit is designed something like a store credit for a gift certificate. It can be used as a credit for excise tax obligations for replacement vehicles during that registration year, but it cannot be converted into a cash rebate.

Under LD 227, the excise tax credit would be converted into a prorated credit, where the value of the credit would be prorated down to reflect the number of months remaining on the registration year. Also, in those circumstances where the prorated excise tax credit is greater than the excise tax obligation pertaining to the replacement vehicle, the municipality would have to provide the registrant with a rebate for the difference.

The final version of LD 227 is not yet available for review, but the Taxation Committee has voted to support a modified version of LD 227. The requirement to prorate the excise tax credit will not be included in the final version approved by the Committee, but the bill will provide a municipal authority to provide a cash rebate for excise tax credit differentials. Apparently, the final version of LD 227 will not mandate municipalities to provide the cash rebates, but excise tax rebates from municipalities will be allowed. It will be up to each municipality to decide if excise tax rebates will be issued or not.

(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.)

Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry

LD 472 – An Act To Clarify Land Planning in the Unorganized and Deorganized Townships of the State. (Sponsored by Sen. Mills of Somerset Cty.)

This bill requires comprehensive plans adopted by the Land Use Regulation Commission for unorganized and deorganized townships in the state to be approved by the Legislature before final adoption.

LD 473 – An Act To Clarify Land Use Regulation in Unorganized and Deorganized Townships. (Sponsored by Sen. Mills of Somerset Cty.)

This bill amends the current law expressing the purpose of land use regulation in the unorganized and deorganized townships of the state to expressly address or include benefits to the property owners and residents of those areas (as well as the general public) and to acknowledge the importance of these areas to state and local economies by supporting forest management and agricultural activities.

LD 598 – Resolve, To Allow Municipalities To Purchase Burn Permit Software. (Sponsored by Sen. Bartlett of Cumberland Cty; additional cosponsors.)

This resolve directs Maine Forest Service to allow municipalities to purchase and use burn permit software from a private party if all statutory requirements of issuing burn permits are met by the software.

Business, Research & Economic Development

LD 428 – An Act To Conserve Energy in Maine Households. (Sponsored by Rep. Fletcher of Winslow; additional cosponsors.)

This bill appropriates \$7.5 million of annual Real Estate Transfer Tax revenue for the purpose of funding a low-income housing Weatherization Assistance Program administered by the Maine State Housing Authority.

LD 575 – An Act To Expand Jurisdictions of Municipal Housing Authorities. (Sponsored by Rep. Driscoll of Westbrook; additional cosponsors.)

This bill provides municipal housing authorities with the exclusive authority to administer federal funds for tenant-based housing assistance payments within their jurisdictions.

LD 677 – Resolve, Directing the Development of a Building Code and Building Rehabilitation Code Implementation Plan. (Reported by Sen. Dow of Lincoln County for the Community Preservation Advisory Committee.)

This resolve directs the State Planning Office, in consultation with three other state agencies, to develop a plan for implementing the Maine Model Building Code and the International Existing Building Code.

Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 632 – An Act To Reduce Maine's Property Tax Burden by Funding County Jails. (Sponsored by Rep. Giles of Belfast; additional cosponsors.)

This bill appropriates \$38.5 million in FY 09 to provide 50% state funding for the operation of county jails.

LD 815 – An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Establishment of Residency for Convicted Sex Offenders after Release from Prison. (Sponsored by Sen. Nass of York Cty; additional cosponsors.)

This bill makes it a Class D crime for a convicted sexual offender to intentionally or knowingly establish or maintain a residence in a municipality that does not have its own police department or resident law enforcement agency.

Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

LD 250 – An Act To Change Snowmobile Registration Requirements. (Sponsored by Sen. Bryant of Oxford Cty; additional cosponsors.)

This bill amends the snowmobile registration process by eliminating the use of permanent registration numbers.

LD 618 – An Act To Increase the Amount Retained by Agents Who Issue Hunting and Fishing Licenses. (Sponsored by Rep. Cressey of Cornish.)

This bill increases to \$3 the fees charged for issuing hunting and fishing licenses and permits by agents and clerks appointed by the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Labor

LD 814 – An Act To Incorporate Binding Arbitration for Monetary Issues in Collective Bargaining for All State, County and Municipal Employees. (Sponsored by Sen. Strimling of Cumberland County.)

This bill establishes binding arbitration on salary, pension and insurance issues with respect to any labor contracts executed between public employees and their employer state, county, school or municipal employer.

Taxation

LD 559 – An Act Regarding the Valuation of Land within Buffer Areas Established under the Natural Resources Protection Laws. (Sponsored by Rep. Joy of Crystal; additional cosponsors.)

This bill provides that land and buffer areas designated by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as significant wildlife habitat under the natural resources protection laws may be classified as open space land and taxed at their current use value or receive a 50% reduction in just value.

LD 570 – An Act To Authorize a Local Option Sales Tax To Reduce Property Taxes. (Sponsored by Sen. Strimling of Cumberland Cty; additional cosponsors.)

This bill allows municipalities to impose a 1% local option sales tax provided the municipality adopts the option by referendum and that at least 90% of the revenue collected by the local option sales tax is used to reduce property taxes.

LD 582 – An Act To Create Fairness in Maine's Property Taxes. (Sponsored by Rep. Simpson of Auburn; additional cosponsors.)

This bill requires all municipalities to conduct a comprehensive revaluation of the taxable property within their jurisdictions within the next nine years and then conduct an update of real property valuations every three years thereafter.

LD 600 – An Act To Improve Revenue Sharing. (Sponsored by Sen. Perry of Penobscot County.)

This "concept draft" bill proposes to repeal municipal revenue sharing and use the state savings to reduce property taxes on homestead residential property.

LD 624 – An Act To Increase the Maine Resident Homestead Property Tax Exemption Amount to \$25,000. (Sponsored by Rep. Sirois of Turner; additional cosponsors.)

This bill increases the homestead property tax exemption from \$13,000 to \$25,000.

LD 640 – An Act To Assess Farm Buildings at Current Use Value. (Sponsored by Rep. Holman of Fayette; additional cosponsors.)

This bill requires farm buildings to be assessed at their “current use” value if the farm property is enrolled in the Farmland Tax program.

LD 665 – An Act Regarding the Calculation of Tree Growth Reimbursements to Municipalities. (Emergency) (Sponsored by Rep. Millett of Waterford; additional cosponsors.)

This emergency bill changes the formula for calculation of state reimbursement to municipalities for lost revenue under the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law by deleting the adjustment for additional general purpose aid for local schools resulting from the reduced state valuation due to tree growth valuations.

LD 693 – Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Authorize the Legislature to Allow Municipalities To Exempt from Property Tax a Portion of the Value of Homesteads. (Sponsored by Rep. Pieh of Bremen; additional cosponsor.)

This resolution would send out to the voters a proposed constitutional amendment authorizing municipalities to implement local homestead property tax exemptions.

LD 736 – An Act To Protect Small Woodland Owners. (Sponsored by Rep. Watson of Bath; additional cosponsors.)

This bill requires a municipal assessor to provide the owner of property in the Tree Growth program with written notice if the owner fails to timely file the sworn 10-year notice with the assessor that the property’s forest management plan has been updated. After sending notice, the bill requires the assessor to wait six months before withdrawing the property from its Tree Growth enrollment.

LD 760 – An Act To Reduce the Excise Tax on Certain Commercial Vehicles. (Sponsored by Rep. Jackson of Allagash; additional cosponsors.)

This bill would establish a 50% decrease in the motor vehicle excise tax that is applied to commercial vehicles that are driven on public ways less than 50% of the total miles driven.

LD 761 – An Act To Enable Municipalities To Establish Municipal Land Banks Funded by Local Option Real Estate Transfer Taxes. (Sponsored by Rep. Rector of Thomaston; additional cosponsors.)

This bill would authorize municipalities to establish municipal land banks for the purpose of acquiring interest in or managing land for conservation, recreational, or environmental purposes or to protect the character of the community. This bill would authorize the capitalization of the land banks through the adoption by referendum of a local real estate transfer tax not to exceed 1.5% of the sale price of the property. The purchase of a primary residence would enjoy a \$50,000 exemption from the local real estate transfer tax, or a greater exemption if so-voted at referendum.

LD 762 – An Act To Enhance a Community’s Capacity to Support Affordable Housing. (Sponsored by Rep. Pingree of North Haven; additional cosponsors.)

This bill authorizes municipalities to impose by referendum vote a local option real estate transfer tax on all local sales of residences when sold for more than \$500,000. The revenue generated

by this local option real estate transfer tax must be distributed by the municipality to local housing authorities, nonprofit housing trusts, or the Maine State Housing Authority. Those organizations, in turn, are directed to use the revenue to develop affordable housing within the municipality generating the local option real estate transfer tax revenue.

LD 786 – An Act To Establish the Maine Land Bank and Community Preservation Program. (Sponsored by Rep. Percy of Phippsburg.)

This “concept draft” bill proposes an amendment to the state’s Constitution to create a “land bank” program that allows the owners of all in-state residential, out-of-state residential, and commercial real estate in Maine to enroll their real estate in a special property tax advantage program if the owner pledges to retain the ownership for periods of at least 5 years.

LD 787 – Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Change the Assessment of Lands Used for Long-term Ownership. (Sponsored by Rep. Percy of Phippsburg.)

This resolution sends out to the voters a proposed constitutional amendment giving the Legislature the authority to allow a municipality to reduce property taxes on real property if the owner agrees to retain ownership of the property within the owner’s immediate family for a period of not less than five years.

LD 789 – An Act To Decrease the Excise Tax Imposed on Motor Vehicles. (Sponsored by Rep. Sirois of Turner; additional cosponsors.)

This bill decreases the excise tax rates imposed on motor vehicles for the first year from 24 mills to 20 mills and for the second year from 17 ½ mills to 16 ½ mills.

Transportation

LD 265 – An Act To Allow a Weight Tolerance for Vehicle Auxiliary Power Units. (Sponsored by Rep. Theriault of Madawaska; additional cosponsors.)

This bill exempts the weight of an auxiliary power unit from the analysis of truck weight limits for heavy duty vehicles with auxiliary power units.

LD 496 – An Act To Exempt Emergency Vehicles from Tolls on the Maine Turnpike. (Sponsored by Rep. Eberle of So. Portland; additional cosponsors.)

This bill exempts a municipality’s emergency vehicles from tolls on the Maine Turnpike if that municipality provides emergency services to the Turnpike.

Utilities & Energy

LD 627 – An Act To Ensure Uniform Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Maine. (Emergency) (Sponsored by Rep. Rines of Wiscasset; additional cosponsors.)

This emergency bill requires licensing for all persons and entities that provide emergency medical dispatching services. Current law requires certification for those dispatchers within public safety answering points (PSAPs). This bill allows emergency medical dispatching to be done outside of and under contract with PSAPs, provided the licensing requirements are met.

LD 645 – An Act To Promote Municipal Energy Conservation. (Sponsored by Rep. Eberle of South Portland; additional cosponsors.)

This bill establishes grants of up to \$40,000 for between five and ten municipalities a year to identify cost-effective energy conservation measures and improvements to municipal buildings.

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/>.

Monday, February 26th

Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
Room 206, Cross State Office Building, 10:45 a.m.
Tel: 287-1312

LD 717 – Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 1: General Provisions and Chapter 10: Land Use Districts and Standards, Major Substantive Rules of the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission.

1:00 p.m.

LD 472 – An Act To Clarify Land Planning in the Unorganized and Deorganized Townships of the State.

LD 473 – An Act To Clarify Land Use Regulation in Unorganized and Deorganized Townships.

Marine Resources
Room 214, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1337

LD 554 – An Act To Amend the Shellfish Laws.

LD 492 – An Act To Clarify Who Receives Money from Fines For Violations of Maine's Soft-shelled Clam Laws.

Tuesday, February 27th

Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
Room 206, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1338

LD 153 – An Act To Improve the Control and Prevention of Invasive Plant Infestations.

LD 250 – An Act To Change Snowmobile Registration Requirements.

Transportation
Room 126, State House, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-4148

LD 496 – An Act To Exempt Emergency Vehicles from Tolls on the Maine Turnpike.

LD 265 – An Act To Allow a Weight Tolerance for Vehicle Auxiliary Power Units.

LD 447 – Resolve, To Improve the Registration Process for Commercial Motor Vehicles.

LD 513 – An Act To Amend the Motor Vehicle Laws.

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

LD 645 – An Act To Promote Municipal Energy Conservation.

Wednesday, February 28th

Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
Room 206, Cross State Office Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1312

LD 598 – Resolve, To Allow Municipalities To Purchase Burn Permit Software.

1:00 p.m.

LD 629 – Resolve, To Create the Sebago Lake Village State Park.

Judiciary
Room 438, State House, 2:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1327

LD 296 – An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Indemnification Agreements.

Labor
Room 220, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1333

LD 375 – An Act To Amend the Family Medical Leave Laws.

State & Local Government
Room 216, Cross State Office Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1330

LD 353 – Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Require a 2/3 Vote of Each House of the Legislature To Enact or Increase a Tax or License Fee.

Thursday, March 1st

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

LD 428 – An Act To Conserve Energy in Maine Households.

LD 575 – An Act To Expand Jurisdictions of Municipal Housing Authorities.

Taxation
Room 127, State House, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1552

LD 530 – An Act To Encourage Open Space through Current Use Taxation of Open Space Land Set Aside for Long-term Protection from Development.

LD 559 – An Act Regarding the Valuation of Land within Buffer Areas Established under the Natural Resources Protection Laws.

LD 640 – An Act To Assess Farm Buildings at Current Use Value.

LD 543 – Resolve, To Establish the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law Review Committee.

LD 665 – An Act Regarding the Calculation of Tree Growth Reimbursements to Municipalities.

LD 736 – An Act To Protect Small Woodland Owners.

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

LD 627 – An Act To Ensure Uniform Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Maine.

Friday, March 2nd

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

LD 222 – An Act To Ensure the Integrity of School Crisis Response Plans.

LD 20 – Resolve, Prohibiting the Use of Carpeting in Schools.

Taxation

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

Tel: 287-1552

LD 26 – An Act To Fund Transportation Projects.

LD 158 – An Act To Allow a Local Option Sales Tax.

LD 570 – An Act To Authorize a Local Option Sales Tax To Reduce Property Taxes.

LD 207 – An Act To Reduce the Meals and Lodging Tax.

LD 263 – An Act To Reduce the Property Tax Burden.

LD 761 – An Act To Enable Municipalities To Establish Municipal Land Banks Funded by Local Option Real Estate Transfer Taxes.

LD 762 – An Act To Enhance a Community’s Capacity to Support Affordable Housing.

LD 174 – An Act To Increase the County Share of the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

1:00 p.m.

LD 600 – An Act To Improve Revenue Sharing.

LD 288 – An Act To Increase the State Share of the Homestead Exemption to 70%.

LD 624 – An Act To Increase the Maine Resident Homestead Property Tax Exemption Amount to \$25,000.

LD 693 – Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Authorize the Legislature to Allow Municipalities To Exempt from Property Tax a Portion of the Value of Homesteads.

LD 79 – An Act To Repeal the Excise Tax on New Motor Vehicles.

LD 459 – An Act To Reduce the Excise Tax on New Vehicles.

LD 558 – An Act To Create Fairness in the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax by Implementing the Recommendations of the Secretary of State’s Task Force on Registration Fees.

Transportation

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

Tel: 287-4148

LD 266 – An Act To Fully Fund the Project To Replace the Route 302 Bridge in Naples.