

Legislative BULLETIN

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Challenging Session Ahead

Former Second-District Congressman John Baldacci was sworn into office as Maine's new Governor on Wednesday evening this week, and the First Session of the 121st Legislature was put into motion by the festivities.

The incoming Governor launched into the substance of his inaugural address with the observation that Maine's "tax system is out of date and out of line with the meager incomes of so many Maine people". This is certainly a theme that resonates with municipal officials across the state, whose primary advocacy agenda for 2003 is comprehensive tax reform.

Baldacci also called upon "municipal and county officials, school board members and community leaders to help lead the way out of our budget difficulties", and made reference to several projects that are being undertaken at the municipal level – in Cumberland County, through the Lewiston-Auburn compacts, and in the town of Hermon – as positive examples of local efforts to more cost effectively provide governmental services. A central theme of the inaugural address was working together, learning from each

other, and encouraging community-based input and leadership.

On the school side, Governor Baldacci said that he would be creating a task force by executive order that will be charged with devising and implementing a plan to produce administrative savings in education funding. The efficiency plan will be designed to move dollars from administration to the classrooms. "We can't keep going to the property taxpayers year after year to pay for the growing costs of education," he said in his address.

The statutory adjournment date of this first legislative session is June 18, 2003, and by all accounts these next five months are going to be very chal-

lenging as the new Administration and recently-elected Legislature grapple with a biennial state budget deficit of \$1 billion, properly financing public education, providing property tax relief, tackling comprehensive tax reform, addressing escalating health insurance costs, and the 2,000 (plus-or-minus) other legislative proposals that will be submitted for consideration.

The goal of this first edition of the *Legislative Bulletin* for 2003 is to provide a "who's who" review of the new Legislature, by committee assignments, and the municipal officials representing all the municipalities in their respective Senate districts on MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Next week the *Bulletin* will review the incoming Baldacci administration and provide an in-depth profile of the upcoming legislative session.

MMA Legislative Policy Committee

The municipal leaders in Maine elect MMA's 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) to serve a two-year term that runs roughly parallel to the two-year legislative term. In July of 2002, the current LPC was elected. Any municipal official within each of the state's 35 Senate Districts can be nominated as a LPC representative, and then an election is conducted where the boards of selectmen and town and city councils within those districts choose two LPC representatives from the ballot.

MMA's Policy Committee is responsible for developing and coordinating the Association's legislative policy process, providing direction on legislative strategy to achieve defined objectives, and taking positions on legislative proposals affecting municipalities.

Whether by phone or letters, by e-

mail or over the counter at the coffee shop — however you connect with your representatives in Augusta most comfortably — we strongly encourage all elected and appointed municipal officials to communicate regularly with their LPC representatives as well as their legislators to ensure the most accurate representation in Augusta.

Legislative Bulletin

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Subscriptions to the *Bulletin* are available at a rate of \$20 per calendar year. Inquiries regarding subscriptions or opinions expressed in this publication should be addressed to: *Legislative Bulletin*, Maine Municipal Association, 60 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330. Tel: 623-8428. Website: www.memun.org

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

LPC Meeting Rescheduled

The first meeting in 2003 of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee, originally scheduled for Thursday, January 16, 2003, has been **RESCHEDULED** for Wednesday, January 29, 2003 at the Maine Municipal Association building in Augusta. The three standing LPC subcommittees are scheduled to review proposed legislation from 10:00 a.m. to noon, and the LPC business meeting will commence after lunch at 1:00 p.m.

121st Legislature: Standing Committees

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