When I first took office four years ago, the challenges were many and the work ahead of us was immense. Maine was in the midst of the Great Recession, the economic outlook was bleak, and our government was in desperate need of reform.

Instead of hiding from our state’s challenges, our administration faced them head on. This was an important departure from “business as usual” in Augusta. My priority as governor has always been to tackle our long-term fundamental challenges so we can improve Maine’s future.

During my first term, we took the first step toward significant tax relief. We also reduced the state’s unfunded public pension liability from $4.1 billion to $2.4 billion—a decrease of 41 percent. We paid off, in its entirety, the long overdue welfare debt of $748 million to Maine’s hospitals. These actions, along with a careful approach to bonding and insistence on increasing the balance of the Budget Stabilization Fund, have improved Maine’s standing with credit

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Biennial Budget...  
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rating agencies such as Moody’s Investor Services and Standard & Poor’s. The progress of the last four years has resulted in more Mainers finding work and an overall improved economy, but there is much more work to be done.

My long-term vision is a Maine without any income tax. When I first took office, Maine’s top income tax rate of 8.5 percent was one of the highest in the nation; this made Maine unattractive for individuals to live and work here. We have reduced that rate to 7.95 percent. Today I am proposing that we modernize our out-of-date tax code to make Maine more competitive with other states. I plan to reduce the top tax rate even further to 5.75 percent, dramatically improving our competitive position in this global economy.

This budget also provides real tax relief for Maine families and small businesses. In all, Maine families and small businesses can expect to see a reduction in their tax burden of more than $300 million. We will achieve this significant reduction by transitioning our tax code from one dependent on taxing earnings to a more modern tax model based on consumption.

In this budget, I am proposing elimination of the estate tax. Maine is one of only 19 states left that still imposes this tax. The estate tax punishes our small and medium-size multi-generation businesses in Maine. Family businesses are the backbone of our economy. We must keep them alive and well.

In addition, this budget increases the amount of pension income exempt from income tax. It also completely exempts military pension income, honoring our veterans and elderly by helping them keep money in their already stretched budgets.

These essential reforms will reduce the tax burden on working families and retirees while ensuring that our most vulnerable continue to receive the care that they need. My administration has realigned the Medicaid program in a way that allows us to chart a new course, prioritizing the elderly, the disabled and those with intellectual disabilities while advancing common-sense welfare reforms.

This budget provides the necessary resources to care for the disabled Mainers who have been waiting in line for services they have long been qualified for, but were not funded. I also propose increased funding for nursing homes to make sure that Maine citizens continue to have access to quality long-term residential care.

This budget addresses the illegal drug problem here in Maine by funding additional agents in the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, as well as more prosecutors and judges to adjudicate the increased caseload. We cannot allow these vicious drug traffickers to keep using our state as their marketplace, and my plan will hold these criminals accountable.

A good education is the best tool for future prosperity. With the increased cost of a post-secondary education, this is becoming harder to achieve for the next generation. Maine already has a tax credit that provides financial support to college graduates, but it is virtually unknown and underutilized. Over the next year, I will be hitting the road and traveling across Maine to share the benefits of this program. This not only helps Maine residents, but also could be used as a tool to encourage young people to come to school in Maine and stay here to have a career and raise a family.

Additionally, this budget provides funding to increase access to student loans through FAME and more investment in our public post-secondary systems, as well as funding to help local school districts collaborate with their neighbors.

I am fortunate that Maine has given me the opportunity to live the American Dream. I want every Mainer to prosper. I want to create an economy that allows Maine families to thrive and succeed. I want them to have a chance to achieve their American Dream.

Our state needs bold initiatives to make it a place where Mainers want to live and work and to make it an attractive destination for young families from across the country. Together, I am confident we can make this vision a reality.

Continued on Page 9...
Call center bill returns

One of the first bills printed this session is one of last session’s most onerous

Confirming the old adage “everything old is new again,” one of the more onerous pieces of legislation from last session has become one of the first of the new bills printed in the 127th Legislature. LD 9, An Act to Retain Call Centers, sponsored by Rep. Stanley Short (D-Pittsfield), is a virtual carbon copy of legislation that eventually was defeated by the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs in the closing days of the 126th Legislature.

LD 9...

As drafted this session, the bill retains the features of last session’s bill as it left the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development (LCRED). LD 9 would require the commissioner of the Department of Labor (DOL) to compile a list of both stand-alone call centers and employers who have at least 30% of their call center operations located here and have relocated from Maine to a foreign country. It does not state how far back the DOL is to look, so it could be assumed to be retroactive many years. If a company appears on the list then it is banned from accessing state tax incentives, grants, or loans for a period of five years. There is also a claw-back provision requiring affected call center employers to repay an amortized amount of any such received assistance to the state. It mandates that any state agency’s call center services be provided in-state. Lastly, it requires a WARN-like notification provision, which insists that any currently operating call center provides the state with at least 120 days’ notice before relocation or face a $350 per day fine.

LD 9 purports to “retain” call centers in our state. In fact, it is our opinion that if LD 9 becomes law, the exact opposite would be true—before the law could actually go into effect, it is likely that a number of call centers, either stand alone operations or those affiliated with existing businesses, would leave Maine, taking their jobs with them. Additionally it is more than likely that we would not see another new call center located here in the foreseeable future.

A Bit of History...

In discussions before the LCRED committee last year, the previous bill (LD 1710) was strongly opposed by the Maine State Chamber as justifiably adding to the already notorious perception that Maine is unfriendly to business. It would impair our state’s ability to attract future call center endeavors and will damage its overall business attractiveness. After all, if the state would penalize one class of businesses in this manner now, which group is next? In addition, the LCRED committee members were warned by their analyst that in all likelihood the proposal would have serious constitutional problems, including conflicts with the Supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution, and conflicts with the ability and rights of states to regulate or interfere with international trade.

Last session’s bill took a somewhat tortured path through the legislative process. It came out of the LCRED committee with a partisan 8-5 “ought to pass” recommendation, with democrats and the lone independent supporting the bill, and the republicans on the committee opposing its passage. The proposal passed in the House, but was defeated in the Senate. Upon reconsideration there, the bill’s sponsor made a small adjustment to the language, managing to get enough votes to pass out of the Senate, but ending up on the appropriations table, where it was eventually defeated by a majority of the committee.

Impact begins weekly publication schedule

With the beginning of the First Regular Session of the 127th Maine Legislature, the Maine State Chamber will resume its weekly publication schedule of Impact with this issue.

To mark the start of the session, we have printed the list of legislative committees on page 5. Governor Paul LePage’s Inaugural Address, delivered on January 7, 2015, is also included on page 1 of this edition.

In the next few weeks, we will publish guest articles from legislative leadership in both the House and Senate regarding the issues facing Maine businesses in the coming months for your consideration.

Going Forward...

It is likely that LD 9 will be scheduled for a public hearing before the 127th Legislature’s LCRED committee in the coming weeks. The passage of time has not in any way improved the ideas contained in the bill. To our knowledge, no other state has enacted similar legislation. It most certainly sends the wrong type of message—not only to any call centers that might be interested in locating here, but to other employers who would legitimately wonder who is next. Lastly, legislation like LD 9 runs contrary to the comments made by legislators and legislative leadership who have indicated that jobs and the economy are top caucus priorities this session. Passage of LD 9 would certainly have an impact on both—unfortunately for the worse.

The Maine State Chamber will update members as to the scheduling of LD 9’s public hearing. For additional information or questions, please contact Peter G ore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org.
LePage Inauguration...
(Continued from Page 1...)

private businesses create jobs, and we did. State government is no longer an adversary against business, but a partner with the private sector.

We made Maine “Open for Business.” Private-sector companies have created more than 20,000 jobs. And there are almost 7,000 jobs at the CareerCenter that still need to be filled. If you want a job, you can get it. But our work is far from complete!

Welfare Reform...
Most importantly, we said we were going to reform welfare, and we are. So far, we have cut the welfare rolls in half. We stopped the growth of Medicaid. We went after fraud and abuse. We put photos on EBT cards. We put more money toward nursing homes. We are using the savings from our welfare reforms to take care of our elderly, disabled and mentally ill. We are transitioning people off welfare and into productive jobs. The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor and Veterans Services have teamed up to create an innovative program called “Welfare to Work.” More than 1,200 Mainers who were on welfare are now working full-time. No more welfare handouts. We will give them skills, training and jobs. We want them to know prosperity, not poverty. We are making progress in reforming our welfare system. But we are just getting started.

Making Maine Competitive...
The people of Maine told us they want us to keep reforming government. They want better jobs. They want welfare reform. They want lower energy costs. They want lower taxes. They want good roads and bridges, and they want a smaller, more affordable government.

Mainers work hard. They have common sense. They know what it means to pay the bills. They want their piece of the American Dream. We won’t rest until every man, woman and child in Maine gets their chance to achieve prosperity, not poverty.

Mainers deserve career jobs with higher pay and good benefits. We must attract new business to Maine and help our existing companies to grow and expand. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel. Other states are growing and expanding. We can do what they are doing. We can make Maine competitive.

Tax Reform...
States with the fastest growth have the lowest tax burdens and the lowest energy costs. That’s not a coincidence. We need good-paying jobs that encourage young people and families to stay in Maine. To create these jobs, Maine must be competitive with other states.

Companies want to come to low-tax states, and so do young families. Once they get here, we must keep them here. We want families, retirees and wealthy residents to stay in Maine.

We lose them to other states because we tax them too much. When we lower the income tax burden—and we will—we put money back in your pocket. You earned it, you should keep it.

My long-term vision is a Maine without any income tax. We will start by getting rid of the estate tax and income tax on pensions. Small Maine companies cannot afford to transfer the business to the family because the estate taxes are so high. Small, family-owned businesses are the backbone of our economy. We must

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Joint Standing Committees of the 127th Legislature

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LePage Inauguration...  
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keep our small businesses alive and well. We must keep our families in Maine.
We must also keep our retirees in Maine. Too many Maine retirees have moved to other states to avoid our high taxes. Let’s work together to keep them here. More importantly, let’s work together to keep their assets here as well.

Energy Costs...

Business owners from all over the state tell me the same thing: energy costs are too high. If you think your household electric bill is high, just imagine how much it costs to build a destroyer at BIW or make paper at a mill in Hinckley. Lower energy costs are absolutely critical to attracting major employers, manufacturers and high-tech industries. We’re off to a good start.

We brought natural gas infrastructure to Maine, but we need an adequate supply of natural gas.

Massachusetts now has a governor who wants to work with us. We are already talking with him about increasing natural gas supply to our region. We need it here as soon as possible so we can help all Mainers.

We need a Public Utilities Commission that concentrates on affordable energy for all Mainers, not just rich, subsidized investors and environmentalists.
I am open to any form of energy that lowers the cost of electricity, but we can’t wait 15 or 20 years. We need affordable energy, and we need it now. We must lift the 100 megawatt cap on all energy sources. We must lower the costs of heating our homes and our businesses. Our rebates and loan programs are driving down heating costs. But we need to allow open competition.

Nearly 10,000 heat pumps have been installed in Maine. That saves on heating costs and improves energy efficiency. It puts money back in your pockets.

Businesses want lower energy costs, and homeowners need lower heating costs. Let’s give the people what they want.

Reducing the Size of Government...

The people of Maine want an affordable, innovative and flexible government. The size and cost of state government should support—not burden—hard-working families. We have started to right-size government, but there is still more to do. It is time to eliminate obsolete regulations and poor customer service. You, the Maine people, are the customers, and state employees are your public servants.

We must have a cost-effective and efficient government that is responsive to the needs of our citizens and our businesses. A government that is too big and too expensive takes resources away from Mainers and discourages job creation.

We need to be bold. We need to think outside of Maine’s traditional model of government. Mainers are tired of paying for a government that doesn’t deliver quality services or competitive schools.

We have made progress on the state level. We have taken the politics out of improving infrastructure. Projects are now prioritized by professionals, not politicians. Infrastructure projects that speed economic development or help businesses get goods to market are the highest priority. Projects based on political promises get left by the roadside. It’s time to do this at all levels of government. Yes, we must work together, but we must work smarter.

Efforts to consolidate jails in Maine have failed. The attempt to consolidate our schools has failed.

School budgets are rising every year. Maine has twice the number of administrators as the national average. But student enrollment continues to drop—and
so does their competitiveness in the fast-growing technical world.

School administrators take home six-digit salaries, while our teachers dig into their own pockets to buy classroom supplies. That’s just simply wrong. Our education system is upside down. It has two winners and two losers. Administrators and union bosses are the winners. The two big losers are teachers and our students. We must get our education budgets under control. We must put the money where it belongs: in the classroom. If we really want achieve the state’s mandate to pay 55 percent of local school costs, we could initiate a statewide teachers’ contract.

We must also get our local budgets under control. Total spending on local government has increased by half-a-billion dollars over the past five years, during the worst recession since the Great Depression. This kind of spending is unacceptable. Mainers cannot afford it. Municipalities blame cuts at the state level, but they ignore that they are duplicating services. This has to stop.

Cities, towns and counties must work together to provide key services. Local control is great, but no one wants to pay for it. We will never be competitive until we learn to share services by working together. It can be done. In Washington County, 18 municipalities have created a shared EMS system. This regional service has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. In Waldo County, several communities have contracted with the City of Belfast to provide fire protection.

State government should reward these efforts. The state should be helping these communities to reduce cost without decreasing services. If we want to improve services and reduce costs, we must have the courage to work together and do it right.

Keeping Mainers Safe...

Mainers deserve to be kept safe. We will focus on fighting drug crimes. Unlike the 126th Legislature, the 127th must prevent young Mainers from getting addicted. We must make sure no more babies are born addicted to drugs. We must focus on the drug epidemic.

We will continue to raise awareness and campaign against domestic violence. Whether it comes from national sports stars or the streets of Maine, there is no excuse for domestic violence. Men must step up and speak out against this heinous crime that traumatizes women, children and families. When it comes to keeping Mainers safe, we can’t move fast enough.

Conclusion...

To the Maine people, we say this: we listened to you, and we hear your concerns. We just hope the legislature is also listening to you. The election sent us all a clear message: Mainers want action.

We must work together. My door is always open to anyone—anyone—who brings innovative solutions that will help move Maine forward. But be warned. I am not here to play political games. We are here to work—to work hard for the people of Maine. We are here to bring prosperity, not poverty.

Actions speak louder than words. Let’s get to work. Thank you.
Modernizing Maine's Tax Code...
- Reduce top individual income tax rate from 7.95 percent to 5.75 percent;
- Reduce top corporate income tax rate from 8.93 percent to 6.75 percent;
- Cut taxes on all pensions and eliminate tax on military pensions;
- Modernize Maine's sales tax rates and base, while continuing competitive rates nationally; and,
- Repeal Maine's estate tax to preserve Maine's family businesses.

Welfare Through Innovation And Sensible Solutions...
- Provides funding to assist thousands of Mainers currently on waitlists to receive services;
- Prioritizing the elderly and supporting nursing homes by providing ongoing funding; and,
- Increased access to primary care and preventive services.

Educating And Attracting Young People To Maine...
- Investing in our next generation by providing additional funding to the University of Maine System to keep a quality education affordable for all Mainers;
- Completing long overdue infrastructure improvements at our public campuses; and,
- Increasing funding to the Finance Authority of Maine’s state grant program, making college more affordable for Mainers.

Investing In Public Safety...
- Increased funding for seven new agents in the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency;
- Creation of four new assistant attorney general positions to focus exclusively on drug crime prosecution;
- Relieving the burden on our county district attorneys by providing funding for 22 additional assistant district attorney positions; and,
- Providing additional resources necessary for the judicial branch by funding four new district court judge positions.
CASELLA, YOUR MAINE RESOURCE

We offer sustainable programs to our customers that not only provide sound economic and environmental return but also build jobs and careers. We view waste as a valuable resource as well as an opportunity for positive change.

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Casella Organics® transforms traditional organic waste streams, including short paper fiber, ash, wood wastes, food wastes and biosolids into compost and other renewable products.

Waste collection, responsible disposal, e-waste recycling and LEED certification services for material diversion and reporting.

CASELLA RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

RECYCLING · COLLECTION · ORGANICS · ENERGY · LANDFILLS

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The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) announced recently that Maine has secured an additional $4,345,555 in funding for the state’s small businesses through a second disbursement from the U.S. Treasury Department’s State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI). “These funds will enable Maine’s small businesses to leverage new capital and create more jobs,” said Governor Paul R. LePage. “The program’s successful deployment shows that our economy and our businesses are growing and moving in the right direction. In partnership with DECD, the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), regional economic development agencies, and the Maine Venture Fund, small business owners will continue to have more resources for growth.”

The state was awarded a total allocation of $13.2 million in September 2011. To date, the federal funds have generated $36 million in private sector financing to Maine businesses. Approximately $4 million in funding has already been disbursed to Maine businesses through FAME’s Economic Recovery Loan Program, regional economic development agencies, as well as the Small Enterprise Growth Fund, d/b/a Maine Venture Fund.

“Maine job creators need access to credit and capital in order to create jobs and hire new employees,” said DECD Commissioner George Gervais. “Maine’s economic recovery is driven by small businesses and their vision for growth. Small business owners will now have more resources for that growth.”

Lincoln Paper & Tissue, LLC, a Lincoln-based manufacturer of commodity and specialty tissue products, received a $970,000 loan through FAME’s Economic Recovery Loan Program, of which $470,000 constituted SSBCI funds. FAME’s investment has induced a commercial lender to invest an additional $6 million into the project. FAME’s actions helped the mill retain 175 direct jobs and hundreds more indirect jobs in the local economy.

“Lincoln Paper & Tissue greatly appreciates FAME’s assistance and commitment to the success of the mill,” stated Keith Van Scotter, President & CEO. “FAME’s efforts and commitment to the region will go a long way toward helping to retain good-paying jobs in the area and to a bright future for the facility.”

“We are pleased that our success is being rewarded with an additional $4.3 million to fund the growth of Maine’s small business community,” said Bruce Wagner, Chief Executive Officer of FAME. “With the help of Maine’s financial institutions, we hope to leverage these funds with private capital to generate $26 million for Maine’s economy.”

SSBCI was created by the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010. Funded with $1.5 billion, the program is expected to spur up to $15 billion in new lending to small businesses and manufacturers as states use federal funds to leverage private investment dollars.

DECD, in cooperation with the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), uses SSBCI funds to support FAME’s Economic Recovery Loan Program and Regional Economic Development Revolving Loan Program, as well as the Small Enterprise Growth Fund, d/b/a Maine Venture Fund. FAME’s Economic Recovery Loan Program provides direct loans of up to $1 million for businesses with insufficient access to credit in order to remain viable and improve productivity. The Regional Economic Development Revolving Loan Program, also administered by FAME, provides loans to Maine’s regional economic development agencies for the purpose of creating or retaining jobs. The Small Enterprise Growth Fund, d/b/a Maine Venture Fund, is a state-run venture capital fund that invests in Maine companies that demonstrate a potential for high growth and public benefit.

A gain this year, our emphasis is on visits with each of Maine’s delegates. Last year, each one gave us their personal time and attention. We left knowing we had been heard. We left knowing that Maine is fortunate that we have congressional leaders who are caring, competent and accessible. While we may often take it for granted, not every state is as fortunate as Maine is.

Registration for our third annual Washington, D.C., Fly-In is open until February 18, 2015. However, space is limited. Event registration is $750 per attendee. Attendees are responsible for all travel arrangements. We are currently working on a group rate for hotel reservations. More details will be available soon.

For more information, please contact Joyce LaRoche, vice president of membership and marketing, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 113, or by emailing jlaroche@mainechamber.org.

Tuesday, March 24, 2015:
- Dinner with Maine Congressional Delegates, The Monocle Restaurant on the Hill.

Wednesday, March 25, 2015:
- Meetings with Maine’s Congressional Delegation, Capitol Hill
- Member Lunch Occidental Grill & Seafood at The Willard Intercontinental
- Obama Administration Briefing - The Willard Intercontinental, Willard Room –
- Capitol Hill Reception, Russell Senate Office Building

Thursday, March 27, 2015:
- Congressional Breakfast, Charlie Palmer Restaurant, 101 Constitution Avenue, NW
- Breakout Sessions, Issue/Industry specific sessions / key Congressional Committee Staffers – these sessions are arranged by The New England Council
Governor LePage nominates Richard Rosen to serve as Commissioner of Finance & Administration

On January 2, 2015, Governor Paul R. LePage announced the nomination of the Honorable Richard W. Rosen to serve as commissioner of the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS). The nomination is subject to the confirmation process by the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Maine Senate.

Rosen, a native of Bucksport, has been serving as acting commissioner of DAFS since the retirement of former Commissioner H. Sawin Millett, Jr. in May. Prior to his appointment as acting commissioner, he served as the Department’s deputy commissioner of finance.

Previously, Rosen served as the director of the Governor’s Office of Policy and Management. During the 125th Legislature, he served as the Senate Chair of Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. He served as a senator representing parts of Hancock and Penobscot Counties for four terms and as a member of the Maine House of Representatives for three terms, accumulating extensive legislative expertise in budget, tax, energy, and health and human services.

“I am pleased to nominate Richard Rosen to serve as commissioner of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. For the last seven months, he has led DAFS through many important initiatives, including the development of my upcoming biennial budget. Richard is a dedicated public servant, and he will continue to serve the people of Maine well as commissioner,” said Governor LePage.

“I am honored to have been nominated by Governor LePage to serve as commissioner,” said Acting Commissioner Rosen. “DAFS is a dynamic organization with a broad scope of responsibility, and I look forward to continuing our important work on behalf of the Governor and the citizens of Maine.”

In addition to his public service, Rosen owned and operated Rosen’s, a department store located in Bucksport, with his wife, Kimberley, for more than 35 years. He is a graduate of the University of Maine and serves on the boards of the Retail Association of Maine, Bucksport Regional Health Center, and Northeast Historic Film.
BOND ISSUES
LD 68, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Attract Business by Investing in High-speed Broadband Infrastructure. (Rep. Campbell, I-Newfield) Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. This bill provides for a bond issue in the amount of $10,000,000 to be used to expand high-speed municipal broadband infrastructure. The bill also establishes the High-speed Municipal Broadband Infrastructure Fund to assist municipalities in developing and improving their broadband infrastructure, contingent upon passage of the bond issue.

BUSINESS REGULATION
LD 9, An Act to Retain Call Centers in Maine. (Rep. Short, D-Pittsfield) Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development. This bill requires the Commissioner of Labor to create a list of employers that have relocated a call center, or a facility or operating unit handling at least 30% of the call volume within a call center, from the State to a foreign country. An employer appearing on the list is ineligible for a state grant, loan or tax benefit for 2 years. The bill also requires the employer to pay back the unamortized value of a state grant, loan or tax benefit previously issued to the employer. The bill requires that call center work for executive branch agencies of the State be performed in the State. If the employer fails to notify the Commissioner of Labor of the relocation of a call center at least 60 days before the relocation, a daily fine of $350 may be assessed.

ENVIRONMENTAL
LD 40, An Act To Protect Maine’s Great Ponds. (Sen. Saviello, R-Franklin) Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources. This bill creates a prohibition on the application of fertilizers within 50 feet of the normal high-water line of a great pond, with exceptions for persons involved in agriculture or applying fertilizer to establish or restore vegetation to stop, slow or remediate shoreline erosion or damage.

HEALTH CARE
LD 23, An Act To Remove from the Maine Medical Use of Marijuana Act the Continued on Page 15...

For the most current information, visit www.mainechamber.org
Maine employers are affected every day by issues such as transportation, technology, education, energy, health care, environment, and taxation, just to name a few. That is why the Maine State Chamber launched its television show, The Bottom Line, in February 2013. The Bottom Line takes an in-depth look at a wide variety of business related issues, their impact on jobs here, and highlights positive aspects of Maine’s economy. Host Dana Connors is joined monthly by various experts to essentially “bottom line” the various facets of these and other complex issues that ultimately create jobs and growth in our state.

The Bottom Line airs three times per week on Time Warner’s public access station, channel 9 for TWC customers. You can watch it on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. and on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. It is also available on our homepage at www.mainechamber.org. Each episode of The Bottom Line is archived at www.mainechamber.org/bottomlinearchive.php.

This month, host Dana Connors discusses the newest Making Maine Work report, Preparing Maine’s Workforce, with guests Dr. Christopher Quinn, president of the Maine campuses of Kaplan University; Ryan Neale, program director for the Maine Development Foundation, our collaborative partner for the Making Maine Work series; Craig Larrabee, president of Jobs for Maine’s Graduates, Inc.; and, Garret Oswald, director of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) at the Maine Department of Labor.

If you’d like to support this initiative, we have a special underwriter opportunity available. Each of the two annual $2,500 underwriters will receive:

30-second Ad Spot: Each of our two possible 30-second ads will run approximately 12-16 times per month (every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. and every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.). The underwriter is responsible for the production of the video.

Legislative Week Ahead: Your logo and website link will be placed on our email broadcast, sent weekly during the legislative session (January through June 2015) to approximately 2,000 subscribers.

Show Highlight: We welcome your participation as a show guest to highlight your positive economic story in one half-show segment during the year.

Other Mentions: Annual underwriters will be listed in opening and closing credits on every show, as well as in our newsletter and social media.

For more information about The Bottom Line, please contact Melanie Baillargeon, director of communications, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 110, or by emailing melanieb@mainechamber.org. Underwriter inquiries can be sent to Melody Rousseau, sponsorship and advertising sales manager, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 102, or by emailing melodyr@mainechamber.org.

New Legislation...
(Continued from Page 15...)

Requirement That a Patient’s Medical Condition Be Debatable, (Rep. Russell, D-Portland) Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. This bill removes from the Maine Medical Use of Marijuana Act any limitation on the type of medical conditions for which patients may be certified by their physicians to engage in the medical use of marijuana.

LABOR
LD 36, An Act to Increase the Minimum Wage, (Rep. Evangelos, U-Friendship) Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development. This bill raises the minimum wage to $9.00 per hour beginning October 1, 2015 and to $10.00 per hour beginning October 1, 2016 and provides that, beginning October 1, 2017, the minimum wage must be adjusted for inflation on October 1st of each year.


LD 72, An Act to Increase the Minimum Wage, (Rep. Hamann, D-South Portland) Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development. This bill raises the minimum wage to $10.10 per hour beginning October 1, 2015 and provides that, beginning October 1, 2016, the minimum wage must be automatically adjusted for inflation on October 1st of each year.

MISCELLANEOUS
LD 53, An Act To Require Shareholder Consent for Corporate Political Contributions, (Rep. Rykerson, D-Kittery) Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs. This bill requires a majority vote of a corporation’s shareholders before the corporation makes a political contribution or expenditure and requires that once the contribution or expenditure has been made, the corporation posts notice of the contribution or expenditure on its website. This bill disallows a corporation that has over half of its shares owned by one or more institutional investors who cannot hold public office, such as a pension fund or a for-profit or nonprofit corporation, from making any political contributions or expenditures. This bill also allows a shareholder who disagrees with a corporation’s political contribution or expenditure to receive from the corporation upon request a rebate of a percentage of the political contribution or expenditure equal to the percentage of ownership the shareholder has in the corporation.
Last fall, the Maine State Chamber launched a new partnership with JustGoodNews.biz, a free, national online news service that focuses solely on publishing positive business headline news from around the country, including Maine. The service is a powerful tool for attracting new businesses to a state, and includes a “Who’s Hiring” page connecting job seekers and employers.

Here are a few of the “just good news” story headlines from Maine’s business community!

- Maine lobster industry hauls in big holiday sales
- Tech Place accelerator set for takeoff in Brunswick
- Aroostook County the star on top of Christmas tree sales
- Portsmouth Naval Shipyard hiring a boatload in Kittery
- Pop-up shops prop up small business in Bucksport
- Poultry processing plants propagating in Maine
- Idexx becomes first Maine firm to ring NASDAQ bell
- Navy floats more business to Bath Iron Works
- L.L. Bean booting up hiring in Lewiston
- Sherman certified business-friendly

We want to ensure we are covering good news stories from all across Maine and not just in specific areas. We are asking that you let us know if you have good news about growing and expanding companies; innovative businesses and startups with great ideas; hiring opportunities, so employers and jobs seekers can connect; and, national, regional, state rankings and awards.

To get your good news to us, simply visit www.JustGoodNews.biz, click “Share Your Good News” at the top of the page, and fill in the information, including uploading photos if you have them (always a nice enhancement to your story). You can also add info@justgoodnews.biz to your newsletter and news release distribution list or email the basic info for follow-up to Amy Downing at adowning@mainechamber.org.

If you or your company has a Facebook page, please “like” the JustGoodNews.biz Maine page - simply search for JustGOODNews.biz Maine on Facebook to find the page. If you or your company is on Twitter, you can follow JustGoodNews.biz on there too — https://twitter.com/justgoodnewsbiz.

We look forward to hearing about and sharing your good news. For more information or if you have any questions, please contact Amy Downing, member services and program manager at the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 104, or by emailing adowning@mainechamber.org.
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When employees feel good, they tend to perform better. That’s why most Chamber BlueOptions’ plans come with employee discounts on health products and services, as well as an online health and fitness program. Just contact your Anthem-appointed insurance producer for more information, or go to the Chamber’s BlueOptions webpage (www.mainechamber.org/blueoptions) to find a producer.

For more information on the Chamber BlueOptions health plan, please contact Joyce LaRoche, executive director of the Maine State Chamber Purchasing Alliance, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 113, or by emailing jlaroche@mainechamber.org, or contact Amy Downing at ext. 104 or adowning@mainechamber.org.

*Resources provided by Anthem.com

This information is intended for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your physician for advice about changes that may affect your health.
Governor Paul LePage has placed energy cost reduction at the top of his agenda in his second term. Priorities may include renewable portfolio standard revisions; regional efforts to expand natural gas pipeline capacity; support for lower cost heating systems in homes and businesses; and investment in Maine’s hydropower infrastructure. The Governor will also appoint two new commissioners to the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC). The Maine PUC will tackle topics that are likely to be part of the policy agenda in the legislature, such as renewable energy incentives, wind energy siting, and long-term contracts.

On Wed., January 21, E2Tech is hosting a forum with government and business leaders to discuss energy policy issues and potential legislation, including those proposals, programs, and actions that will be critical to Maine’s energy future and investments in natural gas, renewable energy, and electricity transmission and distribution. For registration, speakers and other information, please visit http://www.e2tech.org/event-1815560.

Navigate Explorer launched

In December, NECEC’s Cleantech Navigate Northeast program launched the Navigate Explorer, which is a one-stop-shop for entrepreneurs and their supporters to find resources, request assistance from the Cleantech Navigate Northeast community, and to connect with each other. The platform already contains more than 350 support organizations helping companies grow in the Northeast and a private mentor directory that includes more than 200 members.

To learn more about this exciting tool to connect Maine’s cleantech startups and entrepreneurs to a region-wide network of funding, mentoring, and other assistance, or to become part of the network, please contact Bonnie Frye Hemphill by emailing bonnie@e2tech.org.
The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, May 14, 2015, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Hall of Flags (Statehouse, Second Floor).

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Linda Caprara, director of grassroots advocacy, by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org. With your participation, the “Voice of Maine Business” will resonate throughout Augusta!