

April 5, 2018

Taxation committee votes tax conformity along party lines

Maine State Chamber supports the minority “ought-to-pass” report

ACTION ALERT!

Please call your legislator today and urge them to vote YES for the Minority Ought-to-Pass report on Tax Conformity

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:

2 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400 or (800) 423-2900

CONTACT YOUR SENATOR:

3 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0003
(207) 287-1540 or (800) 423-6900

After weeks of working on the issue of tax conformity, the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation finally voted out **LD 1655**, *An Act to Update References to the United State Internal Revenue Code of 1986 contained in the Maine Revised Statutes*, an emergency bill sponsored by Sen. Dana Dow (R-Lincoln). The bill would conform Maine’s income tax laws to the federal code. Conformity with the federal code is especially important as the federal government recently passed into law the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on December 22, 2017. Therefore, if the legislature does nothing with conformity this session, Maine would revert back to the 2016 income tax laws.

On Thursday, April 5, the committee voted along party lines 7-6 “ought-to-pass as amended” with two reports. The

Republicans voted “ought-to-pass as amended” with the language proposed by Governor Paul LePage, which would conform Maine to the federal code. The Governor has stated that he would not support conformity measures that raise taxes on Mainers or Maine businesses. The minority amendment contains mitigating provisions to deal with those instances where taxes may increase to establish neutrality. The Democrats’ majority “ought-to-pass” report on the other hand, approved an amendment, which among other things, discarded the most important business provisions in the Governor’s amendment, namely bonus depreciation and elimination of the alternative minimum tax.

Continued on Page 4...

House Democrats sink minimum wage relief for rural businesses

Despite a softening of the bill, the effort fails by three votes

On Thursday afternoon, April 5, a majority of House Democrats voted down one last effort this session to bring some relief to rural small businesses struggling to cope with rapidly escalating minimum wage costs.

In a 72-75 vote, the House rejected an amended version of **LD 1757**, *An Act To Protect Maine’s Economy by Slowing the Rate at Which the State’s Minimum Wage Will Increase and Establishing a Training and Youth Wage*, submitted at the request of Governor Paul LePage and sponsored by Rep. Joel Stetkis (R-Canaan), which proposed a variety of changes to the minimum wage law passed at in November 2016. The bill had come out of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development (LCRED) divided along party lines, with Democrats on the committee opposed, and Republicans supporting a scaled-down proposal.

As drafted, the minority ought-to-pass report to the full legislature proposed to freeze the minimum wage at \$10 an hour until January 1, 2020, therefore allowing for a 12-month “cooling off” period that

Continued on Page 5...

Inside Impact...

2018 Business Day	p. 7
Gubernatorial Debates	p. 5
Health Care Forum	p. 9
JMG Career Day	p. 12
Minimum Wage	p. 1
Regional Breakfasts	p. 16
Ranked Choice Voting	p. 3
Tax Conformity	p. 1
Universal Home Care	p. 3
Workplace Wellness	p. 14

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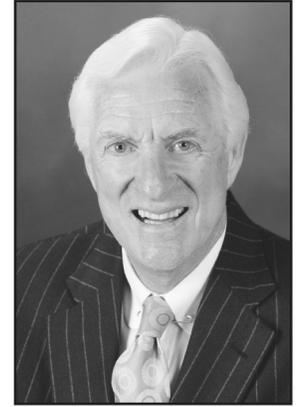
President: Dana F. Connors

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About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce:

Since 1889, the Maine State Chamber has been fighting to lower your cost of doing business. Through our Grassroots Action Network and OneVoice program, we work with a network of approximately 5,000 companies statewide who see the value in such a service and provide the financial support that keeps our access, advocacy, and assistance efforts going strong. As Maine's Chamber, we make sure that the business environment of the state continues to thrive. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce advocates on behalf of their interests before the legislature and regulatory agencies and through conferences, seminars, and affiliated programs.

A message from the president...



"You're killing ME..."

by Dana Connors

As Yogi Berra would say, "it's déjà vu all over again!" Just when we think it can't get any worse, it does. We are facing yet another poorly-drafted citizen's initiative, driven by out-of-state special interests that proposes yet another tax increase on Maine working people. In October 2017, the Secretary of State certified the signatures for a citizen's referendum entitled *An Act To Establish Universal Home Care for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities*, which will now appear on the November 2018 ballot (see article on page 3).

It over-promises and under delivers in its quest to provide universal home care for the elderly and the disabled, and worse still, its economic impacts could be devastating to our state's economy. It resurrects the tax scheme and economic concerns raised in the 3% income surtax to fund education that was on the ballot two years ago. Only this time the effects could be more severe. Instead of a 3% surtax on joint incomes of \$200,000, the current referendum imposes a 3.8% surtax on joint incomes of \$128,400. This increased surtax on a lower joint income affects individuals, married couples and LLCs.

While the intent of the proposal may be well intended, it promotes unchecked union activity and creates a "waiting list" of the elderly and the disabled. It also creates a board without oversight or accountability, and all the while providers' salaries are funded by 77% of the surtax revenue. There is just so much wrong with this proposal, despite its good intentions to help a worthy population. Unfortunately, under the guise of sympathy and empathy, it creates impossible promises and promotes economic upheaval.



The Maine State Chamber has kept our Keep Maine Competitive coalition in place, and we are preparing to once again help Maine voters understand the harmful implications of this new referendum question. We will be working in the coming months with the coalition to better understand the implications of this referendum and to educate voters of its harmful impacts on the economy and the people it purports to serve. □

House debates public hearing on ballot question to impose 3.8% income surtax

The Maine House of Representatives spent more than an hour debating whether or not to require a public hearing on a ballot question that would impose a new tax of 3.8% on all income that either individuals or households earn above \$128,000 (the amount subject to Social Security employment taxes) to provide Universal Home Health Care to all of Maine's residents who are either over age 65 or disabled.

The referendum proposal, backed by the Maine People's Alliance, would raise roughly \$310 million annually through income tax and payroll tax increases related to higher-earning Mainers to provide services that would include home health aides, rent subsidies, home repair, hospice care, and transportation with specific in-home health care ranging from bathing, medication management, and physical therapy to drug infusion treatments.

Under the Maine Constitution, the Legislature has the authority to adopt the proposal without a statewide vote or create a competing ballot measure. Citizen's initiatives come to the Legislature as a bill after the required minimum of 61,123 signatures from registered Maine voters are certified by the Secretary of State's office. The bill is given an LD number and title, like any other bill – in this case, **LD 1864, *An Act To Establish Universal Home Care for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities.***

The Legislature has the ability to hold a public hearing in the same manner as any other bill. This year, Republican House members, as well as few Democrats, argued that a public hearing on the initiative would provide important information to voters about the measure; Democrats indicated that they believed a committee hearing was unnecessary. Following the failed vote, the House voted to indefinitely postpone action on the ballot question. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce supported the Legislature holding a public hearing on the bill.

LD 1864 came up for debate in the Senate this week. The Senate moved that the bill have a public hearing in the Taxation committee. The bill moved backed to the House with a much shorter debate this week. House Republicans voted to recede and concur hoping to pick up some Democrats and follow the Senate's

lead on referring the bill to the Taxation committee for public hearing. Due to six House Republican members being absent, the vote was close, but ultimately failed. The House then voted to "insist," on the bill, which places the bill in legislative files and marks the bill as "dead." This means that this initiative will now appear on Maine's 2018 November referendum ballot and its fate is up to registered Maine voters.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce strongly opposes this citizen's initiative for many reasons. This proposal would be a \$300-million tax increase, the largest tax increase in Maine history. This tax increase would hit Maine's self-employed and small business owners especially hard and make it more difficult for small, family-owned businesses to survive. This would be a double tax penalty for middle class Maine families. It applies the nearly 3.8 percent surtax to every dollar a married couple earns above a combined \$128,000 Social Security tax level even if neither person earns that much.

The initiative over-promises on what it can deliver; the elderly and disabled will be put on waitlists for services in addition to the thousands of Mainers already on waitlists for these services.

The law would create an unaccountable private organization and give it the authority to control and spend hundreds of millions of public tax dollars each year and does not require any independent oversight or public audit of how these tax dollars are spent. The way that the ballot initiative is written would create privacy implications allowing the home addresses, contact information, and sensitive health information about the elderly and disabled to private groups without their permission.

This law would also create forced unionization, as it requires every independent home care worker, even family members providing home care, to join a union and pay mandatory dues to that union. As you can see, this citizen's initiative is extensive and would do a number of different things that are of great concern to the Maine State Chamber.

For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

Implementation of ranked choice voting for June primaries under scrutiny

On Wednesday, March 28, 2018, the Secretary of State's office proposed emergency rulemaking to establish guidelines for implementing the ranked-choice system. The very next day, Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap indicated to the Veterans and Legal Affairs committee on March 29 that his office had learned from the Attorney General's Office concerning legal concerns regarding the implementation of ranked-choice voting for the primaries.

Ranked-choice voting, by law, will be in effect for the June 12, 2018, Primary Election. Mainers approved the new voting concept in a statewide referendum last year, but state lawmakers delayed its implementation. Supporters gathered enough signatures for a People's Veto of the Legislature's repeal of the law.

It is not the whole law that is raising concerns; it is specifically the section of law that states "in a primary election held before December 1, 2021, the person who receives a plurality of the votes cast for nomination to any office, as long as there is at least one vote cast for that office, is nominated for that office." Ranked-choice voting determines a winner based on the majority of votes, rather than a plurality of the votes. A previous amendment to the law had changed this section to align with ranked-choice voting, but it was struck in later amendments.

The Secretary of State is having this new legal concern looked at by legal counsel, but has said while it is being reviewed that the Secretary of State's Office will continue with its implementation process for ranked-choice voting for the June 12, 2018, Primary Election.

The debate over ranked-choice voting continued at the Legislature this week. On Monday, April 2, the Maine Senate debated a joint order that would challenge

Continued on Page 7...

Tax Conformity... (Continued from Page 1...)

Democrats' Proposal...

The language for the Democrats' amendment was not readily available. However, from verbal discussions in the committee, the amendment would, among other things, accomplish the following:

- ◆ Reject the proposal to increase the estate tax;
- ◆ Reject conformity to full bonus depreciation, just maintains current Maine Investment Tax Credit;
- ◆ Initiate a paid family medical leave credit for employers (language to be determined);
- ◆ Reject the repeal of the Alternative Minimum Tax;
- ◆ Lower the child care credit from \$500 to \$300;
- ◆ Reject the decrease in the corporate income tax rate;
- ◆ Increase the earned income tax credit from 5% to 15%; and,
- ◆ Place \$35 million into the property tax fairness credit, increasing the cap

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for taxpayers over 65 from \$900 to \$1,000 and the cap for taxpayers under 65 from \$600 to \$750.

Republicans' Proposal...

Among other things, the Republicans proposal would:

- ◆ Conform to full 100% bonus depreciation for business;
- ◆ Repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax;

- ◆ Eliminate personal exemption, but enact a zero-percent tax bracket and establish a child care credit of \$500 to mitigate elimination;
- ◆ Conform to international provisions; and,
- ◆ Conform to changes in treatment of net operating losses, limit the amount of interest a business can expense but decrease corporate income tax rate

Continued on Page 6...

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would give the many struggling small business a chance to catch up. In 2020, the minimum wage would increase by 50 cents an hour to \$10.50, and then 50 cents more each year until 2023, when the statewide minimum wage would reach \$12 an hour. After that, any indexing tied to changes in the consumer price index (CPI) would kick in from there forward.

In addition, the amendment proposes to establish a “training wage” for workers under the age of 18 for the first 200 hours of employment equal to 80% of the state minimum wage or the federal minimum wage, whichever is higher. It is important to note that any employer is free to increase the wages paid to a youth worker at any time before the 200-hour mark is reached.

The bill was initially debated in the House last week. Although the bill was hotly debated, the first vote on the proposal fell sharply along party lines, failing 81-69. However, the bill was approved by the Maine State Senate with bi-partisan support, 19-16. In addition, the Senate amended the bill by removing the training wage portion, and substituting the 12-month moratorium on next year’s scheduled increase, with a 50-cent increase next year and each year until reaching the voter approved \$12 an hour in 2021.

Once again, the debate in the House was highly emotional and extensive. However, when the roll call vote was taken, the vote to accept the Senate version of the bill failed 72-75. It is important to note that, as with the previous House votes, Republicans supported the bill. However, as many as a half dozen Democrats joined the Republicans in acknowledging the need to slow the rate on increases down, or risk damaging the rural Maine economy. For a complete list of how representatives voted on the amendment, see Roll Call #572 on the

Legislature’s website at <http://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/rollcall.asp?ID=280067253&chamber=House&serialnumber=572>.

With the failure of LD 1757, the tremendous pressure small businesses are feeling regarding the significant increases in the cost of doing business in the slightly more than 14 months that the new law has been in effect remains unresolved. The public hearing on the bill, held slightly more than two months ago, lasted nearly eight hours, with dozens of small businesses testifying before the committee asking for some relief. Besides the concerns expressed with respect to meeting the challenges of the \$2.50 increase in the minimum wage that has gone into effect in approximately 13 months, the real fear expressed by the nearly 50 businesses that attended, many from small rural towns and regions, was how they will be able to integrate yet another dollar-per-hour increase into their business models next January – followed by another dollar-per-hour increase in 2020 (a 38% increase in wage-and-hour costs in less than four years) – and still remain viable and open for business.

While those arguments and others were made on the House floor, they were insufficient to sway the necessary votes to bring some relief to smaller, rural employers. Therefore those businesses appear to be careening toward an \$11 an hour minimum wage effective in 2019 – the amount most often cited as that which will result in disaster for our small businesses. After that, there will be yet another dollar-per-hour increase the following year. Whether anything further can be done to address this issue before the 128th Legislature adjourns in slightly less than 10 days is unknown. For additional information or questions, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

Gubernatorial debates kick campaign season into gear

On Monday, March 26, 2018, Senate President Mike Thibodeau withdrew from the state’s Republican gubernatorial primary. His reasons included the need to focus on his responsibilities at the legislature and running his snow shovel manufacturing business and a heavy equipment dealership. His withdrawal leaves four Republican candidates remaining in the Republican primary. House Minority Leader Ken Fredette, Senate Majority Leader Garrett Mason, former Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Mary Mayhew, and businessman Shawn Moody.

Qualifying on the Democratic side, there are seven candidates still competing for the Democratic nomination. They are, attorney and former Maine National Guard officer Adam Cote, Biddeford Mayor Donna Dion, Portland state Senator Mark Dion, former Speaker of the House Mark Eves, Attorney General Janet Mills, former state Representative Diane Russell, and lobbyist Betsy Sweet. The field for third-party and independent candidates will be finalized after the June 1, 2018, filing deadline.

With the 2018 Primary Election just two months away (June 12), candidates are ramping up their campaigns and increasing their public appearances daily. The four 2018 Republican gubernatorial candidates had their first televised debate on Tuesday night. The debate started with the topic of Medicaid expansion, which all four candidates have previously gone on record as opposing.

Shawn Moody spent his time highlighting his business background; Mary Mayhew, her work on welfare issues and reform; and both Sen. Garrett Mason and Rep. Ken Fredette touted their reliable conservative records and experience in Augusta.

The seven 2018 Democrats gubernatorial candidates will debate this week. □

Tax Conformity... (Continued from Page 4...)

from 8.93% to 8.33 percent beginning in year 2020 to mitigate the impact the two above provisions would have on Maine businesses.

The vote follows weeks of working through all of the different provisions, with a focus on working through the many provisions in the tax conformity bill that dealt with individuals and businesses, as well as a few international provisions.

The Maine State Chamber supports conforming to the federal tax code. The Chamber has taken the position that failure to adopt tax conformity will result in an administrative nightmare for Mainers and Maine businesses and opens door for fraud, with Maine potentially losing millions of dollars of revenue.

In addition to the excessive administrative burden with non-conformance that will be placed on Maine businesses, there are a number of other issues that will

result if Maine fails to conform to the federal code. Specifically, if Maine conforms to the code, businesses will be allowed to take 100% bonus depreciation on assets. This will free up cash that could be used to reinvest in equipment or in employees. If other states that we compete with adopt this bonus depreciation measure and Maine does not, it will place Maine companies at a competitive disadvantage when competing for capital. In addition, the alternative minimum tax would be repealed.

With respect to the international provisions, the federal code transitions the U.S. from a worldwide to a territorial tax system. The idea was to bring back investment to the U.S. whereas now companies hold assets outside the U.S. because of high tax rates in this country. The changes in the federal code lower the corporate tax rate to 21%, putting the U.S. on a level playing field with other countries. The federal code requires businesses to pay a one-time tax on cash, cash equivalents, and non-cash assets that are “deemed repatriated” back to the U.S. These assets are currently overseas.

Maine stands to gain \$31 million in tax revenue from this “deemed repatriation.” If Maine fails to conform to the federal tax code, Maine loses that \$31 million.

In addition, there are a number of other problems that will impact Maine if we do not conform. First, Maine Revenue Services (MRS) will lose the support of the federal government to audit personal exemptions. MRS depends largely on the feds to audit returns for fraud. If Maine does not conform to federal tax laws, filing would essentially be done on the “honor system,” and Maine will stand to lose thousands, if not millions, of dollars because MRS will not have access to the expertise of the IRS to verify taxpayer data.

The bill will now go to the full legislature for debate. The Maine State Chamber is asking its members, and their employees, to please contact their legislators and urge them to vote YES on tax conformity and support the minority report.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org. □

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The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Friday, April 13, 2018, 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!



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Ranked Choice...

(Continued from Page 3...)

ranked-choice voting. After long debate, the Senate voted 22 to 12 in favor of passing the order, which challenges Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap's authority to implement the ranked-choice voting law.

Supporters of the order argued that it is necessary to provide legal clarity prior to the June primary. Ranked-choice voting supporters say the order is too expansive and allows the Senate to possibly sue the Secretary of State. Kennebec Superior Court Justice Michaela Murphy is expected to rule on the injunction concerning implementing the law late in the week.

Ranked-choice voting has been a hot topic at the Legislature since it was approved in a statewide referendum, and it continues to be. For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

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Maine State Chamber hosts forum on the Future of the ACA and Health Care —

Despite two previous re-schedules and a looming Northeaster, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce finally hosted on Wednesday, March 7, an informative and timely forum on the possible future of health care and health insurance in the era of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA).

More than 70 business representatives and interested parties pack the free event, held at the Senator Inn in Augusta, all despite the imminent threat of a double-digit snowfall that day! The forum showcased a panel of state and national experts who provided attendees with the most up-to-date information on what Congress might do, how soon they might do it, and what possible avenues might be open to change the act. In addition, a state panel discussed the market here in Maine, and how trends and tweaks made in Washington may impact employers and their employees.

After two failed attempts to eliminate and re-write the Affordable Care Act, the now-seven-year-old law remains essentially untouched from a statutory perspective. However, the Trump Administration has begun implementing a series of rule changes that will have a significant effect on the implementation and effectiveness of the law. Some of those changes have already been felt in Maine, have impacted the exchange market, and created a greater level of uncertainty. Add to this the changes made in to the ACA in the tax reform package and the result is much is in flux.

It appeared the consensus of the panelists is that Washington will take a “wait and see” approach to a larger review of the ACA until after the elections. All agreed there were changes and corrections that could be made, but the political reality was that agreement on those was

Continued on Page 10...



Health Care Forum... (Continued from Page 9...)

unlikely. While there may be some further small changes over the remainder of the congressional session, real systemic changes are unlikely at this time.

“The Maine State Chamber put (this) forum together with the goal of helping Maine’s business community better understand how the very complicated legislative and programmatic process that is taking place in Washington, might impact our state and our business community,” said Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. “Our panel of state and national experts gave an excellent synopsis of the key issues facing Congress, and the insurance, provider and business communities as the legislative process move forward during the opening week of the new Congressional session.”

This year, the Maine State Chamber took a different direction with regard to our policy lineup. Instead of one panel, we incorporated two panels – the first made up of representatives from our Maine congressional offices with an expertise on health care, and the second panel comprised of state policy experts on the topic charged with reacting to our DC-based discussion. In the final 30 minutes of the forum, an outstanding policy discussion with all seven panelists answering questions posed from the business audience closed the event.

Our federal panel was comprised of:

- ♦ **Katie Mahoney**, executive director of health policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who served as moderator of the panel, and directed questions and discussion to the congressional representatives;
- ♦ **Bethany K. Beausang** with the Office of U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree, who serves as District Representative and Counsel to Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-Maine);
- ♦ **Sarah Khasawinah, PhD, MHS** with the Office of U.S. Senator Susan Collins and the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, handles health

Continued on Page 11...



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The Maine Business Leadership Network (MEBLN), a program managed by the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, is preparing for the launch of Campus Career Connect (C3). Campus Career Connect is an online, accessible group e-mentoring platform designed to support employment goals of college students and transition-aged adults with disabilities.

C3 offers a safe environment for individuals to improve their general employment readiness skills, as well as receive mentoring around disability-specific workplace topics, such as disclosure and self-identification, requesting accommodations, and accessible transportation.

Community College students will access professional and peer mentors to increase their networks, receive advice, and gather support about achieving goals. They will also participate in topical webinars related to employment readiness and engage in live networking and interview fairs hosted by the Business Leadership Networks. □

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Please contact Joyce LaRoche by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 113 or by emailing jlroche@mainechamber.org. More information will be available at <http://mainebnl.org> in the coming weeks!



Health Care Forum... (Continued from Page 10...)

and aging issues for Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) on the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging; and,

- ♦ **Marge Kilkelly** from the Office of U.S. Senator Angus King has served as Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Angus S. King Jr. (I-Maine) since he was sworn in, in 2013. Her portfolio includes health care, opioids, and agriculture policy.

Our state-based panel of experts was represented by:

- ♦ **Joanne Rawlings-Sekunda**, director of the Consumer Health Care Division at the Maine Bureau of Insurance, is actively involved in a broad range of regulatory, consumer protection, and policy matters related to insurance for health, life, disability, and long-term care;
- ♦ **Kristine Ossenfort**, senior director of government relations at Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Maine, has represented Anthem before the Maine Legislature as well as the Governor's office and regulatory agencies since January 2009, after six years as a Senior Government Affairs Specialist with the Maine State Chamber;
- ♦ **Eric Jermyn**, president of Cross Employee Benefits at Cross Insurance, has worked in the employee benefits industry for more than 20 years, having joined Cross in 2015 after a lengthy career with Anthem; and,
- ♦ **Al Swallow**, executive vice president and treasurer of MaineHealth, was appointed in April 2015, with more than 30 years of experience in health care finance.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce would like to thank the panelists and attendees for making this health care forum our best to date. For additional information, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

Maine businesses take part in JMG's largest student Career Development Conference in 25 years

Kiara Holbrook, a senior at Waterville High School, suffered from so much anxiety, there was a time when she wouldn't talk to fellow classmates in the school hallways, let alone speak up in class. She says, "Back in junior high, before JMG, I had a hard time actually talking to people. Sometimes I wouldn't even pass in my homework because I didn't even want the teachers to see it, and I never spoke up in class."

Kiara says thanks, in large part, to the support and encouragement she's received in JMG, on Tuesday, March 27 she joined hundreds of others seniors, and select juniors, from across the state in a high-stress career skills competition at Thomas College. JMG's annual Career Development Conference (CDC) is a celebration of all of the career preparation skills these students have learned in the JMG classroom throughout the year.

"For our students, like Kiara, CDC is a time when we pull everything together we've been practicing in the classroom," said Dana Bushee, JMG's Specialist at Waterville High School. "Through high-stress competitions, the students demonstrate leadership skills, working as a team, critical thinking, and the whole concept of looking and acting professional. It's a lot of pressure, but the experience is immeasurable."

This year JMG is celebrating its 25th anniversary, and with more than 900 students and business and community volunteers taking part, this was the largest Career Development Conference since JMG was established in 1993. Executives and employees from dozens of Maine businesses acted as judges and facilitators as students competed for top awards in public speaking, marketing, communications, and other career-focused contests.

Another highlight of the event,
Continued on Page 13...



Kristen Brewer of Houlton High School



Alex Haley of Hall-Dale High School

Meet the 2018 JMG / Maine State Chamber Scholarship Recipients

Alex Haley, a student of Hall-Dale High School, is very active in his community, volunteering for three separate organizations, as well as being an active member of his school's varsity basketball team. He overcame life without a father figure and looked to JMG for the guidance he needed to succeed in his future endeavors. He is said to work well with others, to be wise in how he uses his time, and a very helpful student. Alex will be pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree in Biology at the University of Maine at Macias in the fall.

Kristen Brewer of Houlton High School is known among faculty as a "hard worker." Despite a life-changing fall that put her dad in the hospital, Kristen managed to balance being in the National Honor Society member, a student of accelerated math and science courses, a member of Student Council, Prom Committee, and the basketball team, all while keeping a 92% GPA. It was her time that she spent with her dad while he was recovering that helped her decide to pursue a Baccalaureate Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Maine at Orono.

Victoria Thompson moved to Hodgdon High School at the beginning of her senior year to be closer to her grandfather and lend a hand taking care of him. While she had trouble keeping her head above water in her previous school, she thrived at Hodgdon, excelling in piano, helping out at town events, keeping two jobs, taking night classes, and keeping up a 3.56 GPA. Victoria is described as "determined, persistent, and a survivor." She will be pursuing a Certificate in Nursing/Medical. □



JMG Specialist from Hodgdon High School, Jason Little, accepted the scholarship on behalf of Victoria Thompson, who was unable to attend JMG's annual Career Development Conference on Tuesday, March 27, 2018.

JMG Career Conference...
(Continued from Page 12...)

Maine State Chamber President Dana Connors presented the Chamber's annual college scholarships to three outstanding JMG students. Dana said, "This is the 15th year that the Chamber has been presenting scholarships to JMG here at CDC, and I am honored to be a part of your special day. I want to be perfectly clear that I am here today because there are hundreds of Maine businesses that belong to the Chamber who believe in you and care about you enough to invest in your futures."

Students also received college scholarships from the Procter & Gamble Scholarship Fund and the Andrew L. Hutchins Scholarship Fund.

During the event's Opening Ceremony, JMG presented its Above & Beyond Award to Bank of America and General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works for their outstanding support of JMG students. "JMG gets such strong support from our associates because of its mission, and importantly, because it effectively delivers on its mission to thousands of Maine students every year," said Bill Williamson, Maine President of Bank of America. "We all know that workforce development is a primary factor in growing our state's economy. Bank of America believes JMG is one of the most important programs in Maine leading to our eventual success in overcoming our workforce development challenges. JMG has shown the way in building partnerships with business, government, schools and local communities to help students reach their full potential."

JMG is a statewide, private nonprofit that partners with public schools and private businesses to offer results-driven solutions to ensure all Maine students graduate, attain post-secondary credentials and pursue meaningful careers. JMG provides more than 7,000 students a year with the skills and experience they will need to reach their potential. JMG graduates become engaged members of their communities, productive adults in the workforce, and contributors to Maine's economy. □

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WORKPLACE WELLNESS

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30 Days to a Healthier You: A Daily Checklist of Wellness Tips

Most of us hear the term *wellness* and assume that it's something beyond our reach. Or perhaps we think that wellness is only for advanced yogis, holistic doctors, or wellness practitioners, but not us — not everyday people just working the daily grind and living busy lives. But this is where we make the mistake. Wellness is nothing more than small daily choices that lead up to lifelong, very big changes — that's it. Anyone can achieve wellness whether that means you're a stay-at-home mom or a full-time working adult, maybe even juggling two jobs just to get by. You don't have to have a lot of money, time, or even kitchen skills because all of us have access to wellness if we choose to. It simply starts with one choice after another.

We found this well-planned 30-day checklist at One Green Planet (<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/lifestyle/thirty-days-to-a-healthier-you-a-daily-checklist-of-wellness-tips>) and will be sharing them in one-week excerpts for the next few months. This checklist makes recommendations for kitchen tips, activity tips, mind and mood tips, and lifestyle tips, which will have you well on your way to a healthier and happier you in just a month. These tips are simple, doable for everyone, affordable, and absolutely life-altering when all combined.

No one becomes healthy by wishing, making excuses, or deeming themselves unworthy. Here's how to choose wellness one day at a time:

Week Two: Activity Tips

1 Aim to get in a 20-30 Minute Walk or Jog

This might sound difficult, but is easier than we all think. Getting up just 30 minutes earlier in the morning will give you plenty of time to get in a good walk (or jog). If you like to run, even better, but walking is great too. Moving first thing in the day boosts your serotonin levels, provides energy to the body, and also helps you focus better throughout the day. It is also an easy way to improve your metabolism to help manage your weight.

2 Lift Something Heavy for 5 Minutes Every Day

How many of you have ever thought, "I don't have time to lift weights," or maybe you know you have time, but just don't enjoy it. Whatever the case, here's an easy way to combat that issue: Pick some-

thing heavy, whether it be a kettlebell, a dumbbell, or even a household item you can grasp in your hands that is heavy but still light enough to pick up. Lift one of these items for just five minutes a day, preferably over your head like you would if you were in the gym, along with by your sides to work your arms, and even hold this while you do a few squats too. Resistance training not only improves your metabolism, but also boosts testosterone in the body that improves your sense of motivation, focus, and even your energy. It also aids in strengthening the body, even in just five minutes. If you have time for more great, but if not, five minutes is enough to get you out of breath just enough to get good results. If you can do this three different times throughout the day, you've lifted weights for 15 minutes without realizing it.

Continued on Page 15...

Workplace Wellness... (Continued from Page 14...)

3 Don't Over Sit Your Welcome

Sitting is not as evil as it's being made out to be now, but it is tremendously important that we don't "over sit" our welcome. We need to stand more throughout the day, even if that's while chatting with friends, talking on the phone, or just getting up in between nightly relaxing activities before bed. If you like to watch television, be sure not to sit there for hours on end while doing so. If you work at a computer all day, get up and move around or try to stand and work however possible. Sitting too long makes you tired, can cause brain fog, increases your insulin levels, and slows down your metabolism. It can even lead to a bad mood, and antsy nature. The body likes to move; give it what it needs.

4 Practice Active Errands and Commutes

When commuting to work throughout the day, running errands or the like, it's important to be active during those activities when you can. For instance, if you can

take the stairs more often, do it. If you can walk to work, do it. If you can park further away at the store, do it. You get the idea. Working in a large city makes it easy for most people, but those that rely on cars and public transportation may have to keep this in mind to prevent easy access to more sitting and less activity.

5 Do Some Sort of Stretching Each Day

Stretching is one of the most overlooked exercises that improves your mood. It releases muscle tension, prevents muscle cramps, improves lymphatic flow and blood flow that can make you happier and also keep digestion working well. It also prevents muscle stagnation that can just make you feel badly. Stretch in the morning a little and a little more at night before bed. Even just a couple minutes will make you feel better — try it!

6 Spend a Little Time Outside Daily

Take a stroll around your neighborhood or walk through a local park each day if you live near one. If you have a dog, take them for a five minute spin down the street. Or, maybe you have the option to exercise outside — try it; it's rejuvenat-

ing compared to indoor treadmills! Being active outside, even just for a few minutes, is a great way to enlighten your spirits without even trying. It puts you in touch with nature, which studies show can actually benefit our brains, prevent depression, and exposes us to the most natural source of vitamin D available to us: the sun.

7 Try Yoga

While not everyone may enjoy yoga, its many benefits are so profound that we should all at least give it a shot. Don't let yoga intimidate you if it seems out of reach or strange. It's actually just a fluid way of moving your body, stretching everything out, and being kinder to your body through movement. While a grueling workout at the gym is great for pumping muscles, yoga is a nice change of pace that reduces cortisol in the body. This lowers stress around the clock and reduces insulin spikes that are caused by elevated cortisol levels. Yoga also stimulates lymphatic flow, a key to keeping your body feeling well in more ways than one. Try some beginner You Tube videos; even just 10 minutes is a great place to start!

And there you go friends, a month's worth of wellness tips you can practice to be a healthier, happier you in just 30 days. You can try one tip per day, or optimally, build on each day as the month goes by. You won't believe how different these can make you feel when practiced on a regular basis.

Remember, wellness is merely a gift you choose to give yourself that begins with one simple choice after another. Start your wellness journey today!

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 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 web page (www.mainechamber.org/blueoptions.php) 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 jlroche@mainechamber.org. □



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To register for this *FREE* event, please contact Kelsey Morrell by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 104, or by emailing kmorrell@mainechamber.org. **To sponsor** this event, please contact Melody Rousseau by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 102, or by emailing melodyr@mainechamber.org.

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