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# WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 17, 2026

ADVOCACY | ACCESS | AWARENESS

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# WEEKLY UPDATE FROM THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT

**PATRICK WOODCOCK**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
MAINE STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ADVOCATE: LINDA CAPRARA



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# BUDGET

NEW LEGISLATION

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Thurs 2/19 9:00 AM @ State House, Room 128**

**L.D. 2212, AN ACT MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS FROM THE GENERAL FUND AND OTHER FUNDS FOR THE EXPENDITURES OF STATE GOVERNMENT AND CHANGING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE LAW NECESSARY TO THE PROPER OPERATIONS OF STATE GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEARS ENDING JUNE 30, 2026 AND JUNE 30, 2027.**

**Position:** TBD, definitely oppose elimination of BETR.

This is the Governor's Supplemental Budget bill. Among other things, the bill proposes to adopt a Pass Through Entity Tax, Eliminate the Business Equipment Tax Reimbursement Program (BETR) and allow partial conformity to the immediate expensing of research and development expenses.

Implication: Elimination of the BETR Program could have devastating effects on Maine businesses and make taxable personal property that was previously reimbursed under BETR.

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# TAXATION

LOOKING AHEAD

## **Upcoming Public Hearing: Wed 2/18 1:00 PM @ State House, Room 127**

### **L.D. 1223, AN ACT TO LOWER ELECTRIC RATES FOR MAINE RATEPAYERS BY REQUIRING THE PAYMENT OF CERTAIN COST FROM THE GENERAL FUND**

THE BILL AS AMENDED WOULD CREATE A REFUNDABLE MAINE INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR RESIDENTIAL AND SMALL BUSINESSES FOR CERTAIN COST THEY PAY ON THEIR ELECTRICITY BILLS.

POSITION:TBD

## **Upcoming Public Hearing: Thu 2/19 10:00 AM @ State House, Room 127**

### **L.D. 2188, AN ACT TO AMEND CERTAIN STATE TAX LAWS**

This bill makes clarifying changes to Maine's tax laws

Position: Monitor

## **Upcoming Public Hearing: Thu 2/19 1:00 PM @ State House, Room 127**

### **L.D. 2010, AN ACT UPDATING REFERENCES TO THE UNITED STATES INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986 CONTAINED IN THE MAINE REVISED STATUTES.**

Position: TBD

This is the State's annual income tax conformity bill. MSCC supports full conformity, however the most important pieces of the bill relate to the creation of a Pass Through Entity Tax and allowing immediate expensing for R & D.

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# VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Work Session: Fri 2/20 12:00 PM @ SH, Room 437**

## **LD 2160 - AN ACT TO MODIFY PROVISIONS OF LAW AFFECTING SMALL DISTILLERIES**

Sponsor: Valli GEIGER of Rockland

Policy Committee: --

Advocate: Linda Caprara

**Position: --**

This bill does the following. 1. It prohibits the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Lottery Operations or the holder of a state contract for wholesale spirits activities and marketing from charging a small distillery a spirits administration services fee or a spirits trade marketing services fee on any sale of spirits. 2. It prohibits the bureau or any other entity of the State from requiring that a small distillery be inspected more frequently than every 3 years. 3. It prohibits the bureau or wholesale spirits provider from requiring a small distillery to report more frequently than on a quarterly basis. 4. It allows a person licensed to sell spirits for on-premises consumption to purchase spirits from a small distillery licensed in the State and allows the holder of a small distillery license to sell or deliver its products to licensed retailers or wholesalers. 5. It allows a small distillery to sell beer, wine and spirits manufactured by small breweries, small wineries or small distilleries licensed in the State without a license for sales for on-premises consumption. 6. It extends the licensing period for a small distillery from one year to 3 years. 7. It allows a small distillery to sell, furnish or deliver spirits manufactured by the small distillery to be sold, furnished or delivered by the State by mail order.



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# VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Work Session: Fri 2/20 12:00 PM @ State House, Room 437**

**LD 2155 - AN ACT TO CLARIFY CERTAIN LAWS GOVERNING LICENSES FOR THE SALE OF LIQUOR BY MANUFACTURERS**

Policy Committee: Tax

Advocate: Linda Caprara

**Position: --**

ADVOCATE: AMANDA JOHNSON



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# HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

LOOKING BACK

**Previous Work Session: Wed 2/11 10:00 AM @ Cross, Room 220**

**LD 2056 – AN ACT TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FINANCING OPTIONS TO CONSUMERS IN THE STATE**

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: Amanda Johnson

**Position: Support**

This bill clarifies Maine's consumer credit law by reaffirming the requirement for substantially equal payments while allowing limited exceptions, including down payments, varied payment intervals, and certain simple interest loans, without weakening consumer protections.

**Implications: The bill allows limited flexibility in simple-interest loan payments while maintaining consumer protections by capping payment differences at 50%, supporting more practical repayment options for borrowers and lenders.**

**Voted Ought to Pass with Amendments**

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# JUDICIARY

LOOKING BACK

**Previous Work Session: Wed 2/11 10:00 AM @ State House, Room 438**

**LD 1911 – AN ACT TO AUTOMATICALLY SEAL CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION FOR CERTAIN CRIMES**

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: Amanda Johnson

**Position: Monitor**

This bill would create a statewide system to automatically seal certain criminal records after setting waiting periods, including eligible non-convictions and older, qualifying convictions, without requiring court petitions.

**Implications: This bill would automatically seal certain non-convictions and older, qualifying criminal records, which could improve access to jobs and housing for rehabilitated individuals and streamline the court process. However, it would also limit employers' access to criminal history information, raise concerns about workplace safety, hiring transparency, and added administrative complexity for state agencies.**

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# LABOR

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Tue 2/17 10:00 AM @ Cross Building, Room 202**

**LD 2049 – AN ACT TO CLARIFY INDEMNIFICATION WHEN SEEKING REMEDY FOR LABOR LAW VIOLATIONS**

Policy Committee: LHHI

Advocate: Amanda Johnson

**Position: Oppose**

The bill establishes joint and several liability between contractors and subcontractors, as well as between employers and staffing agencies, and requires indemnification for wages, penalties, and related costs resulting from labor law violations.

**Implications: As drafted, the bill would make contractors and employers fully liable for labor law violations by subcontractors or staffing agencies, requiring upfront payment of wages, penalties, and fees, increasing legal and financial risk, costs, and potentially discouraging the use of subcontractors—especially impacting small businesses.**

ADVOCATE: ASHLEY LUSZCZKI



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# ENERGY, UTILITIES, & TECHNOLOGY

LOOKING AHEAD

## **Upcoming Public Hearing: Thu 2/19 1:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 211**

**LD 2140 – AN ACT TO REDUCE HOUSEHOLD ENERGY COSTS IN RESPONSE TO FEDERAL CUTS** Policy Committee: EEP

Policy Committee: EEP

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

**Position: Monitor**

Based on the federal energy-efficient home improvement credit that expired December 31, 2025, this bill allows a resident to claim a refundable tax credit for the cost of energy-efficient improvements made to that resident's permanent residence in Maine.

## **Upcoming Public Hearing: Thu 2/19 1:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 211**

**LD 2203 – AN ACT TO LIMIT RATES CHARGED TO LOW-INCOME ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS**

Policy Committee: EEP

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

**Position: Monitor**

The bill prohibits a competitive electricity provider from providing generation service to a residential electricity consumer receiving low-income assistance at a rate that is more than the standard-offer service rate.

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# ENERGY, UTILITIES, & TECHNOLOGY

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Work Session: Thu 2/19 1:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 211**

**LD 307 – AN ACT REGARDING ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY**

Policy Committee: EEPC

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

**Position: Originally NFNA, Opposed to Sponsor's 2.12 Amendment**

As amended, the bill establishes a council to review the impacts of data centers; it adds tribal representation; and includes a moratorium on data centers 20mw or larger until July 2028.

**Implications: Without greater representation from the business community, it risks missing important real-world information in its review and recommendations. The moratorium would also send a signal to the business community that Maine is not welcoming data center development, despite having not yet had a thorough understanding of the energy, environmental, and economic impacts of data centers.**

**Upcoming Work Session: Thu 2/19 1:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 211**

**LD 838 – AN ACT TO EXPLORE PUBLIC FINANCING AND OWNERSHIP OF ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Policy Committee: EEPC

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

**Position: Started as concept draft, opposed original amendment.**

As amended (a second time), the bill would set up a council to study public financing of electric transmission and distribution infrastructure.

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# TAXATION

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Thu 2/19 10:00 AM @ Cross Building, Room 211**

**LD 2140 – AN ACT TO REDUCE HOUSEHOLD ENERGY COSTS IN RESPONSE TO FEDERAL CUTS**

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

**Position: --**

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# HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Tue 2/17 10:00 AM @ Cross, Room 220**

**LD 2082 – AN ACT TO REGULATE THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PROVIDING CERTAIN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Policy Committee: TPC

Advocate : Ashley Luszczki

**Position: Monitor**

Allows certain licensed professionals to use artificial intelligence to assist in providing administrative support or supplementary support in therapy or psychotherapy services. The bill provides requirements for the use of artificial intelligence and prohibitions on its use. The bill also provides for the enforcement of the provisions and penalties for violations.

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Tue 2/17 10:00 AM @ Cross, Room 220**

**LD 2162 – AN ACT TO REGULATE AND PREVENT CHILDREN’S ACCESS TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHATBOTS WITH HUMAN-LIKE FEATURES AND SOCIAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPANIONS**

Policy Committee: TPC

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

**Position: Oppose**

Bans AI systems with human-like features from being accessible to minors without robust age verification, allows exceptions for therapy-focused chatbots under strict conditions, and gives the Attorney General authority to enforce the rules and allows a private right of action for impacted minors.

**Implications: Could increase compliance costs for AI developers and service providers and invite legal exposure through state enforcement and private rights of action. Conversely, it aims to reduce risks of emotional manipulation, privacy harms, and unsafe interactions between minors and advanced AI systems.**

MAINE STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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ADVOCATE:  
PATRICK WOODCOCK



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# HOUSING

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Tues 2/17 10:00 AM @ Cross Building, Room 206**

**LD 2164 – AN ACT TO ASSIST COMMUNITIES WITH CONVERTING VACANT SCHOOL BUILDINGS INTO HOUSING**

Policy Committee: ---

Advocate: Patrick Woodcock

**Position: Support**

The bill proposes to create a program at the newly developed State Redevelopment Land Bank for converting vacant school buildings into housing development. The bill would have a fiscal cost of \$5 million. The funds would be used to reduce the barriers for conversion rather than directly fund conversions.

**Implications: The bill would accelerate the transition of municipal schools into housing projects and potentially increase supply of housing units.**

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# HOUSING

LOOKING AHEAD

**Upcoming Public Hearing: Tues 2/17 10:00 AM @ Cross Building, Room 206**

**LD 2173 AN ACT TO UPDATE THE LAWS REGARDING HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

Policy Committee: ---

Advocate: Patrick Woodcock

**Position:** Monitor

The bill makes a number of technical modifications to LD 1829 that passed into last year and placed restrictions on municipalities limiting some housing projects through minimum lot sizes, height expansions for affordable housing projects, and prohibiting sprinkler requirements in ADUs. The bill makes some technical changes including the extension of municipal adoption

**Implications: The bill would clarify some municipal housing restrictions and allow a grace period for municipalities to adopt the new definition of subdivision and allow more time for the compliance of the additional height for affordable housing development.**

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# HOUSING

LOOKING AHEAD

## **Upcoming Public Hearing: Tues 2/17 1:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 206**

### **LD 916: AN ACT TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN HOUSING**

Policy Committee: ---

Advocate: Patrick Woodcock

**Position: NFNA**

The bill attempts to address “middle-income” housing defined as households with income at or below 120 percent of the area median income by supporting loans or grants to build new or renovated existing property.

**Implications: The bill is pretty vague and to address this segment would require a massive amount of resources. It would be more constructive to look at regulatory changes that allow housing units to be constructed serving this market segment at a lower cost.**

## **Upcoming Work Session: Thurs 2/19 11:30AM @ Cross Building, Room 206**

### **LD 916: AN ACT TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN HOUSING AND LD 2164: AN ACT TO ASSIST COMMUNITIES WITH CONVERTING VACANT SCHOOL BUILDINGS INTO HOUSING**

# UPCOMING EVENTS



Next Weekly Legislative Update:  
**Monday, February 23, 2026**

## Weekly Legislative Update

Join us weekly during the legislative session from 8:30 - 9 a.m. on the first day of the week

**MAINE  
STATE  
CHAMBER  
COMMERCE**



**MAINE  
STATE  
CHAMBER  
COMMERCE**

## 2026 LEGISLATIVE STRICTLY SOCIAL

GIN MILL, 302 WATER ST, AUGUSTA  
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM



**MAINE  
STATE  
CHAMBER  
COMMERCE**

## 2026 BUSINESS DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE

HALL OF FLAGS, MAINE STATE HOUSE  
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026  
8:30 AM - 12 NOON

MAINE  

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CHAMBER  
*of*  

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COMMERCE