



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 9, 2026

ADVOCACY | ACCESS | AWARENESS

MEETING AGENDA

01

Update from
Chamber President &
CEO

02

Advocacy Team
Updates

03

Upcoming Events

WEEKLY UPDATE FROM THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT

PATRICK WOODCOCK
PRESIDENT & CEO
MAINE STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ADVOCATE: LINDA CAPRARA



BUDGET

NEW LEGISLATION

GOVERNOR'S SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

Position: To be determined

The Supplemental Budget proposes \$600 million in new spending. Among other things, the Budget would create a Pass-Through Entity Tax (PTET), eliminate the Business Equipment Tax Reimbursement Program (BETR) and partially conforming to the federal research and development deduction rules, allowing smaller companies (under \$30 million) to immediately expense R & D while limiting the benefits for larger companies by phasing in the benefit over time.

Implication: Elimination of the BETR program would jeopardize future investments and jobs. Partially conforming to the R & D expensing rules



TAXATION

LOOKING AHEAD

LD 2178 – AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE INDEPENDENT OFFICE OF TAX APPEALS AND MAKE OTHER CHANGES TO THE LAWS GOVERNING THE TAX APPEALS PROCESS

Policy Committee: Tax

Advocate: Linda Caprara

Position: Oppose the study without stakeholder input

This bill makes changes to improve the tax dispute resolution and administrative tax appeals process. It would create the Independent Office of Tax Appeals in the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to replace the Maine Board of Tax Appeals and simplifies and modernizes the appeals process to improve the tax dispute resolution process. It also makes changes to the composition and duties of the State Board of Property Tax Review, including: Changing the number of members from a fixed number, 15, to a range of 9 to 15 members, as determined by the Governor, and allowing any combination of qualifications for members. It also directs the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Revenue Services, Office of Tax Policy to review the administrative tax appeals process and file with the Legislature by December 15, 2026 a report and recommended legislation for further simplifying and modernizing the tax appeals process.

Implications: We feel other stakeholders (like the business community) should be involved in this study to simplify the appeals process.

ADVOCATE: AMANDA JOHNSON



HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

RECAPPING LAST WEEK

Work Session: Wed 1/28

LD 519

FORMERLY TITLED: AN ACT TO REMOVE THE REQUIREMENT THAT INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP HEALTH PLANS BE OFFERED THROUGH A POOLED MARKET AND TO ELIMINATE THE PROVISION OF LAW ESTABLISHING A POOLED MARKET FOR THOSE PLAN

NEW TITLE: AN ACT TO ADDRESS THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MAINE GUARANTEED ACCESS REINSURANCE ASSOCIATION

Policy Committee: HCIFS

Advocate: Amanda Johnson

Position: Oppose

The amendment raises the maximum assessment for the Maine Guaranteed Access Reinsurance Association from \$4 to \$5 per member per month starting January 1, 2027. It also requires the Superintendent of Insurance to calculate 1.5% of the fully insured market premium beginning with the 2026 premium year and directs the State to provide that amount to the association annually starting July 1, 2027.

Implications: While the proposed MGARA net loss assessment may help stabilize the individual and small group markets, it would increase costs for Maine businesses, particularly employers that do not directly benefit, potentially straining margins and impacting the broader business climate.

HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming 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: HCIFS

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.

JUDICIARY

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming 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: LHHI

Advocate: Amanda Johnson

Position: Monitoring

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.

Will have a third work session held (to be determined).

LABOR

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Public Hearing: Tue 2/10 1:00 PM @ 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



ENERGY, UTILITIES, & TECHNOLOGY

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Work Session: Thu 2/12 2:30 PM @ Cross Building, Room 211

LD 307 – (NEW TITLE) RESOLVE, TO ESTABLISH THE MAINE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DATA CENTER COORDINATION COUNCIL

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

Position: Neither For Nor Against

It requires DOER to convene a council to define AI data center, provide strategic input, facilitate coordinated state planning considerations, and evaluate policy tools to address AI data center benefits and risks.

Implications: The bill would lay out the foundation for how Maine policymakers view what an AI data center is, and it will provide information on recommendations for the various impacts of this type of data center.

**Additional bills likely to be added to the 2/12 EUT schedule.*

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Public Hearing: Wed 2/11 10:30 AM @ Cross Building, Room 216

LD 2070 – AN ACT TO PROHIBIT LANDFILL EXPANSION INTO WETLANDS

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: : Ashley Luszczki

Position: Oppose

It prohibits the DEP from issuing a permit under the Natural Resources Protection Act or a license under the solid waste management laws for the altering of freshwater wetlands in connection with the expansion of a solid waste landfill.

Implications: This would significantly change how landfill expansion into wetlands is permitted and licensed, potentially impacting all landfill development.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Public Hearing: Wed 2/11 10:00 AM @ Cross Building, Room 216

LD 2171 – RESOLVE, REGARDING LEGISLATIVE REVIEW OF PORTIONS OF CHAPTER 305: NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION ACT – PERMIT BY RULE STANDARDS AND PORTIONS OF CHAPTER 335: SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE HABITAT, MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE RULES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: : Ashley Luszczki

Position: ---

This resolve provides for legislative review of portions of Chapter 305: Natural Resources Protection Act – Permit by Rule Standards and portions of Chapter 335: Significant Wildlife Habitat.

Implications: If the Legislature approves the resolve, the rule is adopted. If the Legislature does not support the major substantive rule, the rule cannot be finally adopted or implemented by the Department, which would require the department to revise it or abandon the policy changes.

ENERGY, UTILITIES & TECHNOLOGY

LOOKING AHEAD

LD 1966 – AN ACT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

Policy Committee: ---

Advocate: : Ashley Luszczki

Position: Oppose

The bill would reshape how community and small-scale solar projects interact with utilities and customers by focusing on cost transparency, billing clarity, and a new cooperative solar model.

Implications: The bill requires greater transparency and consumer protections but expands regulatory obligations and cost-shifting mechanisms that businesses ultimately help fund.

ENERGY, UTILITIES, & TECHNOLOGY

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Work Session: Thurs 2/10 1:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 211

LD 2113 - AN ACT TO ALIGN LONG-RANGE GRID STRATEGY WITH THE STATE ENERGY PLAN AND STRENGTHEN INTEGRATED GRID PLANNING

Policy Committee Assignments: Chamber; EET

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

Position: Monitor

This bill establishes a long-range (10 year) electric grid planning process in Maine, to take place every 5 years, that must align with the state's energy goals, climate strategy, and integrated grid plans.

Implications: It would change the way utilities have traditionally planned investments while at the same time ensuring grid planning aligns with other state plans.

ENERGY, UTILITIES, & TECHNOLOGY

LOOKING AHEAD

LD 838 – (NEW TITLE) RESOLVE, TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION TO STUDY OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC FINANCING OF TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY STORAGE PROJECTS

Policy Committee: EET

Advocate: Ashley Luszczki

Position: Oppose

The bill was amended, turning it into a resolve, requiring DOER to convene a commission to study the creation of a governmental or quasi-governmental entity to provide public financing for transmission and distribution and energy storage projects.

Implications: It could lead to public or quasi-public financing of electric grid and storage infrastructure projects, which could reduce ratepayer costs over time. It could also change how grid investments and planning are done, shifting away from market-driven decisions and toward government-planned infrastructure.

ADVOCATE:
PATRICK WOODCOCK



HOUSING

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Public Hearing: Tues 2/10 1:00 PM @ 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.

HOUSING

LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming Public Hearing: Tues 2/10 1:00 PM @ 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 would make a number of technical modifications to LD 1829 that passed into law 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.

Legislative Meeting: Thurs 2/12 3:00 PM @ Cross Building, Room 206

Committee Bills regarding LD 1375, LD 1453, and LD 1765

UPCOMING EVENTS



Next Weekly Legislative Update:
Tuesday, February 17, 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

S T A T E

CHAMBER

of

COMMERCE