

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# ACTS AND RESOLVES

AS PASSED BY THE

Ninety-seventh Legislature

OF THE

# STATE OF MAINE

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Message  
of  
Governor Burton M. Cross

to the  
96th Maine Legislature

September 21, 1954

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Message of  
GOVERNOR BURTON M. CROSS  
to the 96th Legislature  
Meeting in Special Session

September 21, 1954

Mr. President and Members of the 96th Legislature:

We are faced at this Special Session with more problems than were contemplated in the original call several weeks ago.

The damage from two hurricanes have placed a heavy burden on our Maine towns and cities; a burden that many of them cannot face without help from the State.

I shall lay before you for your consideration, first the original recommendations in the call for the Special Session. I shall then list those of a deferred nature, left over from the Regular Session, and which I believe to be the responsibility of this Legislature and this Administration. Then, I shall list those of an emergency nature on disaster relief.

I recommend acceptance of the Legislative Committee's report on revision of the Maine Statutes, and I wish to compliment the Committee on a fine revision, well indexed and annotated.

I present to you, for possible action, the problem of one month's extension of Daylight Saving Time to conform with other New England States. This poses several factors of hardship either way you decide, and is a confusing situation. I leave it to your own collective judgment.

It is necessary for this Legislature to interpret the joint order passed by the last session on State employees' salaries. It would appear that the joint order intended a salary step increase, should departmental savings be sufficient to warrant it. Through sound administration by your Governor and cooperative action of department heads, such savings were made and are available, should this be your desire.

I believe that you should also consider at the present time the over-all matter of hours, particularly at the State institutions. At the Regular Session, in 1953, funds did not appear to be available to support these two problems. However, with savings accomplished and revenues as they now are, I recommend that you grant both the increase and the reduction of the work week at this time. They will be possible because of operating savings within the present budget or through increased income.

I recommend that the Legislature by joint order, approve a proposal of your Governor, made to the Commissioner of Health and Welfare, a proposal to liberalize the present income and assets schedule of Old Age Assistance and Aid to the Blind, and to set up a flexible scale of financial responsibility of relatives in these two categories.

After nearly two years of administration, it is my considered judgment that this is necessary to care for the many border line and hardship cases in these

categories. Many of you are aware of instances in your own communities; they threw added burdens on the towns and cities which should be the State's, under these programs. This will not require legislative action, but should have approval, through a joint order. Ample funds are available within the current appropriation of the Department to take care of the cost of this liberalization. No new money is necessary.

At the regular session, I recommended to you that we pass legislation to set up a fourth category of State Welfare, "The relief of those permanently and totally disabled." This bill was passed by both branches, but sufficient funds did not appear to be available, and the bill was laid aside.

At the present time, 42 of the 48 states have passed such legislation, and federal funds are still available to Maine for this fiscal year. Many of these hardship cases are known to you, and have been helped by Special Pension Resolves for many years. The Special Pension Resolves are entirely State funds, and the program I advocated to you is a joint Federal and State participation. Sufficient funds are available within the current appropriations of the Welfare Department, and would result in fulfilling a very real need. I recommend strongly reconsideration and passage of this bill. No new money is necessary.

The Governor and Council approved, this summer, the transfer from Highway Surplus of sufficient funds to construct a Truck Weighing Station, at Kittery. This has been considered for some time, and should do much to protect our highways against overloaded trucks. It will be necessary to appropriate \$60,715 to finance this on a 24-hour basis, and to defray the cost of the necessary personnel. Fines and costs resulting from this enforcement will more than balance the expense. Also, due to increased mileage of nearly one million and a half miles driven by State Troopers, in the stepped-up enforcement drive against traffic violations, it will be necessary to allocate additional funds for patrol car exchange this fiscal year. I recommend the appropriation of \$57,400 for this purpose, as the lower accident rate and the lower fatality ratio show the desirable results of such increased enforcement.

I recommend that in the light of increased revenues you reconsider the tobacco tax bill that was passed by both branches of the Legislature in 1953, and vetoed by your Governor. It appeared at that time to be impossible to budget out the contemplated loss of revenue. With the State income at the level it now is, it is quite apparent that such loss of revenue can now be absorbed without curtailing essential services. I recommend reconsideration and passage of this bill at this time.

I recommend that \$500,000 be appropriated from General Fund Savings to cover increased costs of the State Office Building. These increases would cover the purchase of movable partitions, granite facing, the tunnel to the State House, central heating plant, and renovating the Library and other offices at the State House and Highway Building.

I recommend that \$95,000 be authorized from the working capital of the Liquor Commission to establish Retail and Wholesale stores and Commission offices at the warehouse in Hallowell. This will make available necessary extra office space that will allow us to move the entire Motor Vehicle Department into the new State Office Building. No new money will be required, as funds are available in the working capital of the Commission; wholesale outlets are planned at the existing stores to care for the needs of consumers in each large center of the State. This will result in greater convenience to all wholesale users.

The following recommendations are relative to the recent hurricane disaster, and should be considered as emergency legislation :

I recommend that \$97,700 be appropriated from General Fund Savings for emergency repairs at Pownal State School, made necessary by the recent hurricanes. They were especially hard hit, and should be safeguarded against any disaster in the future.

I recommend that one million dollars be appropriated from General Fund Savings to reimburse towns and cities for damages by the two hurricanes to town roads and bridges. It will be necessary to take this from General Fund Savings, as the existing Highway Surplus account will be heavily drawn upon for storm damage to State roads and bridges on State and State-aid roads. These, of course, are a responsibility of the State under the law.

The history of the Highway Surplus over the past three years is as follows :

At the end of the fiscal year 1952, it contained \$2,048,000.

At the end of the fiscal year 1953, it contained 3,360,000

As of July 1, 1954, it contained 3,204,000

It is highly essential that this surplus be held at a level that will allow for emergencies such as this, and for working capital. It appears absolutely essential that the following expenditures will be required to be made from existing surplus :

\$2,000,000	in hurricane damage to State and State-aid roads and bridges
500,000	increase for snow removal costs in 1954-55
300,000	increase for tarring and maintenance costs in 1954-55

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Total \$2,800,000

It is obvious that these expenditures over the coming fiscal year will reduce the surplus to a dangerous point of less than half a million dollars, and that, therefore, this hurricane damage to town roads and bridges cannot be taken from this fund.

It is my considered judgment that the needs of the towns in this emergency must be met from General Fund Savings.

Reimbursement to the towns will be supplemented by that which may be given by the Federal Government under the Civil Defense Public Law 875. This covers debris clearance, as well as other emergency damage claims.

The State reimbursement on town roads and bridges should be passed on not less than 50% payment of provable damage with a provision that towns should not be required to pay more than one per cent of valuation in any instance, as in many cases, those hit the hardest are the least able to pay. Their plight is a very real one, and I believe it to be a serious obligation of State Government to step in and aid the towns in this State-wide disaster.

To aid further the towns that have suffered losses to school property, I recommend that \$700,000 from General Fund Savings be added to the educational subsidy and channelled to the towns this fiscal year.

I am also aware of the impact upon the towns of the teachers' salary increases voted by this Legislature in 1953.

These additional funds this year should materially assist our communities in meeting the provisions of the new salary scale, as well as damage caused to physical properties by the two hurricanes. It will give the towns added relief at a critical time, and this action will raise the subsidy to approximately a 105%.

I cannot stress too strongly that where the funds are available in savings under the present Administration, it should be used to render aid to towns and cities hard pressed by this hurricane disaster.

These recommended withdrawals from General Fund Savings total \$2,297,700 and compare favorably with the amount of departmental savings and increased revenues lapsed in to the surplus as of July 1, 1954.

I do want to take this opportunity to thank all my fellow Legislators who have worked so long and so hard with me in the service of the people of Maine. I know how much we have accomplished in the last Legislature to promote forward-looking administration. The plans recommended by your Governor and passed by you have been implemented by action, and these changes, plus careful administration and outstanding cooperation from our State department heads have resulted in over a half million dollar saving in overhead, which, added to increased revenues, resulted in a 7¼ million dollar General Fund Savings at this time.

I feel that you and I have a real obligation to the people of Maine to finish some of the projects that were held up or curtailed by apparent lack of funds in 1953. I strongly urge that you do these things that I have outlined to you.

As your Chief Executive, I shall look back with a feeling of pride on the many accomplishments of this Administration and this Legislature. It could not have been possible without your cooperation and that of the department heads and the State employees.

As your Governor, this year will complete twenty years of public service to the people of my State. I shall look back on this record with deep, personal satisfaction of work well done. To me, that is sufficient reward. My thoughts will always be with you and my every effort in the future will continue to be for the service of my native State of Maine.

BURTON M. CROSS,  
Governor of Maine