

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

AS PASSED BY THE

ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

January 3, 1979 to June 15, 1979

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ADDRESS

October 10, 1979

by

GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN

to the

SECOND SPECIAL SESSION

One Hundred and Ninth Legislature

ADDRESS

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN

TO THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE 109th LEGISLATURE

October 10, 1979

My remarks this morning will be brief. There is no reason for me to elaborate at length on why we are here.

Last week, we asked you to come back into session because we expected you would have the opportunity to vote on some much needed energy assistance legislation.

It was the consensus of opinion then that no bill should go to the floor until we had had an opportunity to see if we could work out a position on which all could agree.

But I want you all to know your presence here, by standing by, was a powerful impetus to the conduct of those discussions.

I want you to know, too, that I appreciate the inconvenience to many, and hardship to some of you, that convening again now means.

But, again, your presence is indispensable to any hope for constructive action.

Little has changed since last week. Winter is still coming. Yesterday's snow was a stark reminder of what is to come.

There are thousands of elderly men and women, and thousands of children from the neediest homes in the State, who still look to us for assistance.

We are still the only hope they have for meaningful, perhaps life sustaining, help.

We still anticipate the average fuel bill increase will be about \$330 a household, 60 per cent more than last year.

And the news this week warns of further price increases from the OPEC nations.

Our responsibilities remain the same.

The bill I have sent up today represents a good faith effort to achieve a

compromise, between objections raised by some of you over the level of funding, and our obligation to provide an adequate level of assistance.

I started at \$6.2 million, with ceilings of \$250 and \$125 per household, even recognizing an overall per family increase of \$330.

My plan began with limits because of both restraints on our resources, and our recognition that paying less than the full increase would encourage conservation.

I have listened to your objections. I believe that the concerns some of you raised were legitimate and reasonable.

State revenues did drop below estimates during July and August.

And so, I acted to address these concerns by reducing both the maximum allotment, and the overall appropriation in this revised bill.

But, I am pleased to be able to announce this morning that our revised preliminary estimates show that September revenues are ahead of expectations. In fact, while the final figures aren't ready yet, it appears that September revenues will exceed estimates by more than \$2.5 million.

This puts revenues for September 5.4 per cent above estimates for the month.

It dramatically improves our financial picture for the first quarter of the fiscal year.

It should resolve any lingering doubts about the State's ability to pay for this program.

To those who object, and say that this can all be done through our General Assistance Program, I say that many of our elderly won't ask for general assistance.

To many of them, that program has the same demeaning connotations that it has to many of you.

A program specifically geared to the elderly won't be the same as welfare to many of them, and they will be more likely to ask for the help we make available.

To those who object that we have not mandated that the program be administered by local communities, I say that our plan gives communities the option of administering it, but recognizes that many cities and towns are not prepared for that kind of undertaking.

And again, it would be shortsighted not to pass this assistance.

We will lose federal matching dollars that would be available to us, and we will end up spending more State dollars to buy the same amount of oil.

Today will be a very telling day in the history of the 109th Legislature. For, either this Legislature will meet the urgent and real needs of those citizens who need help, or this Legislature will go on record as having turned its collective back on older men and women, and our neediest children, and thousands of other people, who happen to be poor.

In the absence of clear leadership from Washington, this Administration has tried to act.

I have done what I can. Now you must keep faith with your obligations.

This is a nation that bails out billion dollar corporations like Boeing. This is a nation that has tolerated a tax system which has allowed some of our wealthiest citizens to pay no taxes.

These are government subsidies for those who are strong and can stand alone.

Here, we are asking for help for many of those who cannot stand alone.

Several weeks ago, in meetings with your leadership, I asked that consideration of any emergency aid plan be conducted in an ecumenical spirit, because the needs to be met were too important to be defeated by partisan consideration.

If we fail to enact this bill for partisan political reasons, there will be no victories for either party.

But there will be defeats. And they will be felt by those who go cold this winter.

I hope we won't let that happen.

The concept of the bill already has the support of both parties.

The money is there.

Let us demonstrate, by our action, that we care.

As you vote today, remember the least powerful, the least influential, the most vulnerable, of our fellow citizens.

The people of Maine will have to live with our decisions. And we will have to live with our consciences.