

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE
AS PASSED BY THE

ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SPECIAL SESSION

September 25, 1981

AND

THIRD SPECIAL SESSION

December 9, 1981

AND

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

January 6, 1982 to April 13, 1982

AND AT THE

FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

April 28, 1982 to April 29, 1982

AND AT THE

FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION

May 13, 1982

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J.S. McCarthy Co.
Augusta, Maine
1981

LEGISLATIVE ADDRESS

September 25, 1981

by

GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN

to the

SECOND SPECIAL SESSION

One Hundred and Tenth Legislature

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN
 TO THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION
 OF THE 110TH MAINE LEGISLATURE
 September 25, 1981

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERED

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of the House and Senate of the 110th Maine Legislature:

I have asked you to be here today for one reason — and one reason only.

It is necessary.

Indeed, it is more than necessary.

It is essential that you act before October 1.

Failure to act would mean hardship, in some cases suffering, for many of the neediest people of our state.

People this Administration — and this and previous Legislatures have acted to help — many times in the past.

People who depend on us.

People in your towns, in your neighborhoods, whose health, well-being, whose freedom to live outside the confines of unnecessary institutionalization depends on the decisions you make today.

I believe the need for this legislation is well understood by now.

All of you have had the opportunity to study it.

I have discussed it in detail with your leadership and with the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

I appreciate the careful study your Appropriations Committee and the Committee on Health and Institutional Services have given to the bill.

I appreciate the compassion and sensitivity they have brought to their deliberations.

I appreciate the hard work and the cooperative spirit of the past week.

My bill is in three parts.

First, we propose a modest appropriation to ensure that we can maintain the current assistance levels for people receiving certain health and social services which have been reduced by Congress at the President's request.

Programs such as homemaker services, health care and aid to the handicapped.

There has been some disagreement over whether we should fund for the current fiscal year only or whether we should follow the usual practice of budgeting for the biennium.

To me, that is a secondary issue.

What really matters is that we not disrupt for even a day these vital services.

The second part of the bill accepts our share under the new block grant system.

I can appreciate that this new approach and the complexity of the language is confusing to many who administer and receive assistance under the many programs folded into the block grants.

And I well understand your frustration in not being able to know in advance ex-

actly how much money Maine will receive under those block grants.

The fact is, I share that frustration.

Trying to plan effectively has been hampered all year long by the consistent unavailability of definitive financial information regarding the block grants.

So our bill has incorporated the best information available to us.

And it respects your prerogative by incorporating into law my commitment to consult with you on any significant variation in financing.

Let me tell you what the consequences of not acting might be:

We would be placing in jeopardy a great deal of funding.

Not a delay in receiving it.

But a permanent loss.

And we simply cannot afford that.

Not when these programs reach Maine with a 25 percent funding reduction built in.

And not when the President has requested even further reductions in these services.

As you heard him say last night on television, and as he told me yesterday at the White House, he now proposes to take even more money — another 12 percent — away from these programs.

In addition to the possible loss of funding, we would lose some of the flexibility that is the best feature of the block grant approach.

In the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, for example, failure to act will mean that we will lose the freedom to use that money as we believe is in the best interest of Maine people. We would be passing up the opportunity to make our own decisions on how to spend it, and letting someone in Washington tell us how it should be used — instead of someone in Augusta.

Crippled children, victims of rape, the aged poor receiving winter energy assistance, the mentally ill, these and many, many others are dependent upon the money in these six block grants.

People with real needs.

Needs you have not ignored in the past.

Needs you cannot ignore now.

Needs we must address today.

The third part of my bill appropriates money from the new alcohol premium you approved earlier this year.

It funds worthwhile programs to treat and prevent alcoholism.

You will also be asked to pass a slightly revised version of the submerged lands bill.

Though I had real concerns about the bill, the Justices of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court have advised me it is constitutional, so we have made minor modifications to clarify and improve it, and we are submitting it now, so that your intention to pass it this year can be realized.

And I am asking you to pass a bill to authorize the commissioners of Franklin County to spend some of their funds to assist with the operations of the Farmington branch of the Maine Central Railroad.

That bill is important to a part of the state that needs every economic assist we can provide.

I ask your support of these bills.

Before I leave you to your deliberations, I would like to offer a closing thought about the social service programs under consideration today.

There is a new mood in the country today.

The cover of a national magazine recently summed it up:

It said it's fashionable again to be wealthy and to flaunt it.

And that's fine.

So long as this mood does not serve as an excuse to turn our backs on the people who have no wealth to flaunt.

People who, through no fault of their own, and, indeed, despite their very best efforts, cannot take care of themselves.

People who do not choose to be helpless, crippled, ill, or aged.

But are, nonetheless.

For that is the reality of being needy in Maine.

The cynical, the welfare cheat, the people who won't work, they are out there.

But they are the minority, the exception.

And we are making every effort to root them out.

They should never be used as a reason to deny our compassionate support for those who truly need your help.