

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

AS PASSED BY THE
ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION
December 1, 1982 to June 24, 1983
Chapters 453-End

AND AT THE
FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
September 6, 1983 to September 7, 1983
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LEGISLATIVE ADDRESS

September 6, 1983

by

GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN

to the

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

One Hundred and Eleventh Legislature

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN
TO THE FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE 111th MAINE LEGISLATURE
JOINT CONVENTION
September 6, 1983

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of the 111th Legislature:

I am pleased to welcome you to the State House for what I hope will be a productive Special Session.

Since we last met, all of us have, I trust, enjoyed a glorious Maine summer. It was a summer of exceptionally fine weather, as good as any in memory. And that meant a summer of exceptional success for our tourist industry. That vital industry continued the great growth and momentum we have tried to foster.

The gathering in Portland one month ago of the nation's governors generated tremendous publicity for our state and elevated its prestige around the country. It contributed to the momentum I spoke to you about last winter, the momentum that is making the very name of our state as special to others as it always has been to us.

Just last week, there was news that advanced some solid numbers as further evidence of this momentum.

The United States Department of Commerce reported that per capita income in Maine grew last year at a rate that was substantially higher than the national average.

Around the nation, per capita income rose 5 percent. But here in Maine, workers took home 6.5 percent more — a rate that is about one-third higher than the national average. In fact, the Commerce Department said, over the past four years the wages and salaries of Maine workers have been growing at an average nearly 10 percent faster than the income of workers in other states.

But as encouraging as that report may have been, it also included some figures that reminded us of the challenge that still lie ahead.

Since 1979 we have climbed from 46th to 41st among the states in per capita income. But that still means that workers in four out of five states do better than our own men and women. And we still have the lowest levels of earnings among the six New England states.

Taken together, all this means first, that the emphasis we have placed on economic development is showing tangible results; and, secondly, that we must not relent, even slightly, in our commitment to make Maine an even better place to do business.

Therefore, a very significant portion of the financial package I am recommending to this Special Session directly supports Maine's potential for economic growth.

For example, I am recommending \$10 million in support of the cargo port

developments at Eastport, Searsport, and Portland.

All are worthy of public support.

All will enhance Maine's ability to export our native products.

But I would like to mention in particular the Eastport project. For there is an outstanding example of those special Maine traits of independence and self-reliance.

Eastport has defied the experts who have said that it was no site for a major port development.

Eastport has resolutely believed in itself when sometimes it seemed no one else did.

Working with nothing more than an old breakwater, it has been shipping out an average of 40,000 tons of cargo in the past two years. And it has been estimated that, with a better facility and some needed dredging, that figure could grow six-fold to one-quarter of a million tons a year by 1993.

The people of Eastport—indeed, all of Washington County—with its long history of economic depression, deserve the support I propose we lend this project. For, virtually alone, they have built their own momentum, and I believe they deserve a fair share of Maine's bright economic prospects.

I am also recommending funding so we may continue to upgrade airport facilities around the state, for these, too, are essential to our business development.

These funds will improve safety at many of these airports. And they will help those that now have regular carrier service.

Likewise, we need to replace the vessel that now serves the Lincolnville-to-Islesboro route.

Another \$2 million is recommended for the Community Development Block Grant Program. This is a program that has already been put to use successfully in more than 50 communities. It has been federally supported, but we believe this program has been so valuable to our communities and the state that it deserves additional state support.

It is also appropriate to invest some monies in Maine's great historical treasures. Among those that are eligible are sites as varied and different as the Lakewood Theater and the Damariscotta Shell Heaps, Lewiston's Grand Trunk Depot and Admiral Macmillan's schooner "Bowdoin", Portland's Victoria Mansion and the Katahdin Iron Works.

More than 50 historic buildings, structures and sites are in need of repair, but most are owned by non-profit organizations which have chronic financing problems. We cannot take care of all of them, but the support we lend will improve many as attractions for Maine's millions of annual visitors and preserve for our own citizens these reminders of our state's heritage.

In these programs, from transportation to historic preservation, what I propose falls short of what needs to be done or what should be done. But our recommendations represent a careful balance between our needs and what a prudent state government can afford. They add to the momentum of Maine.

Surely that momentum has nowhere been more visible than in the progress we have made in cleaning up our air, our water, and our land.

We must provide money to pay our share of the cleanup of two of the nation's most serious hazardous dump site problems at Gray and Winthrop. And we must clean up dump sites in Washburn, Augusta, Saco, Buckfield and Baileyville. The problems must be addressed for the sake of our children and the health and safety of future generations of Maine people.

We are also asking for additional funding for pollution abatement facilities. The federal government is reducing its share of the cost of these treatment plants, but our commitment to helping our towns remains as firm as ever. The amount I am recommending will help communities around the state as they work toward solving their pollution problems.

In other areas, we are recommending to you bond financing to replace and upgrade overcrowded court facilities. And so this package includes financing for new courthouses serving Skowhegan and the Bath-Brunswick area.

We must continue our efforts to make every public building accessible to every citizen. And so I am recommending funding that will make all 16 county courthouses accessible to our handicapped citizens.

We must build upon the progress we have made in improving our prison facilities to ease the overcrowded conditions and provide a more humane environment. I fully appreciate that spending money on prisons is never a popular idea. But we are a humane society, and how we treat convicted offenders is a test of our decency.

We must also upgrade our crime lab, so our law enforcement officials may be able to evaluate evidence more quickly and effectively.

We must continue to renovate state buildings. To delay these projects means we will have to spend even more money for the same work a few years from now.

Some of you may reasonably ask if we can afford to do all that is proposed in this legislation.

I say, beyond any doubt, we can.

Indeed, the ratings of our bonds have been upgraded by Moody's, even though the ratings for many other states have gone down.

Even more remarkable, our level of bonded indebtedness, measured in constant dollars, has been reduced by 25 percent just since 1980.

And we are scheduled to retire more than 80 percent of our current bonded indebtedness within the next ten years.

Yes, I say we are in sound financial shape.

The \$33 million recommendation before you is all that remains after a rigorous screening process that began with more than \$200 million in recommendations from state departments and agencies. We examined these proposals closely, and before we submitted them to the Legislature, we eliminated three out of every four dollars recommended for new bonds.

Your own committee and staff work reduced my recommendations by nearly \$20 million.

And so, what is before you today represents a consensus of what must be done without further delay.

I would like to have seen in this package the financing we recommended for the vocational technical institutes.

I believe the recommendations we sent up were sound, practical, and as necessary as any before you today.

But I support the final recommendations presented to you by the Appropriations Committee.

And I appreciate the sincere efforts of the Committee, the leadership of both parties, and the Legislative Finance Office that brought these recommendations into final form.

I know that there are some in this Legislature who are interested in addressing the VTI's at this Special Session.

I can assure you, if that should fail, the needs of these schools will be addressed when we meet for the Second Regular Session in a few months.

I believe the bond package before you today represents what a fiscally responsible Administration and Legislature should do at this time to meet our obligations, to maintain and improve public facilities, and to continue the momentum that Maine is now enjoying.

I urge you to vote in favor of this reasonable, prudent, affordable program on behalf of our people, our state, and our future.