

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

AS PASSED BY THE

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STATE OF THE STATE MESSAGE

of

GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN

January 31, 1985

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislature, Honored Guests, Citizens of Maine:

Two years ago, I came before you and reported that Maine is moving again.

I am pleased to report to you tonight that Maine continues to move ahead.

Maine is outperforming the nation as a whole in retail sales, in job growth, and in reducing unemployment.

The figures for 1984 are truly impressive: 23,000 new jobs; 103 new and expanded businesses; income growth that is among the highest in the nation; and a State credit rating that is the very best in New England.

By year's end, 95 percent of all Maine men and women seeking work had jobs.

But you don't have to rely on numbers. You can go see for yourself.

Go to Aroostook County, and see the Simplot and McCain potato processing plants, see the 2000 acres of new broccoli fields planted last year, and the 4000 acres planned for this year.

Go to Machias, and see the new blueberry processing plant.

Go down to the docks in Eastport, and see the cargo ships laden for Europe and the new salmon farm just offshore in the Bay.

Go to Thomaston, and see the Dragon Cement Plant, reopened with the investment of Maine's Passamaquoddy Tribe.

Go to the Portland and South Portland waterfronts, and see the shipbuilding, and, everywhere, the bustling commercial activity.

Yes, Maine is on the move.

Today, we live in times we have not seen in Maine since the earliest years of statehood.

One of Maine's foremost historians, Robert Tristram Coffin, wrote: "The years 1820 to 1880 were the only years the State of Maine was able to keep her smart children home and give them something to do, and not have to breed them for states further west, Illinois and Michigan, Oregon and Washington."

Those decades of growth in the 19th Century were built on a foundation of investment, both public and private: investment in canals and railroads, in mills and factories.

Today, we have the opportunity once more to build a future in Maine that can provide for all of our children.

Today, for the first time in memory, young people do not have to leave the State to find work. In fact, young people from out of state are marching to Maine to enjoy our quality of life.

Today, Mainers do not have to go to Connecticut to work for companies like Digital and Fairchild and Pratt Whitney. Today, those companies are right here in Maine. They don't have to go to Boston or New York to work in commerce, finance, or the arts. Today, the opportunities are right here in Maine.

Yes, as we begin 1985, The State of our State is very good.

Working directly with you, the representatives of the Maine people, we have built the foundations for a prosperous and caring Maine.

The outlook has never been more promising.

And if we act wisely, we can make today's promise, tomorrow's reality, for all Maine people.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The first priority of any government is to protect and improve the public safety.

Last year, 231 Maine people died on our highways, more than half in alcohol-related crashes.

This is fewer than when I took office 6 years ago, but it is still too many. Clearly, something must be done.

Today, one out of five drunk-driving convictions are repeat offenders, people who have been caught once, and then caught again. I propose a mandatory 30-day jail sentence, and a two-year license-suspension for second offenders.

Seatbelts reduce by half the chances of serious injury in accident. I propose to make wearing seatbelts the law.

Raising the drinking age will reduce accidents, save lives, and avoid needless family tragedies. I propose to raise the drinking age in Maine to 21.

Last year, 33 motorcycle riders were killed. Ninety percent of them were not wearing helmets. I propose to make helmets for motorcycle riders mandatory.

Some have argued that the decision to wear a seatbelt or a helmet is a private matter. Too often, however, one person's free choice becomes the taxpayers' obligation. We wind up supporting orphaned children, disabled adults, and workers in need of rehabilitation, all because people fail to take simple measures — buckling up, or wearing a helmet.

There is no safety substitute for the immediate results that these measures provide. And I know of no simpler way to save lives, and the taxpayers' money.

Supporting these bills is not a matter of invading privacy; it is simply a matter of common sense.

Alcohol and drug abuse are often the root of problems such as unemployment, child abuse, and violent crime.

We must renew our efforts to educate the young people of Maine about the dangers of forming these deadly habits.

Many of our citizens have shown leadership in addressing this issue: groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving; and Students Against Drunk Driving; and private businessmen like Mike Burns in Augusta, who volunteers his time to speak in area high schools.

More than 1,000 students, teachers, policemen, and parents have been trained by an outstanding state employee, Carl Mowatt of Farmingdale, and gone back to their communities to develop local prevention programs.

One outgrowth of this effort, Project Graduation, has been adopted by more than a hundred Maine schools, and become a national model for other states.

In addition, I propose this year to double our State Police effort to reduce the availability of illegal drugs in Maine.

Finally, I want to make a personal pledge to go to as many schools as possible, and meet directly with students to give them the message that we are creating opportunity in Maine for our students.

But this opportunity will be available to them only if they have the skills and the self-discipline to take advantage of it.

EDUCATION

For the opportunities will be there.

Last fall, the Maine Legislature passed an education reform package that will endure as one of the outstanding achievements in the history of Maine public education.

I have included more than seventy million dollars in the biennial budget to carry out the State's share of this program.

But State help alone will not correct the deficiencies in our public education system. The task before us is to make every Maine school the best it can be for every Maine boy and girl.

Tonight I call upon the parents, the teachers, the principals, and the school board members of this state to join with us in this effort.

Together, we can give our children all that they need, to be all that they can become.

I am also pleased to announce tonight that I will request a 25 percent increase in funding for the University of Maine in the next two years.

Later this year, the distinguished Visiting Committee to the University of Maine, chaired by Dr. Robert Strider, former President of Colby College, will make its recommendations to this Legislature.

We look forward to their report as the occasion to renew the mandate for excellence in Maine higher education.

CHILD ABUSE

But before we can educate our young, we must first assure them the freedom from fear and harm to which they are entitled.

No crime is more heart breaking than the abuse of a defenseless child.

Maine has made great strides in improving services to our children and families. But the tragic deaths of two little Maine girls, Angela Palmer and Garianna Quinn, is proof that there is more we must do.

We must, once and for all, break the cycle of violence and neglect against our children; the vicious cycle that makes today's victim, tomorrow's abuser.

Last summer, I set up a Working Group on Child Abuse and Neglect. In December they made 51 recommendations to improve the protection of Maine children.

I will submit emergency legislation to give immediate effect to their major recommendations.

I will ask for nearly \$3 million to provide more child protective workers, more effective training for those involved in the protection of children and better treatment for victims of child abuse and their families.

With these actions, assistance to victims will come sooner, convictions for serious offenders will be more swift, and children will be better protected.

Two weeks ago, I received a letter from Clayton Hiltz of Jay, a member of the jury in the Garianna Quinn case. Let me read to you, if I may, from his letter:

“Dear Governor Brennan:

“I had the privilege of serving in Superior Court in Farmington recently on a case which involved a step-father accused of beating-to-death his three year old step-daughter.

“If I had just read this story in the paper, my reaction would have been my usual one, how terrible! Then other stories, such as car accidents, plane crashes or other incidents would have caught my attention, as it does most people, and would have been placed out of mind.

“This incident did not get placed out of mind. This little girl lived a life of pain and suffering over a long period of time.

“Not since I served my Country and State proudly in Viet-Nam have I been so awakened by the things in life that so very few people have a chance to see or understand.

“I am writing to ask a personal favor.

“In my opinion, serving on jury duty is a duty of citizenship just as serving my Country in the Army was also.

“The State of Maine has sent me two checks, totalling \$169.60. I strongly feel this money should be returned.

“As Governor of this great State you will know exactly where it should go to help someone such as Garianna.

“I want to feel that in some small way I have been able to help some other child in a similar situation. Wherever this money does go, please send it in Garianna Quinn’s name.

“This will give me a certain peace of mind. I thank you very much for your time.

“Sincerely, Clayton Hiltz.”

Let us all resolve here tonight that, like Clayton Hiltz, each of us — as private citizens, as parents, as neighbors and as friends — will do all we can to assure there will never be another Garianna Quinn case in Maine.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Neglect and abuse find fertile ground in the stress of being out of work.

Like so many social problems, the best thing we can do to relieve the problems of dependency, neglect and abuse is to assure every Maine citizen a good job. Not just a make-work job, as I have said so often, but a meaningful job, a job that gives dignity to the human spirit.

The best thing we can do together, is to continue supporting the working men and women of Maine — the businessmen, the skilled workers and the entrepreneurs — in their efforts to make Maine grow.

For Maine’s economy is growing, and this Legislature has been a vital partner in the effort;

— by passing an Interstate banking law that last year brought \$32 million in new capital to Maine;

— by supporting the Finance Authority of Maine, that last year invested \$57 million in Maine businesses, and created 1700 new jobs;

— by reforming Maine’s health care system, which will save Maine business and citizens as much as \$40 million this year; and

— by authorizing Job Training, Community Development, and Small Business Revitalization programs that rank among the very best in the nation.

We propose to redouble our efforts in 1985;

— by building a \$5 million State Economic Development Center here in Augusta, to give Maine business people and local officials one place to come for help;

- by embarking upon a \$230 million program to rebuild Maine's bridges, repave Maine's roads, and upgrade Maine's airports;
- by expanding the marketing of Maine products at home and abroad;
- by stepping up our tourist promotion effort;
- by providing greater technical help to Maine's small businesses;
- by supporting the local and regional development efforts that have spread across the State — like the Pro-Maine Conference in Northern and Eastern Maine, chaired by Mayor Lawrence Willey of Bangor, and involving more than 200 civic and business leaders; and finally;
- by attacking head on, the problem of workers' compensation.

I am convinced that, in its excesses, the present worker's compensation system in Maine hinders our efforts to build a stronger economy.

I will make this the subject of a special address to the Legislature in February.

NATURAL RESOURCES

We must also take action to be sure that our natural resources, the foundation of our economy and our way of life, are protected and enhanced.

In years past, Maine's rivers were fouled, our air was dirty, our landscape was spoiled by litter, and our scenic views were obscured by billboards. Our Maine heritage was in danger of being lost.

The Maine people and the Maine Legislature responded.

We are now a national leader in cleaning up and protecting our land, our air, and our water. Our heritage has been saved.

Today we face the challenge of how to manage our reclaimed resources, of using them today, and improving them tomorrow.

Two years ago, in the Maine Rivers law, the Legislature showed how this can be done, and added to our national reputation.

As a result of that law, we have protected 1100 miles of truly outstanding rivers and, at the same time, produced a 20 percent increase in our hydropower to replace nearly a million barrels of imported oil each year.

This year, we shall build upon this proud record. This year, I will propose measures to improve the productivity of our farms and our forests, to protect our groundwater supplies; to complete the municipal sewage treatment program begun twenty years ago under the national leadership of our own Senator Ed Muskie.

And this year, I will propose a \$3 million program to complete the State Park System begun a full generation ago, with parks on Pleasant River Lake, to serve the people of the Bangor area; in the Belgrade Lakes, to serve the Augusta-Waterville region; in the St. John Valley, to serve the people of Northern Maine; and on Jewell and Little Chebeague Islands in Casco Bay.

These projects will benefit all the people of Maine, support our growing tourist industry, and allow us to leave an improved natural heritage to our children.

HOUSING

Maine has another heritage of churches, town halls, homes, and mills, that remind us of our past.

I shall ask you to approve a bond issue in support of local efforts to restore our most important historic buildings.

No state has a richer architectural heritage than Maine. Beautiful old homes grace the landscape of every city and town.

Our existing housing stock, however, is not sufficient to meet the needs of a growing population. Nearly half of it was built prior to World War II.

Decent, affordable housing has become hard to find across the State. For some elderly people on fixed incomes, single mothers with children, homeless men and women, it is almost impossible.

We propose to create a housing fund that will generate \$200 million of private investment to build and repair 2500 housing units, and make it possible for an additional 5000 Maine families to buy their first home.

Many of us can remember buying our first home; the special feeling of becoming part of the neighborhood and community.

We must keep this special opportunity for family and community life alive in Maine.

OTHER

We will offer other initiatives as well;

- Building a new million dollar state crime lab;
- Funding for additional judges and court renovations;
- Support for the Chief Justice's recommendation to reorganize the Probate Court System;
- Improvements to our fisheries lab in Boothbay;
- Additional group homes for our mentally retarded;
- Expanded job training for mothers on AFDC;
- Support for congregate housing for the elderly;

And, we will continue the progress we have achieved on behalf of our mentally handicapped citizens at Pineland Center, our state hospitals, and our community programs throughout Maine.

These and other proposals, too numerous to mention tonight, will continue to build a prosperous and caring Maine.

To Members of the 112th Legislature, and to your leaders, Senate President Charles Pray and House Speaker John Martin: I welcome your energy; I welcome your experience; and I welcome your ideas.

I promise I will not follow the example of one of my predecessors, Governor Daniel Davis, who, 100 years ago, brought cannons and militia to the State Capitol to protect himself from opposing points of view.

We will face difficult issues together over the next two years.

None will be more so than the effects of Federal cuts now under discussion in Washington.

Today, \$450 million, more than one-third of our State revenues, comes from the federal government.

This money supports activities essential to our state and local governments: health care, housing, education, and job training.

No state in the Nation has done more than Maine to offset the effects of past Federal cuts. While federal aid has declined, State aid to our cities and towns has increased by fully two-thirds in the past six years.

In fact, this year, for the first time, State revenue sharing to local governments will actually exceed Federal payments.

But there is a limit.

If drastic cuts become reality, we must, and shall respond.

But we must also realize that Maine State Government cannot fulfill its own role, and the role of the federal government at the same time. The resources are not there. We must be ready, together, to make hard choices.

To Maine citizens.

I invite you tonight to join in the work of building a prosperous and a caring Maine.

We know that government cannot, and should not, try to do everything.

We know that the care and education of our children begins with parents.

We know that safe roads are the responsibility of each driver.

We know that job creation requires that businessmen and women act with imagination, and a willingness to take risks.

We know that the protection of our natural beauty takes care and vigilance from all of us.

President John Kennedy once said that what government is all about is making choices — choices that remind us of both our limits and our values.

Certainly, the government of the people of Maine has its limits. We are not the wealthiest state, and we cannot do everything we might sometimes wish.

But there is no state that is richer than Maine in its people and its values.

The special values we share include compassion, generosity, ingenuity, and perseverance.

We had moving examples of these values in the past year:

Dr. Demetrius Traggis, whose compassion for children moved him to help families cope with serious illness, by setting up the Ronald MacDonald House in Bangor;

Elizabeth Noyce of Bremen, whose generosity to the University of Maine, the Portland Art Museum, and the Maritime Academy, has enriched the lives of all of us;

Ted Starrett, whose ingenuity transformed an agricultural by-product, potato skins, into a thriving new business in Belfast;

And Joan Benoit of Freeport, whose perseverance and courage in the 1984 Olympics made every Maine heart glow with pride.

It is not by accident that Dr. Traggis, Ted Starrett, Elizabeth Noyce and Joan Benoit are among our neighbors.

The same values they have shown can be seen practiced over and over again, in a thousand ways, in every day life in Maine.

People may stumble and fall — but when they do, there is generally a friend or neighbor there to lend a hand to help set things right.

Yes, the strength of Maine is the strength of our people.

And there is a part for each of us to play in building Maine's future. There are parts for citizens at every level of Maine life — in our schools, in our city councils, our civic groups, and our Legislature.

For the past 6 years, my part has been to serve as your Governor.

In an Address to the Legislature sixty years ago, Governor Percival Baxter spoke these words that come to mind tonight,

“If I have earned the respect and confidence of my fellow citizens, I am sufficiently rewarded for all my work.

“I love the State of Maine and all its people; and this affection has increased with each year of my service.

“There is much to be thankful for; much I would yet do for my State.”

We all have much to be thankful for — a rich heritage, a caring people, a time of unusual promise.

Today, we live in the best of times in Maine.

Together, we can make an even better tomorrow.

Thank you very much.