

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE

AS PASSED BY THE

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**STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS
OF
GOVERNOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.
JANUARY 24, 2000**

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, Honorable Members of the 119th Legislature, and Citizens of Maine:

Just a week ago, Maine, and all of us in this building, lost a great friend. Chuck Cianchette was an original—energetic, enthusiastic, creative, hard-working, and loving. Wherever he was, things happened—in business, in politics, with the Boy Scouts, Camp Susan Curtis, or in just about any cause in his beloved Pittsfield. His agenda was always the common good as he saw it, and in many ways, he represented the best of Maine—positive and enthusiastic, creative and receptive to change, and deeply caring about his family and neighbors throughout the state.

His nephew Peter, of course, is a distinguished member of this body and many of us know and work with members of his family.

And so tonight, I want to dedicate this speech to Chuck and use his life to help us to understand where we are, and, more importantly, where we can be in the future.

The first thing anyone will tell you about Chuck is that he always saw the glass half full. Sure, he acknowledged problems, but his underlying attitude was positive—he believed in himself and the people around him and he was always ready to move on to solutions. And it's that attitude, I believe, that is the first and perhaps most important thing we can learn from Chuck—for once we learn, absorb, understand, believe—really believe—that we've got something special, something extraordinary going up here, that we can compete and excel, then everything else will come.

I've been working in and around social, cultural and economic issues affecting Maine for almost 30 years, pretty intensively for the past five, and I've become totally convinced that the key ingredient—more than tax incentives or highways, technology or even good schools—is that indefinable attitude that won't take no for an answer, that says yes to life and it's infinite possibilities.

So, how are we doing? What is the state of the state? Here are some answers Chuck would like:

Since 1995, we have added a net of 65,500 new jobs to the Maine economy; that's net additional jobs over and above the replacement of jobs lost due to the

well-publicized layoffs that we've all lived through. This is a stunning number—it represents over a thousand new jobs every month, month in and month out, for five years. Cumulatively, it is equal to the entire population of the City of Portland; or looked at another way, it's as if we have added a facility equivalent to the lost G.H. Bass in Wilton, every week and a half for five years.

And it's not just happening in southern Maine. In the last year, for example, four of the counties that have historically lagged the state in growth—Hancock, Waldo, Franklin and Somerset—experienced higher job growth than the state average. Here are some comparative unemployment rates—from January of 1994 to the fall of 1999—Aroostook, 12.3% down to 4.1%; Penobscot, 7.8% down to 3.7%; and Washington, 12.5% down to 6.7%. Could there be better evidence that Maine—all of Maine—is moving in the right direction?

Speaking of Washington County, I have an announcement to make—one that has been five years coming, and couldn't come at a better time. The ICT group, a world leader in telecommunications-based businesses, which currently has call centers in Oxford, Pittsfield, Wilton, and Lewiston, is opening a new center within the next 90 days—in Calais, Maine. One hundred and fifty jobs to start and an entirely new set of opportunities for the people of Washington County.

And as unemployment has dropped, pay has generally gone up. In my office is a picture of a sign in front of a Scarborough sandwich shop; "Now hiring, medical benefits, 401k plan, incentive program." I would submit that when sandwich shops are offering 401k plans, we're definitely moving in the right direction.

Our welfare rolls are at the lowest level in 30 years and those getting off the rolls are staying off. Our brand of welfare reform which includes education, training, and other supports, is working.

In education, we're flying.

Maine has the best K-12 system in America and our students continue to test at the top of the national class in all areas. In fact, just this past December the National Education Goals Panel recognized Maine as the State with the highest performance in the nation in improving public education.

In higher education, we have lagged in the past and are below the New England average for college graduates, but quietly and steadily, we're moving up. In just the last two years, enrollment in the University System is up over 1,800 students, and by another 411 in the technical colleges.

All of this speaks of an economy that's moving from heavy lifting to heavy thinking.

Over the last three years, we have made real strides to rectify Maine's low position in the funding of research and development. We've taken big steps with the funding of the University of Maine's Economic Improvement Fund at the rate of \$10 million every year, a \$20 million bond issue in 1998, the funding of the Maine Technology Institute to get applied research grants to Maine's businesses, and, with the crucial help of Senator Snowe, securing the opportunity to create a first-in-the-nation Ocean Observing System.

Already the returns are beginning to show. Two new sensor companies have been incubated, a new aquaculture venture has been launched, a new technique for freezing lobster has been created, and several patents are pending for new wood composites products.

Our environment—already one of the best in the world—is getting better.

- We have cleaner air: In the mid-eighties, Maine averaged nine days of unhealthy air a year. In 1999, even with all the heat, we had one.
- We have a cleaner marine environment: Over 100,000 acres of clam flats have been opened in the last five years and the value of the lobster catch is at an all-time high.
- We have cleaner workplaces: As a result of the Toxic Use Reduction Act, which was re-authorized last year by this Legislature, we have seen a 57% reduction in toxic materials released, a 20% reduction in toxics used, and a 28% reduction in hazardous waste generated.
- We have cleaner rivers: Dioxin levels in river fish have steadily declined as the nation's most stringent dioxin standards have been implemented ahead of schedule. Last summer, we removed Edwards Dam and the stretch of the Kennebec outside these windows which couldn't attain a Class C designation before—for the first time in living memory,

is up to Class B, and they're now catching stripers in Winslow.

- We're improving our forests: The Forest Practices Act has been strengthened, and we have better information about the state of our forests than ever before, as well as clear benchmarks to guide future forest management. Most of Maine's large landowners—including the state itself—are voluntarily going through an outside audit of their forest practices.
- We are preserving our natural heritage: Last year, the state acquired Scarborough Beach and 29 miles of shoreline on Moosehead Lake and the land bond that voters passed in November will ensure that the Maine we enjoy will be here for our kids, as well.

In health, there's some good news, too. Three years ago, I stood here and told you of my friend Henry Jones and the promise I had made him in the hospital in Washington to someday try to help keep kids off tobacco. Working together that year, we doubled the tax on cigarettes, and set in motion a media campaign aimed at young people. I'm happy to report tonight that in the two years since that law became effective, tobacco consumption in Maine has dropped 16%, and, as I will mention later, this is just the start.

Financially, the state is in the best shape in a decade; Chuck would like this; he was, after all, a businessman. Virtually all of the gimmicks used to balance the budget in the early 90s have been eliminated, amazingly we've proven that the "temporary sales tax" increase really was temporary, we're paying our bills on time, and our savings account, the rainy day fund,—down to a few million dollars five years ago—is now at \$130 million. And I believe—as my budget makes clear—that we should continue to cut taxes and keep adding money to the rainy day fund while times are good.

The state's infrastructure—the vital connections that allow us to work, travel and communicate—is good and getting better. Thanks to the foresight and support of this and prior Legislatures—and the leadership of John Melrose and his colleagues at the DOT—we are in the midst of the most ambitious and far-reaching reconstruction of our highway, bridge and rail system in the history of the state.

There is hardly an area where work is not underway or being planned—although I'm sure I'll hear from a few tomorrow—and the down payment on significantly improved rural arterials and east-west

connections, and making passenger rail a real option is in the budget I have just put before you.

The three port strategy—a dream since the Administration of Governor Jim Longley a quarter century ago—will be a reality by the end of this year, as construction of major projects at Mack Point and the Port of Portland are added to our world class facility in Eastport.

And barely two months ago, the largest one-time infrastructure project in the history of the state of Maine was completed—without a dime of taxpayer money. I refer to not one but two natural gas pipelines connecting Maine and New England to the vast energy resources of western and eastern Canada.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of this project. For the first time, Maine is at the beginning of the energy supply pipeline instead of the end, and some of the benefits are already being felt.

At this moment, in Bucksport, Veazie, Jay, Rumford, and Westbrook, clean, efficient gas-fired electrical generating plants are on-line or under construction, representing jobs, over a billion dollars in new tax base, and the reasonable likelihood of cheaper electricity for our homes and businesses.

Now, if I were making this speech 20 or even 10 years ago, this would be the end of the infrastructure discussion. But not now, not this year, not when we've all learned that in terms of communication—and doing business—a tiny strand of spun glass can be as important as the widest highway or longest bridge.

And here's some really good news—we already have what is probably the best telecommunications system in the country—80,000 miles of fiber optics, the country's first fully digitally switched network, the first state to have 100% of our schools and libraries on-line, and the installation this coming year of the nation's most advanced interactive TV system in our high schools.

But it gets better, because I am announcing tonight that this winter, Maine really goes on-line.

To anyone who has waited for an Internet site to open or a file to download, the key is speed and the key to speed is something called bandwidth—the size of the “pipe” that carries the phenomenal resources of the Internet to our homes and businesses.

In the age of e-commerce, bandwidth is the essential commodity. Just as the roads and railroads defined economic opportunity a century ago, these wires or the lack of them—will spell the economic difference between businesses, towns, and states in the new century.

And tonight, we're hitting the bandwidth jackpot.

First, Time Warner (now AOL-Time Warner) is extending their cable-based high speed internet service, called Roadrunner—now available only in the Portland area—to northern Maine. This means Presque Isle and New Sweden, Caribou and Limestone will have better Internet service than Boston or New York.

This will mark the first time Time Warner has deployed Roadrunner outside an urban area anywhere in the country. And it didn't happen by accident—it took commitment from within the company and persistent local leadership—and that leadership, that advocacy for this region, came from a great guy named Barry McCrum—who's here with us tonight. Barry, congratulations and thanks for what you've done for the County.

But what about the rest of the state? Here's the second part of our bandwidth bonanza—Bell Atlantic, the folks who installed most of the fiber and those fast switches, will be bringing to Maine their own high speed Internet service over ordinary phone wires—called DSL—within the next month. The service will be offered first in our major urban areas—Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, and Bangor, with further expansion to other areas of the state to follow. Ed Dinan, Vice President for Bell Atlantic in Maine, is here with us tonight.

I won't dwell on the importance of the Internet—in education, entertainment, health care, and particularly in business—but there's little doubt that these two announcements add up to a huge step for Maine, not into the middle of the pack, but to a position of real national leadership in access to technology.

But is the state of the state all good? Are the problems all well in hand? Of course not—we still lag the country in income and the strength of our economy is still unevenly distributed. Many of our citizens, because of age, geography, or—most likely—education, are shut out of many of the new opportunities and are left stranded while the rising economic tide lifts all boats but their own.

Health care costs are soaring, straining family and business pocketbooks and throwing more and more hard-working people into the ranks of the uninsured.

And as we grow and prosper, something special about Maine—our open spaces, vibrant towns, working waterfronts, the very qualities that define this special place, seem to be slipping away.

So how do we deal with these daunting challenges? How do we preserve the best of Maine and at

the same time build a new, more inclusive, more prosperous state?

For an answer, let's return for a moment to my friend Chuck Cianchette. Last year was Cianbro's 50th anniversary and to celebrate, they commissioned a book to describe the history of the company. As you read the book—which is a great American story by the way,—four first-generation brothers growing up in a small town, starting a business from a beat up old pick-up truck after returning from the war, and building it to one of the premier construction companies in the country—anyway, as you read the book, two qualities jump out as being responsible for the company's amazing success—first, a creative, can do, open-to-change, willing to take risks attitude, and a deep, family-based concern for people.

Let's talk first about being open to change. If there is any one quality essential to survival in today's world, it is the willingness to adapt, to react, to adjust to constantly changing circumstances.

For we live in the period of fastest change in human history, and businesses and jobs which were secure a few years ago find themselves suddenly at risk—from new competitors, new technologies, and new ideas.

The question is whether we understand and then embrace this fact, welcome it, and bend it to our will, or whether we resist and move to the sideline and watch the future pass us by.

So we are faced with a stark choice, a defining moment—whether we are going to look back or forward, whether Maine will lead—as our motto suggests we should—or lag, as this nation and the world enters a new century. For what is happening, right before our eyes, is a fundamental redefinition of the Maine economy. For the past hundred years, our fortunes have been pinned to two economic legs—natural resources—fish, farming, and wood fiber,—and traditional manufacturing—shoes, textiles, and wood components.

Although they will continue to be important parts of our economy, the plain fact is that technology will steadily alter or replace more and more of these jobs.

So Governor, what do we do? Do we just turn our backs on these industries and their people that have given so much to Maine over the years? Absolutely not; we continue to help them keep costs down by doing everything we can to control workers comp and health care costs, by constantly re-examining our regulatory system to ensure that we are being sensible and cost-effective; by defending them vigorously against well-intentioned but wrong-headed assaults from the Federal Government—such as is now occurring with the proposed endangered species

listing down east; and by controlling taxes in every way we can, including continued commitment to the business equipment property tax program, the most powerful and proven effective stimulus to capital investment in modern Maine history.

Yes, we support these traditional industries, but at the same time we must set our face firmly to the future. And do you want to know what the future looks like?

It's a company that sells information and service; that's based in Maine, but has a world-wide reach; that rests upon the skills and innate capabilities of our people; that is growing fast and reacts to opportunities and changes in the market; that depends upon high technology and fast connections; that requires more education but creates new opportunities for personal growth and professional challenge; that pays better than the old mill jobs and is easier on the back.

I've just described EnvisionNet, probably the greatest entrepreneurial success story in recent Maine history. Heather Blease, who is with us tonight, started with four people and an idea barely five years ago and is now closing in on over a thousand employees at three locations.

Her product? Information. Your Internet screen freezes up in Dubuque, San Francisco, or Portland; you dial an 800 number for Microsoft tech support and the phone rings in Winthrop, Maine. A knowledgeable and friendly voice talks you through the fix, and everybody's happy. You're back on-line; Microsoft has a happy customer, and Maine has another good job.

So how do we keep this happening?

First, we help our companies—new and old—find access to the capital and ideas they need to make their businesses grow in Maine. Two days from now, I will be hosting the first digital summit with some of the best minds in high tech—John Sculley, the former head of Apple and Bob Metcalfe, who invented some of the hardware that makes the Internet possible—at Via, a global e-commerce strategy and communications firm based in Portland. These are people who have the know-how, along with a deep love of Maine, who've agreed to sit down and brainstorm on how Maine can best meet the challenges of the new economy.

Second, we train the people they need to make it work. This means continued support for the University, the technical colleges, and K-12 so we can build that supply of capable people. We also must maintain our support for flexible and cost-effective training programs which can be tailored to meet the needs of individual businesses and individual workers.

But I want to stop for a moment on the issue of training and mention a critical problem that we must make a special effort to address. I call it the stranded worker. In a single week several years ago, we lost almost 300 textile jobs when Eastland Woolens in Corinna closed; the same week, one of the larger employers in southern Maine added 300 computer processing jobs. So on paper, there was no net loss—but tell that to the people in Corinna.

Because of location and a lack of training, to a 55-year-old laid off textile worker in Corinna, those computer jobs in South Portland may as well have been on the moon.

If we're going to prepare our people—all our people—for this century, we've got to establish a path for our existing workers to upgrade their skills—or develop entirely new ones—in mid or late career as well as early on.

This move began last year with the inauguration of Maine's first ever Community College Partnerships—not new bricks and mortar, but an unprecedented collaboration between the Technical Colleges and the University—under the able leadership of Terry MacTaggart and John Fitzsimmons. This new system—aimed at making higher ed accessible and affordable—is off to a rousing start with 400 new students before it was even announced, and with a generous \$2 million gift from Bernie Osher of Biddeford and San Francisco matched with \$2 million proposed in my budget, Community College costs will come down even further.

But now we have to invite another player—Adult Ed—to the table and take the next step in a pilot project I call “Transition U.,” an initiative designed specifically for mid-career workers who are—or are about to be—in transition and who are ready to trade the shuttle of the loom for the mouse of the computer.

And so tonight I'm calling upon the Maine Jobs Council and Val Landry of the Department of Labor, Duke Albanese at Education, Steve Levesque at DECD to work with the University, Adult Ed and Technical College Systems to create Transition U.—light on the bricks and mortar, guys, and no new bureaucracy, but a practical collaborative partnership with real results.

But, the state cannot do it all; employers must join us in investing in their people as well as their machines.

Another step toward the new economy is, of course, to maintain and expand where possible, our support for better education, at all levels. As I mentioned earlier, we are getting real, measurable results, but we can't for a moment let up.

My budget proposes an increase in GPA to 5% in the second year of the Biennium, meets a commitment to fund professional development, adds \$20 million for school renovation, provides a 5% increase for adult education for both years, and supports a collaborative effort to attract and retain capable educators.

The investments I have mentioned tonight in telecommunications, transportation and education are the foundation on which we are building a knowledge-based economy. But, our ace in the hole in terms of long-term economic prospects is the wonderful Maine environment—clean air and clean water, forest trails, mountains, lakes, the ocean, the New England village, viable downtowns; simply a great place to live, work and raise a family. This is our competitive advantage that we can't let slip through our fingers.

But there are signs that we may be squandering this asset—congestion and commercial sprawl at the gateways to our spectacular natural resources; residential development leapfrogging to the headwaters of lakes, slowly turning them algae green; downtowns traded away for strip development at the next highway interchange, and farms, woodlots and wildlife traded for large-lot subdivisions. These are some of the costs of sprawl, and unless we reverse course now—while there is still time—we will have lost something precious and irreplaceable about Maine.

But how do we do it? We need an approach that is at once generous and demanding of efficiency; at once respectful of the freedom of choice and of holding people accountable for paying the costs of their choices; at once mindful of property rights and of legitimate public goals.

Fortunately, a package of ideas to implement such an approach is now taking form, thanks to the work of three groups that have been pursuing this problem on closely parallel tracks: the Legislature's Task Force on Smart Growth chaired by Senator Sharon Treat and Representative Ken Gagnon; a citizens' Smart Growth Forum sponsored by Eco-Eco and led by Ted Koffman from the College of the Atlantic; and my own cabinet subcommittee, chaired by Commissioner John Melrose. Their collective package might be called Smart Growth: the Competitive Advantage.

The Smart Growth initiatives include promoting investments in our downtowns and service center communities, and helping communities restore traditional neighborhoods. It also includes preserving our open rural spaces and promoting agriculture by reducing penalties on farmland under the Farm and Open Space Tax Act, eliminating the sales tax on electricity use in agriculture and aquaculture, and strengthening our Right to Farm law.

I strongly support this package, and will work hard with you this session and the next to implement it.

I have asked DEP Commissioner Martha Kirkpatrick to work with businesses and the environmental community to encourage innovation and to rethink our natural resource protection strategy with the goal of simultaneously expanding business opportunities and improving the environment through an initiative we're calling Smart Production.

But, as we embrace this transition to a new economy for Maine, let's not leave our people behind. We need to do all we can to make sure all Maine people are safe, healthy and prepared to be full and active participants in our state's future.

Let's start with children. Due in large measure to the work of this Legislature and its predecessors, to our dedicated teachers and parents, and to a network of great community resources, Maine is now generally considered one of the best states in the country in which to raise a child. In fact, last summer, a child advocacy group in Washington said we were the best. And now comes new recognition and a new opportunity to build on the extraordinary network already in place for our kids.

Just today, I received a letter from General Colin Powell informing us that we have been chosen by America's Promise as one of three model states in the nation for our work on behalf of children. Citing what he calls "some of the most impressive community mobilization work in the country," General Powell stated that, "a great deal of your work represents best practices" that other states can follow.

I am tonight accepting General Powell's offer—and Maine will be among the first states to make manifest America's Promise.

One of our most difficult people problems affecting children and adults is health care. After a few years in remission, inflation in the cost of health care has come roaring back, threatening our families and businesses, and even our state finances. Almost \$7 million of expenditures in the supplemental budget is to cover just the increased cost of health care for our employees.

And neither I, nor anyone in this room, has the answer. I do have some ideas, however. The first, which I announced in December, is to create by Executive Order a Blue Ribbon Commission on Health. Charged with presenting a detailed picture of Maine's current system—where are the costs? Where is the growth? Who pays? Where are the opportunities for savings and increased access? This bi-partisan group of Maine citizens will at least give us the data and the options necessary to inform our decisions at

the next legislative session. I have asked Bob Woodbury, former President of the University of Southern Maine and Chancellor of the University of Maine System, to Chair the Commission. I have also asked Joe Carleton, a former member of the House of Representatives, to serve as a member. Both are here tonight, and I thank them for their willingness to serve. I will announce the other members of the Commission and sign the Executive Order later this week.

Outside the work of the Commission, however, is one fact too often ignored—a substantial portion of the health care bill in Maine—probably as high as one-third—that's over a billion dollars a year—is avoidable, because it relates to health care costs we bring on ourselves—through choices about the way we live.

We are in the midst of a slow motion epidemic in Maine, an epidemic we're causing, and only we can stop. Four chronic diseases—cardiovascular and lung disease, cancer, and diabetes—all related to smoking, lack of exercise and poor diet—kill 75% of Maine people. This tragically high figure accounts for us having the fourth highest death rate in the nation.

Starting this year, we can really get to work on this problem using the money received from the national tobacco settlement.

I propose that we use this money primarily for a Campaign for a Healthy Maine, an initiative which empowers state agencies, communities, schools, and health care providers to effectively address this chronic disease epidemic.

The first priority of this campaign must be the prevention and cessation of smoking in Maine, especially among our young people. In the long run, this will save us money—about \$60 million of our annual Medicaid budget goes to smoking-related illnesses.

The second step in the campaign is to improve the overall health of Maine people by promoting prevention measures within our schools and our communities. If we made healthier choices, day to day, year to year, we could give ourselves what would amount to a three quarters of a billion dollar tax break—the equivalent of repealing the income tax completely.

And part of this campaign must be a significant allocation to alcohol and substance abuse prevention.

Further, I have asked Dr. Dora Mills—our chief health officer—to convene later this year a world-class conference on health prevention strategies that work—and we'll get moving on making Maine a healthier state.

By the way, a year and a half ago, Mary gave me an ultimatum about exercise and now at least twice a week I face some weightlifting and the dreaded treadmill—and I feel better than I have in 20 years. If I can get back into it after a no-exercise break that lasted almost 40 years, then just about anybody can.

And finally, on the subject of health, I am hopeful that in the near future I will be able to thank you for your help in approving a new psychiatric treatment center and investments in community mental health that will improve the delivery of these critical services and signal the end of a decade-old Consent Decree.

And one last people issue. I've introduced and acknowledged several people in the gallery tonight—Mary, Barry McCrum, Heather Blease, Ed Dinan and several others. But if you look up there once again, you'll see 12 empty seats, representing twelve people—9 women and 3 children—who I can't introduce to you tonight.

For they are people in Maine who died last year—died as victims of domestic violence.

With all our progress in so many areas—jobs, education, the environment—for too many of our citizens, almost 4,000 reported in 1998—mostly women and children—day to day life is a living hell of fear and intimidation, fear of the monstrous violence that takes place behind closed doors and is no respecter of geography or social position.

We can pass laws, add judges and DAs—and we will—but this scourge will not pass until we decide once and for all as a people that it is not acceptable, cool, cute, or a symbol of macho power to beat up on women or children.

I can't imagine anything less macho than a grown man hitting a kid.

If you think back 20 years, we came to a similar point with driving drunk and we toughened the laws, but we also just plain stopped tolerating it.

And so tonight, let's start that process of change—first by committing ourselves to enforce the law—in my view, the rule should be zero tolerance—abuse of women and children in Maine will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted.

But laws can only be the start—the change has to be cultural—in our hearts—that violence is unacceptable, especially in our homes, and we won't stand by and let it happen. We all have to get involved. It seems to me that one of the simple things you and I can do this session to send this message is to pass the pending bill that would prevent someone under a protective order as a result of domestic violence from getting a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

This isn't gun control, it's common sense.

I'm also directing the Commissioners of Labor; Human Services; Education; Corrections; Mental Health Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services; and Public Safety to develop along with the Judicial Branch; the Attorney General; and the Commission on Domestic Abuse, a coordinated community response and report back to me and the 120th Legislature plans to attack what I today proclaim as Maine's Public Enemy Number 1—violence against women and children.

And so, in the end, let me come back to Chuck. Positive, enthusiastic, full of common sense; ready to take risks and willing to dream; active and full of fun; and above all caring, as a dad, a neighbor, a friend.

We would do well to search for these qualities in ourselves—as people and as a state. For a million futures lay before us and the choice among them is completely in our hands.

None of us can be certain of exactly the right course, but if we steer by the chart of this one Maine life, we cannot and we will not fail.

Thank you and good night.