MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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REP. ELIZABETH H. MITCHELL
CHAIR

SEN. MARK W. LAWRENCE
VICE-CHAIR

118th MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SEN. CHELLIE PINGREE
SEN. JANE A. AMERO
SEN. ANNE M. RAND
SEN. R. LEO KIEFFER
REP. CAROL A. KONTOS
REP. JAMES O. DONNELLY
REP. MICHAEL V. SAXL
REP. RICHARD H. CAMPBELL

SARAH C. TUBBESING
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEETING SUMMARY

January 22, 1997

Approved February 27, 1997

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, called the Council to order at 9:45 a.m. in Room 427, State House.

ROLL CALL

Senators:	President Lawrence, Sen. Pingree, Sen. Amero, Sen. Rand, Sen. Kieffer Absent: Sen. Pingree
Representatives:	Speaker Mitchell, Rep. Kontos, Rep. Saxl, Rep. Campbell Absent: Rep. Donnelly,
Legislative Officers:	Sally Tubbesing, Executive Director, Legislative Council David Boulter, Director, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis Lynn Randall, State Law Librarian Suzanne Gresser, Principal Attorney, Office of Revisor of Statutes Joy O'Brien, Secretary of the Senate Joseph Mayo, Clerk of the House Millicent MacFarland, Assistant Clerk of the House

SECRETARY'S REPORT

None.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Item #1: Recommendation to Extend Income Protection Pursuant to Legislative Council Policy

Motion: That the Legislative Council authorize coverage under the Income Protection Plan to eligible employees as recommended. (Motion by Sen. Rand; second by Rep. Campbell; unanimous).

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Item #1: Recommendation that the Legislative Council Join the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States (Tabled at January 16 Council meeting, pending additional information).

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, recognized Rep. Harry True. Rep. True reported that he is a member of Maine's Advisory Committee on Gambling and that he had gotten involved in the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States, which had originally been formed under the auspices of NCSL, although it now operates independently. Rep. True expressed his concern that as all states grapple with issues related to gambling, including video lottery terminals, Indian gaming, and shipboard gambling, participation in the national organization could be a valuable opportunity. He acknowledged that the $2,000 "dues" that had been requested by the new organization was "a small price to pay," given the resource the organization could be Maine.

In the ensuing discussion, Council members raised two questions:

1) Could Maine continue to attend the group's meetings even though it did not become a dues paying members? (Speaker Mitchell). Rep. True responded that the meetings would probably still be open.

2) Why this group had left NCSL, given that Maine, like other states, already pays sizable dues to NCSL. (Rep. Kontos). Rep. True, reading from the organization's minutes, indicated that it wished to have complete independence in terms of policy setting.

Motion: That the Council expend up to $2,000 to support Maine's formal participation in the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States. (Motion by Sen. Amero; second by Sen. Rand; motion failed, 4-5).

NEW BUSINESS

Item #1: Letter from Long-term Care Steering Committee regarding Blue Cross Proposals to Form HMO's With Certain Hospitals

Motion: That the letter be accepted and placed on file. (Motion by Sen. President Lawrence; second by Rep. Kontos; unanimous).

Item #2: After Deadline Requests

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, noted that some of the sponsors of bills on the list had not been notified of the Council meeting since it had originally been scheduled as a work session on the budget. The Council proceeded to consider after deadline requests from those sponsors who were present. The Council's action on these requests is included on the attached list.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMARKS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned its regular meeting on the motion of Sen. Rand, at 10:07 a.m.

Note: A Work Session on the Legislature's Part I Budget Request followed.

RECONVENE

The Council reconvened at 4:53 p.m. on January 22. Senator Pingree and Representative Donnelly were absent.

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, opened the discussion by pointing out that some of the cuts proposed by Senator Amero would require changes in the law, and that the required legislation had not been proposed. Sen. Amero responded that $540,443 of the cuts she proposed would not require a statutory change and that she would like the Council to consider some of the required changes in legislation. She then proceeded to review proposals with the Council.

Motion: That the minority report be adopted. (Motion by Sen. Amero; second by Rep. Campbell; failed 3-5).

Motion: That the Council approve those proposed reductions that do not require statutory changes, including freezing all salaries; eliminating payment of longevity bonuses; and requiring session employees to pay their own health insurance premium during periods when they are not active on the payroll. (Motion by Sen. Kieffer; second by Sen. Amero).

Discussion centered on the following points:

- The Legislature has cut more than 20% of its total positions over the past 5 years; and its budget represents less than 1% of the total General Fund budget. (Rep. Kontos)

- It is more important for the Legislature to continue to pay benefits for its employees than it is to pay dues to national organizations. (Sen. Rand)

  Sen. Rand continued, expressing her deep concern that the Council is treating a highly professional group of employees "like disposable tissue". In response to Sen. Amero's contention that the Republican proposal does not consider cuts to positions, Sen. Rand stated that the proposal does affect people's willingness to apply for legislative positions.

- By freezing salaries, the Legislature will be out of "synch" with other state employees. (Speaker Mitchell). Responding to Sen. Kieffer's suggestion that "someone has to go first;" Speaker Mitchell pointed out that legislative employees do not have the right to bargain and that the Council has a responsibility to treat them fairly.

  The vote on the motion by Sen. Kieffer failed 3-4.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council finally adjourned at 5:45 p.m.