MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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118TH MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

MEETING SUMMARY

DECEMBER 18, 1997

Approved January 20, 1998

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, called the Council meeting to order at 2:26 p.m. in the Legislative Council Chamber.

ROLL CALL

Senators:	President Lawrence, Sen. Pingree, Sen. Rand, Sen. Kieffer Absent: Senator Amero
Representatives:	Speaker Mitchell, Rep. Kontos, Rep. Saxl, Rep. Campbell Absent: Rep. Donnelly
Legislative Officers:	Sally Tubbesing, Executive Director, Legislative Council John Wakefield, Director, Office of Fiscal and Program Review David Boulter, Director, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis Margaret Matheson, Revisor of Statutes Lynn Randall, State Law Librarian Paul Mayotte, Director, Legislative Information Services Joy O'Brien, Secretary of the Senate Joseph Mayo, Clerk of the House Millicent MacFarland, Assistant Clerk of the House

SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 20, 1997 COUNCIL MEETING

The Summary of the November 20, 1997 Council meeting was accepted and placed on file.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Sally Tubbesing turned to Meg Matheson, who reported that all bills that had been accepted by the Council at its initial screening meeting in October had been finally drafted and sent out for sponsor review and signature. She further stated that she anticipated that virtually all bills that had been accepted for introduction would be available for sponsor signature by the time legislators returned in January.

This item did not require Council action.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Item #1: Requests for Extension of Study Deadlines

Before taking up individual requests, the Chair, Speaker Mitchell, stated that she had established a Study Subcommittee to examine all aspects of the current system and procedures for the creation and initial organization of interim study commissions and that she had asked this Subcommittee to report to the Council in January.

Turning to the requests, she noted that Council members needed to be aware that extensions beyond mid-January are problematic. Most of the interim study commissions are staffed by the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis; and those staff must now turn their full attention to the work of the Joint Standing Committees. The Speaker asked David Boulter for his comments, and Mr. Boulter reinforced the need to keep in mind that committee deadlines will come quickly in the "short session," and committee work will require the full attention of staff.

The Council proceeded to consider the following requests.

- **Task Force to Study Strategies to Support Parents as Children's First Teachers** (letter from Rep. Christina Baker, Chair)

  Discussion: Sally Tubbesing pointed out that this Task Force is staffed by the Department of Human Services.

  Motion: That the request to extend the deadline to January 15, 1998, be approved. (Motion Rep. Saxl; second by Rep. Campbell, unanimous).

- **Blue Ribbon Commission to Study the Effects of Government Regulation and Health Insurance Costs on Small Business in Maine** (letter from Rep. Arthur Mayo, Chair)

  Motion: That the request to extend the Commission's deadline to January 16 be approved. (Motion by Sen. Rand; second by Sen. Kieffer, unanimous)

- **Task Force to Study Equal Economic Opportunity for All Regions of the State** (letter from Rep. Marc Vigue, Chair)
  Note: The extension of this deadline requires legislation, and the Council supported the inclusion of the necessary language in an "omnibus" bill which the Revisor's Office has been assembling. The Council did not take a formal vote on this request.

- **Task Force to Study the State's Regional Service Center Communities** (letter from Rep. Richard Farnsworth, Chair)

  Discussion: The Speaker noted that this Task Force is not staffed by legislative staff.

  Motion: That the request to extend the reporting deadline to January 15 be approved. (Motion by Rep. Saxl, second by Sen. Rand, approved 6-1)

- **Commission to Study Insurance Fraud** (letter from Sen. Lloyd P. LaFountain, III, Chair)

  Motion: That the request to extend the reporting deadline to January 15 be approved. (Motion by Senate President Lawrence, second by Sen. Kieffer, unanimous)

- **Legislative Task Force to Study Registration for In-Home Personal Care and Support Workers** (letter from Sandra Bethanis, R.N., Chair)

  Motion: That the request to extend the reporting deadline to January 15 be approved (Motion by Sen. Pingree, second by Senate President Lawrence, unanimous).

- **Commission to Study the Funding and Distribution of Teletypewriter and Other Telecommunications Equipment for People with Disabilities** (memo from Sen. Sharon Treat, Chair)

  Motion: That the reporting deadline be extended to January 15 only. (Motion by Sen. Rand, second by Senate President Lawrence, unanimous).

Item #2: Requests for Additional Meeting(s)

- **Commission to Study the Unemployment Compensation System** (letter and memo from Sen. Sharon Treat, Chair)

  Motion: That the reporting deadline be extended to January 15, and that the Revisor of Statutes be instructed to incorporate the necessary language in legislation. (Motion by Rep. Campbell, second by Senate President Lawrence, approved 6-1)

- **Joint Standing Committee on Taxation** (letter from Sen. Richard P. Ruhlin, Senate Chair and Rep. Verdi L. Tripp, House Chair)

  The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, stated that the presiding officers had already approved this request and that no Council action was necessary.

- **Joint Select Committee on Research and Development** (letter from Sen. Mary Cathcart and Sen. Richard Bennett, Co-Chairs)

  Motion: That the request to extend the reporting deadline to January 15 be approved (Motion by Senate President Lawrence; second by Sen. Kieffer, unanimous)

- **Task Force on State and Federal Tax Filing** (letter from Rep. Scott Cowger, Chair)

  The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, recognized Rep. Scott Cowger, who chairs the Task Force. Rep. Cowger reported that the Task Force had had 4 meetings, but that its progress had been slowed by the absence of a representative from the Internal Revenue Service until early December. He stated that he was planning to submit legislation to extend the work schedule and to seek additional funds. The Council took no formal action on this request in view of the fact that legislation had been filed.

  Speaker Mitchell emphasized that this was a Council issue, however, since the Task Force is staffed through the Council, and Rep. Cowger agreed to submit an Interim Report by January 1.

- **Commission to Examine Rate Setting and the Financing of Long-term Facilities** (letter from Joseph M. Kozak, Chair)

  David Boulter clarified that the Council had already approved an extension for this Commission to November 30, 1998, and that legislation had been submitted to accomplish this. Senator Pingree, who is a member of this Commission, agreed to follow up with Mr. Kozak. The Council took no further action at this time.

Item #3: Medical Liability Demonstration Project: Interim Report Submitted by the Bureau of Insurance Pursuant to 24-A MRSA, § 2978 (Executive Summary enclosed)

Motion: That the Interim Report be accepted and placed on file (Motion by Sen. Rand, second by Rep. Saxl, unanimous)

Item #4: Proposal to Produce a Video on the Legislative Process (request of Rep. Kontos)

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, recognized Rep. Kontos, who reported that a group of interested parties has been exploring the concept of producing a video on the legislative process. The group includes the Secretary of State's Office and the Clerk of the House. She noted that she and Senator Pingree had seen a video from New Jersey, and it helped them understand what a valuable public education tool this could be. Rep. Kontos stated said that the informal planning group had been working with Spring Point, a video production facility affiliated with Southern Maine Technical

College, and had determined that the estimated cost of producing a 25-minute video is $25,000. She noted that her group has also begun consulting with potential funding sources, including Time Warner Cable, and that the group proposes to host a fund-raising event in January.

Speaker Mitchell stated that others had discussed the importance of this kind of product in recent years and suggested that Rep. Kontos contact the Maine Development Foundation. Senate President Lawrence encouraged Rep. Kontos to involve the Senate in this project, and Rep. Kontos stated that she had discussed the project with both Sen. Pingree and Rep. Campbell recently, noting that it was critical for this project to have bipartisan and bicameral support. She announced that the group's next meeting was December 22 and invited participation. Rep. Kontos then recognized Barbara Merrill, noting that she had been helpful in developing a fund-raising plan, and Ms. Merrill reported that the initial response from corporations to her "soft calls" was very enthusiastic. She, too, stressed the importance of bipartisan endorsement of the project if fundraising is to be successful.

The Chair, Speaker Mitchell, thanked Rep. Kontos and asked her to return to the Council in January with more detailed information about the entire proposal.

The Council took no formal action on this item.

Item #5: Request to Pay Maine's Annual Dues to the Assemblée Internationale des Parlementaires de Langue Francaise (AIPLF) for the period 1993-1997 (letter from Senator Paradis)

Motion: That this item be tabled, pending the collection of additional information regarding the Legislature's prior payments to the organization by the Executive Director. (Motion by Senate President Lawrence; second by Rep. Saxl, unanimous)

Item #6: After Deadline Bill Requests

Requests to introduce legislation to the Second Regular Session were considered by the Legislative Council. A summary of the Council's action on these requests is attached to this meeting summary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMARKS

Rep. Kontos announced a bipartisan "Social" on January 13, with proceeds to go to the Legislative Memorial Scholarship Fund.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.