

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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## **Reason's against holding Youth in Government in the Fall**

Dear Members of the Legislative Council;

The State YMCA of Maine operates in two distinct sessions, the first are the Regional Training Session where we do the election of officers, and all the bills are submitted to get a hearing, and then the Augusta Session. In order to pull the weekend in Augusta together we need 3-4 weeks, go get housing, print and then deliver to billbooks, and set up the entire weekend session. I have asked the advisors and students who currently participate in our program what would conflict with moving our program to the fall of the year. The came back with several comments here are a few:

"In addition to the sports seasons, and mock trial the fall play is in the middle of Nov. at Leavitt. A fall season would probably mean, any fall athlete that might participate probably would not participate."  
Margot Dudley, Leavitt Area HS

"I am sure the major conflict with harvest break is already on your list, as well as having no time to fundraise to off-set the cost for our students."  
LeRae Kinney, Presque Isle HS

"Well, I am only one advisor, however at Erskine, I coach varsity field hockey too, so I would be unable to work with the kids for model state. It may be difficult to find someone to take on that position. In addition to fall sports there isn't a lot of time for kids to write bills, to meet after school to discuss questions/concerns and to go over books. Also the training sessions and Augusta sessions during fall sports these kids would be unable to participate because of commitments. Plus this is time that the students get acclimated to their new classes and teachers, and for participants that are juniors and seniors, this is a hectic time with SAT's and PSAT's."  
Lori Dube, Erskine Academy

"With so many other things going on at this time of year it would be very difficult to get a group together and ready for the Augusta weekend in the Fall. We have soccer, football, field hockey, and many, many other things, such as show chorus, JROTC Raiders rehearsals, etc., going on. In the Spring many of these organized club activities are finished."  
Beth Paradis, Nokomis High School

"Recruiting for the program - There just would be no time to recruit students in such a short time frame. Most schools are beginning to recruit students right now. We as teachers are just getting to know our students and getting them interested in the program. This is a huge problem for big schools. I just can't get exposure for the program and make connections in less than a month's time.  
Fundraising - There just isn't enough time in two months to get all of the fundraising done for the program. My group is currently doing one fundraiser and will do a couple more to help pay for the program costs.  
Writing bills - Students need time to write bills for the program. Two months or less is not enough time. Many bills need research and time to prepare.  
Training Sessions - We can't go to the training sessions and get all of the materials printed in two months and then head to the program.  
Timing - Yes, we could do all of the preparations in the spring for a fall session, but things change over the summer. Students move and others change their minds. There would be no way to get Freshmen involved in such a short amount of time. We would have to be recruiting in the middle school and that would be a nightmare for some of us."  
Dawna Cyr, Bonny Eagle HS

**To summarize the factors that would negatively effect participation in our program**

- 1) Harvest in Aroostook County
- 2) Fall Sport season and playoffs
- 3) Maine Trial Lawyers Mock Trial Competition
- 4) Fall Musicals
- 5) Delegation preparation
- 6) Volunteers availability

In **Aroostook the harvest break** has students out of school during the time that we would need to hold our training session. Moving in to prior to the break would mean holding the Training Session in early September and then waiting over 2 months to the Augusta Session. This would give those groups only about 2-3 weeks at the beginning of the school year to organize delegations, write bills, and plan for elections. Many of our groups meet all winter to organize bills and plan for elections this would mean the Northern 1/3 of the State would be in a position to have to rush at the opening of the school year to be involved.

The volunteer teachers in the schools many of them are the same people that coordinate the **Mock Trial program**. This program operates in the fall. Their program begins in the middle of October with the finale being in early November. Many of our participants come from the students that take part in the Mock Trial program. This would mean we would lose about ½ of our volunteer staff, and most likely about ½ of the participants.

**Fall sports** unlike the spring sports take place much more on weekends. Football on Friday nights, and Saturday afternoons would be happening during our regional training sessions where we elect our officers and have bills submitted. Also fall championships for sports would occur during this time also. Field Hockey, Soccer, Football, Cross Country, and Football playoffs run on Saturday's beginning on 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in October and continue until the third weekend in November. This would eliminate many participants most likely at the last minute as their school and teams go through the program putting a lot of pressure on them to choose. This would mean we could be planning for many more than would show up, or most likely they simply wouldn't sign up. Our training sessions would be held in the middle of Fall Sports season with homecoming, and games happening. The Augusta Session would fall on the weekends of State Championships in Football or the weekend of Cross Country, and Soccer State Finals, as well as Regional Finals for Football.

Many of our schools have told me that **the first two weekends in November are their weekends that they run their school musicals**. They target the time between the fall and winter season. Many of our participants are a part of these and thus would have to choose which program to be a part of. At least 5 of our schools have told me that they have large fall musicals.

Finally, several of my major volunteers who organize the program are involved in outside activities that they participate in during the fall. They have said they would not be able to be involved in Youth in Government if the program changed. Jeff Jewett teacher at Lawrence HS, he runs the legislative portion of the weekend allowing me to handle logistics, runs the Maine Basketball officials clinics the first two weekends in November and would eliminate his participation. That would also eliminate the location of our Training Session held at Lawrence. Margot Dudley of Leavitt Area HS is the advisor for Leavitt's Mock Trial program, and would no longer be able to do both if they were at the same time. Again this would eliminate the site of one of our 3 regional training sites. Lori Dube, advisor from Erskine Academy our largest delegation coaches Field Hockey and says she would no longer be able to participate in the program. Dawna Cyr of Bonny Eagle HS and Lori Cobb of Machias both are advisors to Mock Trial programs in their schools. So they also would be eliminated from being a part of our program.

Several of my advisors have also contacted me telling me that they organize 'the their delegations after fall sports end and work throughout the winter at regular meetings to draft their bills, and work on participation in the program over the course of November, December, January, and February, then attend the Training Sessions in March and then the Augusta sessions. Moving to the fall would mean having to try to stuff all this into September and October while students are involved in fall activities.

As the Director I would say that I would rather have to wait to get the dates for each year, rather than try to change the program. Out of the 41 States that run Youth in Government only 2 run their programs in the fall. Arizona, and Washington. Both programs are exclusively YMCA Leaders Clubs and not school groups. They don't deal with schools, they also run the Mock Trial program in their States.

By looking at all these factors at the numbers of participants from last year of 197, I would think that our program would be less than 100 if we ran the program in the fall. Between losing key volunteers to organize groups in the local schools, and participants who have to choose between various activities it would mean a program that simply wouldn't have the same appeal. I would say that I would fear for the future of the program if run in the fall.

I understand the difficulty of getting our dates every other year, and have no problem if it means having to wait later in the year to set our dates. If we can have our dates by early November we can make the arrangements once they are set. Our program simply wouldn't be as good anywhere other than the State House, so working with you and the legislative leadership to make the State House available to our program in the spring is our top priority. In speaking with people who have worked with our program for 10-15 years they all say our program wouldn't survive if it is in the fall. So we will do whatever we need to do to work with you to continue our existing relationship.

Respectfully submitted

Lonney A. Steeves, Director  
State YMCA of Maine  
Youth in Government Program