MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION
10th Legislative Day
Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Representative STOVER of Boothbay assumed the Chair.

The House met according to adjournment and was called to order by the Speaker Pro Tem.

Prayer by Pastor Aaron Ware, Gospel Light Baptist Church, New Vineyard.

National Anthem by Shane Reitze, Fairfield.

Pledge of Allegiance.

The Journal of Thursday, February 26, 2026 was read and approved.

Under suspension of the rules, members were allowed to remove their jackets.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Following Communication: (H.C. 380)

STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

February 25, 2026
The Honorable Matthea E. L. Daughtry
President of the Senate
The Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau
Speaker of the House of Representatives
132nd Legislature
State House
Augusta, ME 04333
Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to State Government Evaluation Act ("the GEA"), Title 3, chapter 35 of the Maine Revised Statutes, we are pleased to submit the findings of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources resulting from a review and evaluation of the Board of Environmental Protection ("the Board") under the GEA. As a result of our review, the Committee finds that the Board is operating within its statutory authority.

Additionally, the Committee has voted to report out legislation pursuant to 3 MRSA §955(4) to consider an amendment to 38 MRSA §341-D(4)(A) to clarify Board procedures regarding appeals of licensing or permitting decisions of the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, which was one subject of discussion during our Committee's review of the Board. It is our intent that this legislation once printed be referred back to the Committee for a public hearing, work session and a vote before
consideration by the full Legislature.

Sincerely,
S/Denise Tepler, Senate Chair
S/Vicki Doudera, House Chair

READ and **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 381)

STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

February 25, 2026
The Honorable Matthea E. L. Daughtry
President of the Senate
The Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau
Speaker of the House of Representatives
132nd Legislature
State House
Augusta, ME 04333
Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to State Government Evaluation Act ("the GEA"), Title 3, chapter 35 of the Maine Revised Statutes, we are pleased to submit the findings of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources resulting from a review and evaluation of the Department of Environmental Protection ("the Department") under the GEA. As a result of our review, the Committee finds that the Department is operating within its statutory authority.

A majority of Committee members, however, would take this opportunity to express concerns regarding the adequacy of Department staffing responsible for the processing and review of license and permit applications. We are aware of instances where Department action on a license or permit application does not occur in a timely fashion, which can unnecessarily delay and negatively impact the project or activity for which approval is sought. To be clear, we do not believe these issues to be the fault of current Department staff and we commend those staff for the critical work they are doing to process and review the multitude of license and permit applications received.

Instead, a majority of Committee members would express support for additional staffing assistance to be provided at the Department to assist in the processing and review of applications. We are aware that the Department at present has authorization for additional positions but often faces significant difficulties in filling vacancies with qualified applicants. While there may be multiple factors contributing to what we understand is an approximately 10% unfilled position rate at the Department, we believe that the salaries and benefits associated with these authorized positions are not competitive with similar private sector jobs. Accordingly, a majority of Committee members would support the adoption of any measures that would enhance the competitiveness of the salaries and benefits for these authorized positions at the Department, which we believe would serve to best address the processing delays for license and permit applications described above.

Sincerely,
S/Denise Tepler, Senate Chair
S/Vicki Doudera, House Chair

READ and **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 382)

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

February 25, 2026
The Honorable Matthea Larsen Daughtry, President
Maine State Senate
The Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau, Speaker
Maine House of Representatives
Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:
Pursuant to Resolve 2023 c. 126, the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission is pleased to submit its annual report. Copies of the report have also been distributed to Governor and Joint Committee on State and Local Government as directed by law.
Sincerely,
S/Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 383)

STATE OF MAINE
CLERK'S OFFICE
2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

March 3, 2026
Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau
Speaker of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
Dear Speaker Fecteau:
Pursuant to Joint Rule 310, the following Joint Standing Committees have voted unanimously to report the following bills out "Ought Not to Pass:"
Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

L.D. 2190 An Act to Implement Certain Changes in the Certificate of Need Laws Recommended by the Commission to Evaluate the Scope of Regulatory Review and Oversight over Health Care Transactions That Impact the Delivery of Health Care Services in the State

L.D. 2197 An Act to Prohibit the Sale and Leaseback of a Health Care Entity's Main Campus to a Real Estate Investment Trust as Recommended by the Commission to Evaluate the Scope of Regulatory Review and Oversight over Health Care Transactions That Impact the Delivery of Health Care Services in the State

L.D. 2198 An Act to Implement Certain Recommendations Related to the Ratio of Debt to Equity in Transactions Involving Health Care Entities from the Commission to Evaluate the Scope of Regulatory Review and Oversight over Health Care Transactions That Impact the Delivery of Health Care Services in the State

L.D. 2199 An Act to Prohibit Interference with the Professional Judgment and Clinical Decisions of Licensed Health Care Professionals as Recommended by the Commission to Evaluate the Scope of Regulatory Review and Oversight over Health Care Transactions That Impact the Delivery of Health Care Services in the State

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

L.D. 76 An Act to Allow Use of the Fish Hatchery Maintenance Fund to Compensate Hatchery Staff When Certain Operational Needs Require Overtime

Sincerely,
S/Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 384)

STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER'S OFFICE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

March 3, 2026
Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
Dear Clerk Hunt:
Please be advised that pursuant to her authority, Governor Janet T. Mills has nominated the following:

on February 25, 2026

Dana Hammond II of Bristol for reappointment and Luis Tirado of South Portland for appointment to the Marine Resources Advisory Council.
Pursuant to Title 12 MRSA §6024, these nominations are contingent on confirmation by the Maine State Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources.
Rebecca Wyke, Ed.D. of Augusta and Matthew S. Colpitts of Winthrop for reappointment to the Maine Retirement Savings Board.
Pursuant to 5 MRSA §172, these nominations are contingent on confirmation by the Maine Senate after review by the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services.
Sincerely,
S/Ryan D. Fecteau
Speaker of the House

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

SPECIAL SENTIMENT CALENDAR

In accordance with House Rule 519 and Joint Rule 213, the following items:

Recognizing:

Rebecca Young, of Caratunk, recipient of a Spirit of America Foundation Award. The Spirit of America Foundation was established to encourage and promote volunteerism, and the foundation presents awards to honor local individuals, organizations or projects in appreciation of community service. We extend our congratulations and best wishes;

(SLS 1658)

On **OBJECTION** of Representative CARUSO of Caratunk, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

On motion of the same Representative, **TABLED** pending **PASSAGE** and later today assigned.

Recognizing:

Ben Towle, of Caratunk, recipient of a Spirit of America Foundation Award. The Spirit of America Foundation was established to encourage and promote volunteerism, and the foundation presents awards to honor local individuals, organizations or projects in appreciation of community service. We extend our congratulations and best wishes;

(SLS 1659)

On **OBJECTION** of Representative CARUSO of Caratunk, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

On motion of the same Representative, **TABLED** pending **PASSAGE** and later today assigned.

In Memory of:

Gary Getchell, of Dresden. Mr. Getchell devoted his life to education, mentorship and community. His teaching career began in 1957 as a fourth-grade teacher in Lynn, Massachusetts, and spanned schools in Raynham, Foxborough and Yarmouth, Massachusetts. He also coached soccer, field hockey and baseball. From 1974 to 1982, he served as Principal of Mattacheese Middle School in Yarmouth, later teaching mathematics at Cape Cod Community College until his retirement in 2002. While at Cape Cod, he started the school's distance learning program. He was a member of the Masonic Fraternity and Past Master of Howard Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, and Pilgrim Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, in Harwich, Massachusetts. While living in Dresden, he worked as an adjunct professor in algebra and general mathematics at Kennebec Valley Community College; taught Instructional Methods to sixth-grade mathematics teachers at Hall-Dale; was a Dresden School Committee member for six years; was instrumental in starting the consolidation of what would become Regional School Unit 2; represented Dresden as a member of the RSU 2 School Committee and served as chairman of the Negotiations Committee; was a member of the Dresden Select Board in 2024; participated in the Richmond Players performing group; and was Santa at the Richmond Tree Lighting Event at the town gazebo. Mr. Getchell will be long remembered and sadly missed by his family, friends and community;

(HLS 579)

Presented by Representative HEPLER of Woolwich.
Cosponsored by Senator TEPLER of Sagadahoc, Representative LEMELIN of Chelsea.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative HEPLER of Woolwich, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

On motion of the same Representative, **TABLED** pending **ADOPTION** and later today assigned.

In Memory of:

Lynne Gould Cianchette, of Pittsfield. Mrs. Cianchette's career was devoted to serving students, working at Maine Central Institute and St. Petersburg College in Florida. Service to others defined her. Deeply connected to her community, she gave of her time generously, including to the Sebasticook Valley Hospital Auxiliary, the ARTS Club and MCI Football Boosters. She was also known for providing home-baked goods, soups and meals to friends and families she cared about, often showing her love through food and thoughtful acts of kindness. Mrs. Cianchette will be long remembered and sadly missed by her family, friends and community;

(HLS 582)

Presented by Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield.
Cosponsored by Senator FARRIN of Somerset.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

On motion of the same Representative, **TABLED** pending **ADOPTION** and later today assigned.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

The Speaker resumed the Chair.

The House was called to order by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair would like to thank the Representative from Boothbay, Representative Stover, for her service as Speaker Pro Tem. If you will all join me in thanking her.

The following item was taken up out of order by unanimous consent:

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE
Refer to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Pursuant to Statute

Representative DOUDERA for the **Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources** on Bill "An Act to Update Financial Assurance Requirements for Certain Solid Waste Facilities"

(H.P. 1504) (L.D. 2227)

Reporting that it be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES** pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 38, section 2124-A, subsection 2.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**.

Sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

Refer to the Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Pursuant to Resolve

Report of the **Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development** on Bill "An Act to Reduce Certain Costs Associated with Residential Construction"

(S.P. 907) (L.D. 2224)

Reporting that it be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** pursuant to Resolve 2025, chapter 64, section 2.

Came from the Senate with the Report **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** in concurrence.

Refer to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Pursuant to Resolve

Representative MURPHY for the **Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs** on Bill "An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula"

(H.P. 1503) (L.D. 2226)

Reporting that it be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** pursuant to Resolve 2025, chapter 84, section 2, subsection 4.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**.

Sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

Divided Reports

Majority Report of the Committee on **JUDICIARY** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-506)** on Bill "An Act to Provide Required Funding for the Reimbursement of Assigned Counsel and to Develop the Public Defender Office for Cumberland County" (EMERGENCY)

(S.P. 852) (L.D. 2059)

Signed:

Senators:

CARNEY of Cumberland
TALBOT ROSS of Cumberland

Representatives:

KUHN of Falmouth
BABIN of Fort Fairfield
LEE of Auburn
O'HALLORAN of Brewer
PUGH of Portland
SATO of Gorham
SINCLAIR of Bath

Minority Report of the same Committee reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "B" (S-507)** on same Bill.

Signed:

Senator:

HAGGAN of Penobscot

Representatives:

CARUSO of Caratunk
HENDERSON of Rumford
POIRIER of Skowhegan

Came from the Senate with the Majority **OUGHT TO PASS AS AMENDED** Report **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-506)**.

READ.

Representative KUHN of Falmouth moved that the House **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

Representative POIRIER of Skowhegan **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Rumford, Representative Henderson.

Representative **HENDERSON**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. So, the bill that we have before us seems like a relatively straightforward funding reimbursement for PDS-assigned counsel. And as someone who doesn't serve on Judiciary, I think I'll try to stop using acronyms and just tell you what that means. So, PDS is our Public Defense Services. For those of you who have been in the Legislature for a few years, it essentially is the counterbalance in our justice system to the DA's office. These are the offices that the Legislature has created to provide defense counsel for indigent members, or people who can't afford an attorney when criminal charges have been brought against them. It's a constitutional right for them to have an attorney.

PDS provides that in two ways. One is through their actual employed counsel, so, people that are employed through the Public Defense Services. The other way is through private attorneys. So, private attorneys willfully sign on to become, what are referred to as rostered attorneys, and they take on these cases and provide defense counsel for people who can't afford it at the State's expense. What the bill does in front of us is it reimburses, or creates funding for reimbursement, for technically services already rendered, right? So, private attorneys who have provided counsel for these people, say, maybe even up to a year or a year and a half ago, at the end of the case, they submit an invoice to the State of Maine and the State reimburses them. Well, PDS has come to us this year and said, 'hey, we're significantly short, we're $13 million short this year, we're nine million dollars short next year, we need you to put something in place, so that we can pay these private attorneys.'

And we could get into the reasons why PDS doesn't have the funding. Part of it is because the majority of the Legislature last year took $10 million away from them to pay for other things. So, now, they're short $22 million over the next two years. And this Legislature, which seems to be the theme of the majority party is that we're going to borrow tomorrow's money that we make to pay for things today. And that's exactly what's happened here is last budget, last year, they decided to pull $10 million from PDS, still knowing that

assigned counsel needed to be paid in the future, that we had 1,100 people on the unrepresented list, but still decided that we're going to deal with that in 2026, but in 2025 we want this $10 million to pay for who-knows-what.

So now, here we are today, needing to pay them, and I agree we need to pay them. In fact, there's a Minority Report on here that I have that was supported by me and put in place by me that also provides reimbursement because I can see the value of providing reimbursement. But that Minority Report not only provides reimbursement but it creates some guardrails in the future to ensure that we're not unduly spending money where we shouldn't.

Republicans pay their bills. Okay? You can laugh if you want --

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **HENDERSON**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But Republicans pay their bills, and the proof of that is that you have a strong Democrat Majority Report and a strong Republican Minority Report, both vying for this bill to be paid. The question is how it's going to be paid. Are we going to pay it with guardrails? Are we going to pay it to ensure that there's equality in the justice system moving forward? Or are we just going to continue to dump money into something that currently doesn't have a ton of guardrails on it?

So, as much as I hate the fact that I'm going to have to have a no next to my name today when it comes to reimbursement, I want to be very clear that it has nothing to do with whether or not I believe that PDS should receive this money; it should; I believe it should with guardrails. I believe it should with some common-sense measures moving forward to ensure that there's equity in our justice system, that there is equality in pay in our justice system, so that there's a quality of benefits in our justice system and that's what the Minority Report does. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Falmouth, Representative Kuhn.

Representative **KUHN**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, this bill provides one-time funding to address a shortfall for the payment of assigned counsel. So, to be clear, these are not the employed attorneys who work for PDS, these are the community members who step up to take these cases on the roster.

This is to pay bills for services that have already been rendered or are in process as the current resources are going to run out on April 1st. This shortfall is not the fault of PDS. We heard part of the answer of how that happened, but we did not hear the cause for the shortfall is that back in the '22-'24 budget, the Legislature increased the hourly rate for assigned counsel from $80 an hour to $150 an hour, and that amount was not completely put in the baseline, and that is the cause.

The concern is that if we permit a disruption, which will happen if this isn't passed on an Emergency basis, we risk these attorneys leaving the rosters and then the unrepresented list goes up. It is critically important that we maintain the progress we've made and not compromise this fragile and just nascent system. We learned at our AFA hearing just on Friday that PDS is making huge progress in addressing the needs of unrepresented individuals. One year ago, there were 1,100 people on that list, people who are constitutionally entitled to counsel and did not have it and as of Friday when we were in AFA, that number was under 200. That's still 200 too many, but it is remarkable progress and that system is working.

Notably, the Committee did agree unanimously on the urgency of this funding and the need to pay that bill as soon as possible. And unfortunately, the Minority Report addresses something that was not at all relevant to the bill we were putting forward. It dealt with de-unionizing the PDS employees. The PDS employees are not even subject to this bill. This bill applies to assigned counsel. Moreover, the question of de-unionizing these employees was never subject to a public hearing. I imagine the individuals who risk losing that status would've liked to have come to a public hearing and provide their testimony on that. So, I would encourage Members to support this motion and provide this urgently needed funding for our public defense system.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Newport, Representative Fredette.

Representative **FREDETTE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, I was going to start this comment off today with I'm showing my age, but that's a sensitive subject today. But this issue sort of originated and its genesis was back in 2010, when then-Chief Justice Leigh Saufley sought to have the appointment of attorneys removed from what was then the Judicial Branch. And so, as part of the 125th Legislature, it was removed from the Judiciary and it's evolved into what it has become today. And if you look at the amount of funding since 2010 to today, that has done nothing but this, it's just gone up.

And, you know, this is sort of a you know, theory, this is a one-time request, but that's what we've heard repeatedly over the years. We're not paying our bills, this is a one-time request. Well, I mean, the reality is, you know, if the conversation is that, you know, we need to pay our bills, you know, hospitals are owed $100 million right now in delayed payments. I think Representative Drinkwater has talked about that eloquently. And so, my point is there's lots of bills that need to be paid, and as an attorney myself, obviously, to my brothers and sisters in the practice of law, we want them to be paid. But as a Member of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think this is something that needs to compete with the larger request from the Chief Executive in terms of funding on the table down in Appropriations.

Now, my understanding is we anticipate a change package coming from the Chief Executive next week and, you know, most of the people may not know this in the Body, but we just had a revenue report for the month of January and that report was a negative $80 million, Mr. Speaker. So, what that means is, is that, you know, we budgeted X and we actually got X minus $80 million. Now, over the last four, five, six years, obviously, we have enjoyed surpluses. And so, to see an $80 million shortfall for the month of January is a significant issue. Now, what we don't know is, is that a trend? Now, if it does become a trend, we obviously will likely have some funding issues in 2026 and then likely have some funding issues going forward to 2027. And I probably don't need to tell this Body that we have just started a conflict in the Middle East which may cause people to be more cautious about spending money.

And so, I think from an Appropriations perspective, and that's what this is, it's about paying our bills; I am very cautious about what those revenue projections are going to look like for February, March and April going forward. And I think that's prudent. And part of my purpose in giving this speech today, Mr. Speaker, is is that I think that this issue needs to be sent down to Appropriations and compete with all of the other issues on the table.

Now, my understanding is this is $13 million for FY '26 and then nine million dollars for FY '27 from General Fund money. So, again, I think as the Good Representative from Rumford indicated, you know, there was $10 million taken from

this account from the majority party in the last budget, which is why we have this problem today. And so, again, I don't think it's a problem that was not anticipated, we knew this was going to be a problem, it's just here today rather than the last time a budget was passed. So, I think that that also then, from an Appropriations perspective, if you're looking at this bill, there's a request in the Chief Executive's package for an additional roughly $20 million for funding for indigent legal services. Now, that's a different request, but do we fund that or do we fund these attorneys because we owe them the money? I mean, I think there's a lot of unknowns. I think the Good Representative from Rumford indicated she was going to be a no on this, and I think until we see the Chief Executive's change package, I will be a no on this.

And I will close with this, Mr. Speaker, you know, the conversation is, you know, well, these are bills that we owe. Okay, I get that. But I also know that in my district, Mr. Speaker, that there's a Statute in place that says there shall be a courthouse in Newport. Well, guess what, it's been over a year now and we don't have a courthouse in Newport. And I think that's just as important as paying attorneys. And so, when we're talking about having all these conversations about, well, this bill needs to be paid and that bill needs to be paid, we need to be looking at courthouses, we need to be looking at indigent legal services and we need to look at paying attorneys' bills that we've already gotten the benefit of. And so, to that extent, Mr. Speaker, I think the Good Representative from Rumford is correct. I'll be a no on this, I'll be a no on the Emergency measure, so that the proper arena for this to be discussed and figured out will be down at the Appropriations Committee in terms of looking at all of the issues that need to be addressed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Bath, Representative Sinclair.

Representative **SINCLAIR**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as so frequently happens when the Good Representative from Rumford was speaking, I found myself agreeing with her on a good many points. That frankly happens the majority of days that we're sitting up on the fourth floor together.

Every single Member of the Committee who voted on either Report agreed that these bills need to be paid. Now, the Good Representative from Newport brought up the fact that, yeah, we've got other bills that need to be paid. Also true, and also agreed. But a key difference here is that this is a bill that needs to be paid because it is a service that the State is constitutionally required to provide, Mr. Speaker. And part of the reason why everyone on the Committee agreed that this needs to go through and should go through as an Emergency is because the bill will be paid in that it's for past rendered services, but it will cost the citizens of the State more if we don't pass it as an Emergency. Because then, not only will the underlying invoice be paid, but also interest on those underlying unpaid bills.

Now, the difference between the two Reports is just the question of whether we also address a policy difference, on whether employed counsel; the folks that actually work directly for and at PDS; whether they should be unionized. I agree with the Good Representative from Rumford, it's an important policy conversation to have and like every other policy conversation, it should go through our normal process, meaning it should have, at the very least, a public hearing. That issue attached in Amendment "B" was not given a public hearing. There are a lot of reasons why, if we ever do come to debate that issue in a properly brought bill with a public hearing, there are a lot of reasons why those individuals should be afforded unionization.

I would offer two quick quotes from some folks whose names you might recognize, Mr. Speaker. John Adams, one of our country's Founding Fathers, himself a criminal defense attorney, who described jury trials along with representative government, which we're all here as part of, described them as the heart and lungs of a functioning democracy. Thomas Jefferson described jury trials, noting that they are the only anchor by which a government can be held to the principles of its Constitution. Part of why defense attorneys, like those employed by PDS, might need unionization more than prosecutors is because those heart and lungs can't breathe if the people who are there facilitating that breathing need to constantly worry that a political shift in the winds might lead to their being terminated from their position. Put differently, a defense attorney who is employed at PDS should not have to fear that by doing a particularly good job defending their clients, they may end up getting sacked because the community doesn't like that a particular individual was found not guilty.

But like I said at the start, Mr. Speaker, that is a separate policy question than where the bill is actually targeted, and it is deserving of a public hearing, so that those most directly affected have opportunity to voice their perspective on it. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Auburn, Representative Lee.

Representative **LEE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I genuinely do not understand what we're debating here today. This bill compensates people who have already done work last year. The alternative says, let's wait 90 days to compensate those people that we know we owe money to.

We are in a Sixth Amendment crisis, we have been in a Sixth Amendment crisis, we are just getting to the point that we're starting to correct that. We're saying wait 90 days. You know what's going to happen in those 90 days? Assigned counsel who are not getting compensated for work they have done will leave the rosters. We will be further in a Sixth Amendment crisis, it will be harder and harder. A no vote today makes our Sixth Amendment issue worse. Please support the bipartisan Majority Report today and I hope we are able to pass this as an Emergency.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Auburn, Representative Libby.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are all prepared to vote to pay everyone who is due to be paid with Committee Amendment "B." I do want to thank the Good Representative from Bath for his statements in opposition to having full bill Amendments come forward in work sessions and assume that that means there will be robust no votes coming forward when there are bills with the entire contents replaced in the future. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Kennebunk, Representative Sayre.

Representative **SAYRE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will keep this brief. And I am motivated by the Good Representative from Winter Harbor, who reminded us last week to tone down the rhetoric. I don't think this argument is served by the statement made by the Good and Dear Representative from Rumford that one party or another party pays its bills. I have a very partisan rebuttal to that statement that in the interests of what the Good Representative from Winter Harbor has encouraged us to do, I will keep to myself, and instead, simply advise that we can be better than

suggesting that only one party pays its bills. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Rumford, Representative Henderson.

Representative **HENDERSON**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. So, I think when you make statements such as Republicans pay their bills, you make factual statements such as that, it is a statement of fact. It is a statement to underscore the truth of what Republicans do, not to diminish or belittle another party. I'm not a Democrat, I can't speak for the Democrats. But I am a Republican, so, I stand and I say, Republicans pay their bills. I would welcome any Member from the other side of the aisle to stand and say that Democrats pay their bills if they believe that that is the truth. There is no rhetoric, there's nothing that needs to be toned down. I'm simply here making a factual statement. I can say the truth without someone needing to read between the lines and think that it's somehow diminishing somebody else.

I would rebut my Colleague from Auburn that the alternative to this is not waiting 90 days. The alternative to this is the Minority Report. And I struggle at times, as a Republican in the minority, why it is when we have these conversations, we have two paths forward, both that pay bills, both that get this done in an Emergency measure. I struggle with, why is it that it's the Republicans that have to be the ones to cede? It's the Republicans that have to be the ones to say, no, you're right, we're going to bend the knee, we're going to bow a little bit, we're going to break a little bit, we're going to bend a little bit, we're just going to go along with what you do. Why is the alternative being broadcast and played out like, well, if you don't go our way, by golly, they'll have to wait 90 days?

Representative **SALISBURY**: Point of Order.

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Chair would inquire why the Representative from Westbrook rises.

Representative **SALISBURY**: I think we've gotten a little off topic, and I'm wondering the relevance to the bill at hand.

On **POINT OF ORDER,** Representative SALISBURY of Westbrook asked the Chair if the remarks of Representative HENDERSON of Rumford were germane to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Chair would conclude that the Representative is responding, in my understanding, to comments that were made by the Representative from Auburn, Representative Lee. I think they are germane.

The Chair advised that the remarks of Representative HENDERSON of Rumford were germane to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **HENDERSON**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, the alternative here is not waiting 90 days, the alternative is another path that gets this bill paid in an Emergency measure, it just puts some guardrails on it.

The idea that this has not had a public hearing, maybe it hasn't had a public hearing on this LD number, but to make sure that I stay germane to the topic at hand and the bill at hand, and thanks to the Representative from Westbrook for that reminder, because I can get delayed sometimes, there was a bill last year that we debated and the Chief Executive brought forth a proposal at that time that included this. And it was a bill where PDS came to us and said, we need emergency funding and we need it now. Maybe it was a smaller amount, to the tune of six million dollars, perhaps, but this wasn't my idea; this was the Chief Executive's idea that I resurrected this year.

So, the idea that it hasn't had a hearing, many people from PDS showed up last year to express their sentiments on the idea. It has been flushed out. And Mr. Speaker, I have had major amendments dropped on my lap 20 minutes before we're required to vote, two hours before we're required to vote, three-page amendments, 17-page amendments. So, the idea that at a work session someone can't bring forward an amendment that makes the proposal better is, I'll just say, disingenuous. There is an option to move forward, there's actually two options to move forward, both of them that are currently written in the Calendar pay this bill in an Emergency measure, it's not a 90-day wait.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Kennebunk, Representative Sayre.

Representative **SAYRE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Good Representative from Rumford's statement of faith about the difference between the parties, but I would like to make a statement of fact.

There have been 11 bankruptcies by U.S. Presidents, and bankruptcy is a legal process we allow individuals to not pay their bills. That is what they are. Thomas Jefferson famously bequeathed to us the Library of Congress because he could not pay his bills and the United States inherited his library. The others; Abraham Lincoln, a Republican --

Representative **LIBBY**: Point of Order.

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Chair would inquire as to why the Representative from Auburn rises.

Representative **LIBBY**: I would question the point of this. One colleague making a simple statement, then getting taken in a weird context and elaborated on at length. What are we debating?

On **POINT OF ORDER,** Representative LIBBY of Auburn asked the Chair if the remarks of Representative SAYRE of Kennebunk were germane to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Chair understands the point of the objection, thank you. The Chair would remind the Member that the issue before us is related to funding for the reimbursement of Public Defense. The Chair understands the Representative is responding to a comment regarding Republicans paying their bills. The Chair will provide some latitude for a response, but would maintain that the context in which the comments were made were about the present day, so, the Chair would put some guardrails around the comments about how far back in history we're going to go.

The Chair reminded Representative SAYRE of Kennebunk to stay as close as possible to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **SAYRE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The examples go as recently as 2014, I'll leave it at that. To paraphrase you, Sir, the Member will defer.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Newport, Representative Fredette.

Representative **FREDETTE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, I apologize for rising a second time, and as I conclude my 10th year in this Body, I'm always happy to see younger people in the balcony, watching their representative democracy in action. And so, I think it's helpful that people understand that this is a deliberative Body and that people will have differences of opinion. I don't agree with attacking people personally, but certainly we will have differences of opinion and that's what elections are about. And so, I appreciate the Speaker's job in terms of allowing healthy debate, because I think it's important

not only for the Body, but for those young people that come to watch the deliberative Body here.

I will only say in concluding on this, you know, again, this is a $13 million request for FY '26, a nine million dollar request for FY '27. This is not a surprise. This is not something we didn't anticipate. Anybody that's a lawyer understands the legal process. Everything takes time in that process. So, this was something that could've and should've been dealt with in the last budget. It was not. My guess is the reason why is, is because it would've required an additional increase in taxes to fund. And then, you know, that's roughly $24 million from the General Fund, and then again, I'll go back to this request for indigent legal services for roughly another $25 million, which is Part T in the budget, from the Rainy Day Fund and from the Stabilization Fund.

And so, again, I appreciate the constitutional comments, you know, because I think it's important, but I think it's important that it be looked at in the context of the overall budget. That if we're going to pay our bills that need to be paid, and let's just assume that that's $250 million, and this is $25 million that we need to set aside so that we can pay this bill, then theoretically, that leaves $225 million that the Appropriations Committee will figure out in terms of paying our bills. I think that's the right way to do this. I think you'll be hard pressed to see people on this side of the aisle being supportive of taking money from the Stabilization Fund to pay bills, even in a one-time fashion.

And so, I see this in a very different context, and I do appreciate and I do understand and I do support the issue of the constitutionality of people sitting in jail, waiting for a court-appointed attorney to deal with their legal issues, I'm glad they're getting the backlog fixed. I see that as a separate issue than how are we going to resolve this as a Body, because if this goes forward in its own way, gets exempted from the Table, then we have less money to figure out how we're going to pay the rest of the bills when we bring forward a bill from the Appropriations Committee for this Body to consider.

And so, again, to that extent, I appreciate the work of the Committee, I appreciate the work of both sides, which are talking about the issue of unionization, and I will only say that my understanding of the unionization issue is that I don't think it was necessarily intentional when the bill originally was passed, but again, that's probably something to be discussed for another day, but I think the Good Representative from Rumford is correct in providing the Amendment to this bill, and so, I will be voting no. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Falmouth, Representative Kuhn.

Representative **KUHN**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to provide a clarification on the last speaker. There's been no indication that this bill would be exempted from the Table. Whether it passes as an Emergency or otherwise, it will go to the Table and compete with other priorities.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 628

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Archer, Arford, Babin, Beck, Bell, Boyer M, Brennan, Bridgeo, Bunker, Cluchey, Copeland, Crafts, Crockett, DeBrito, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Faircloth, Farrin, Faulkingham, Friedmann, Frost, Gattine, Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Harriman, Hasenfus, Hepler, Julia, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Lee, Lookner, Macias, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, McCabe, Meyer, Milliken, Mitchell, Montell, Moonen, Murphy, O'Halloran, Olsen, Osher, Pugh, Rana, Ray, Rielly, Roberts, Roeder, Rollins, Runte, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sato, Sayre, Shagoury, Sinclair, Skold, Stover, Terry, Webb, Yusuf, Zager, Mr. Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Ardell, Bagshaw, Bishop, Blier, Boyer D, Campbell, Carlow, Caruso, Chapman, Cimino, Collamore, Collins, Cooper, Cray, Daigle, Drinkwater, Ducharme, Eder, Flynn, Foley, Foster, Fredericks, Fredette, Gifford, Greenwood, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Hymes, Jackson, Lance, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, McIntyre, Mingo, Morris, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Pomerleau, Quint, Rudnicki, Schmersal-Burgess, Simmons, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Thorne, Tuell, Underwood, Wadsworth, Walker, White J, White R, Wood P, Wood S, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Geiger, Lanigan, Pluecker, Supica, Warren.

Yes, 77; No, 67; Absent, 5; Vacant, 1; Excused, 1.

77 having voted in the affirmative and 67 voted in the negative, 1 vacancy with 5 being absent and 1 excused, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **ACCEPTED**.

The Bill was **READ ONCE**. **Committee Amendment "A" (S-506)** was **READ** by the Clerk and **ADOPTED**.

Under suspension of the rules the Bill was given its **SECOND READING WITHOUT REFERENCE** to the Committee on **Bills in the Second Reading**.

Under further suspension of the rules the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-506)** in concurrence.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Gardiner, Representative Montell, who wishes to address the House on the record.

Representative **MONTELL**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say a few words about the most recent Fire Chief in Hallowell. He lives in my district in Farmingdale, where he was Fire Chief most recently for nine years, but he has actually given 51 years of overall service as a firefighter. And I just want to say on behalf of my district and on behalf of the people of Maine, I just want to say thank you for your years of service and enjoy a very happy retirement. You deserve it. Thank you.

Majority Report of the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-820)** on Bill "An Act to Require and Encourage Safe and Interconnected Transportation Construction Projects"

(H.P. 187) (L.D. 287)

Signed:

Senators:

CURRY of Waldo

BAILEY of York

Representatives:

GERE of Kennebunkport

GOLEK of Harpswell

JULIA of Waterville

LOOKNER of Portland

MALON of Biddeford

Minority Report of the same Committee reporting **Ought Not to Pass** on same Bill.

Signed:

Senator:

BENNETT of Oxford

Representatives:

COLLAMORE of Pittsfield

EDER of Waterboro

MINGO of Calais

READ.

Representative GERE of Kennebunkport moved that the House **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Pittsfield, Representative Collamore.

Representative **COLLAMORE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot of complex bills in Housing and Economic Development Committee. I didn't think we would be working bills that should clearly go to the Transportation Committee, but here we are.

The Housing Committee telling the Maine DOT how they should prioritize their funding is just not right. The Majority Report directs the DOT to prioritize transportation projects based on land use, housing and community development. Ignoring the criteria they should focus on; the durability, condition and safety concerns of an area of infrastructure. Basically, the Majority Report is saying that projects centered around housing are more important than a bridge that is collapsing or a culvert that could wash away in the next extreme weather event. The Maine DOT needs to be able to make project decisions while balancing safety, conditions, mobility and fiscal priorities. This bill, if passed, will reduce the DOT's flexibility to respond to emergency safety needs and infrastructure preservation.

The DOT already has over $60 million committed in projects in the Complete Streets Program, the Village Partnership Initiative, the Municipal Partnership Initiative and the Roadway Context Classification System. While infrastructure to housing projects is important, most of these projects are built on town roads, not State roads, and if the infrastructure like bridges and culverts are not sound, who will want to move to the housing projects? Also, in a time when all of us are talking about affordability, it's important to note that according to the National Transportation Research Group, Mainers spend on average over $1,500 per year in extra vehicle operating costs due to poor road conditions. This includes repairs, tire replacements and increased fuel consumption. In busy urban areas like Bangor, for example, these costs can reach up to $1,800 per driver, per year. With nearly 20% of Maine's primary roads being considered in poor condition, this is not the time to put more conditions on Maine DOT's project decision making.

With all of this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I ask that you follow my light, support the Maine DOT and Mainers that drive on our State roads and reject this motion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Kennebunkport, Representative Gere.

Representative **GERE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, we are making strong progress on housing and other community priorities through both regulatory reform and in helping communities build and preserve affordable housing in vibrant places. The Maine Office of Community Affairs has initiated a lot of great work to help municipalities and regions with a more streamlined process for accessing grants and funding.

This bill takes one small step in integrating the Department of Transportation's programs with key priorities that many communities in Maine are working on, including integrating transit transportation and including pedestrian and bicycle transportation, encouraging mixed use and infill development to keep community centers strong and preserving our environment by locating housing in places where we have infrastructure. Specifically, this bill does not require but gives the DOT authority to include these considerations in their prioritization and projects. There is no request or requirement that they disregard any other criteria. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Newcastle, Representative Crafts.

Representative **CRAFTS**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Members of the House. The question the Representative from Pittsfield brought up, the Committee of jurisdiction, and I just wanted to stand and speak to the fact that the issues at hand in housing and development are important. The challenge I have with this bill and why I won't be supporting the motion is that when we talk about prioritizing funding within the Department of Transportation, things get real tricky because, for example, on my way to work today, I had to drop my car off for an inspection. Like many Mainers traveling the roads right now, the potholes are pretty significant. I'd really like Route 130 to be repaired. But that's not how we assign and prioritize funding in this State.

The Legislature and the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation does not legislate specific projects, because we have seen the risk to the process becoming politicized. And so, we asked that the Department of Transportation; which I will be very clear, needs and requires the encouragement of this Branch of government to address some of the changing needs within the State; the Department is still tasked with maintaining 2,500 bridges in Maine, and I don't know if folks saw, but the State is ranked as a D+ in bridge safety. We came in 47th in the country. So, when we talk about the funding of our infrastructure system, I'm concerned about, quote, 'prioritizing funding' based on individual legislation.

And I would also address the fact that, you know, the Department of Transportation and the funding currently relies on a $250 million TransCap Bond which will dry up next year. And so, when we talk about funding needs, there's a much bigger picture that needs to be addressed. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 629

YEA - Abdi, Archer, Arford, Beck, Boyer M, Brennan, DeBrito, Dhalac, Doudera, Friedmann, Gattine, Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Harriman, Hasenfus, Julia, Kessler, Kuhn, Lee, Lookner, Macias, Malon, Mathieson, McCabe, Meyer, Milliken, Mitchell, Montell, Moonen, Murphy, Osher, Pugh, Rana, Ray, Rielly, Roeder, Runte, Sachs, Sato, Shagoury, Skold, Yusuf, Zager.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Ankeles, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Bell, Bishop, Blier, Boyer D, Bridgeo, Bunker, Campbell, Carlow, Caruso, Chapman, Cimino, Cluchey, Collamore, Collins, Cooper, Copeland, Crafts, Cray, Crockett, Daigle, Dill, Dodge, Drinkwater, Ducharme, Eaton, Eder, Faircloth, Farrin, Faulkingham, Flynn, Foley, Foster, Fredericks, Fredette, Frost, Gifford, Greenwood, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Hepler, Hymes, Jackson, Lajoie, Lance, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Mastraccio, Matlack, McIntyre, Mingo, Morris, Nutting, O'Halloran, Olsen, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Pomerleau, Quint, Roberts, Rollins, Rudnicki, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Schmersal-Burgess, Simmons, Sinclair, Smith, Soboleski, Stover, Strout, Swallow, Terry, Thorne, Tuell, Underwood, Wadsworth, Walker, Webb, White J, White R, Wood P, Wood S, Woodsome, Mr. Speaker.

ABSENT - Geiger, Lanigan, Pluecker, Supica, Warren.

Yes, 45; No, 99; Absent, 5; Vacant, 1; Excused, 1.

45 having voted in the affirmative and 99 voted in the negative, 1 vacancy with 5 being absent and 1 excused, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **NOT ACCEPTED**.

Subsequently, on motion of Representative GERE of Kennebunkport, the Minority **Ought Not to Pass** Report was **ACCEPTED** and sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

CONSENT CALENDAR
First Day

In accordance with House Rule 519, the following items appeared on the Consent Calendar for the First Day:

(S.P. 807) (L.D. 1994) Bill "An Act to Provide Immunity from Civil Liability for Justices of the Peace" Committee on **JUDICIARY** reporting **Ought to Pass**

(S.P. 771) (L.D. 1964) Bill "An Act to Require the Development of a Standard Written Disclosure for Sellers and Installers of Distributed Generation Resources, to Make Changes to Other Standard Disclosures and to Make Misrepresentation in the Sale of Electricity Products an Unfair Trade Practice" Committee on **ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-511)**

(S.P. 772) (L.D. 1965) Resolve, to Establish a Task Force to Create a Court Navigation Program Plan (EMERGENCY) Committee on **JUDICIARY** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "B" (S-505)**

(S.P. 801) (L.D. 1989) Bill "An Act to Increase Access to the Progressive Treatment Program Fund" Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-512)**

(S.P. 802) (L.D. 1990) Bill "An Act to Update the Requirements for Psychology Licensure" (EMERGENCY) Committee on **HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-503)**

(S.P. 813) (L.D. 2127) Bill "An Act to Increase the Cap on Bonds Issued by the Maine State Housing Authority to Reflect Current Housing Production Needs in the State" Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-501)**

(S.P. 875) (L.D. 2156) Bill "An Act to Provide for the 2026 and 2027 Allocations of the State Ceiling on Private Activity Bonds" (EMERGENCY) Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-510)**

(H.P. 1441) (L.D. 2152) Bill "An Act to Make Allocations from Maine Turnpike Authority Funds for the Maine Turnpike Authority for the Calendar Year Ending December 31, 2027" Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** reporting **Ought to Pass**

(H.P. 1102) (L.D. 1661) Bill "An Act to Establish a Comprehensive and Interagency Approach to Invasive Species Management" Committee on **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-814)**

(H.P. 1159) (L.D. 1741) Bill "An Act Regarding County Law Enforcement Administration and Rural Law Enforcement" Committee on **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-818)**

(H.P. 1365) (L.D. 2035) Bill "An Act to Increase the Fee Cap for the Board of Licensing of Auctioneers" Committee on **LABOR** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-822)**

(H.P. 1370) (L.D. 2040) Bill "An Act to Survey Food Insecurity in Maine" Committee on **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-815)**

(H.P. 1388) (L.D. 2075) Resolve, to Authorize the State Tax Assessor to Convey the Interest of the State in Certain Real Estate in the Unorganized Territory Committee on **TAXATION** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-817)**

(H.P. 1393) (L.D. 2078) Bill "An Act to Establish the Electricity Cost Fairness Refundable Tax Credit" Committee on **TAXATION** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-816)**

(H.P. 1398) (L.D. 2083) Bill "An Act to Expand Access to Certified Residential Medication Aide Training" Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-819)**

(H.P. 1440) (L.D. 2125) Bill "An Act to Sustain Access to Children's Residential Care Services" (EMERGENCY) Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-821)**

Under suspension of the rules, Second Day Consent Calendar notification was given.

There being no objection, the Senate Papers were **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED** or **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended** in concurrence and the House Papers were **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED** or **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended** and sent for concurrence.

ENACTORS

Acts

An Act to Support Permitting of Certain Multifamily Housing Developments Under the Site Location of Development Laws

(S.P. 57) (L.D. 128)
(C. "A" S-494)

An Act Regarding the Allocation of Net Energy Billing Costs and Long-term Contract Costs and Benefits

(S.P. 754) (L.D. 1936)
(C. "A" S-495)

An Act to Require the Maine Office of Community Affairs to Establish a Technical Assistance Materials Hub

(S.P. 808) (L.D. 1995)
(C. "A" S-498)

An Act to Exclude Agricultural Leases from the Definition of "Subdivision" Under the Planning and Land Use Regulation Laws

(S.P. 812) (L.D. 1999)
(C. "A" S-493)

An Act to Provide Funding to Improve the College and Career Readiness of Certain Students in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties

(S.P. 865) (L.D. 2147)
(C. "A" S-500)

Were reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed, **PASSED TO BE ENACTED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.

The following items were taken up out of order by unanimous consent:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The following matters, in the consideration of which the House was engaged at the time of adjournment Thursday, February 26, 2026, had preference in the Orders of the Day and continued with such preference until disposed of as provided by House Rule 502.

Expression of Legislative Sentiment Recognizing Stella Foy, of Saco

(SLS 1487)

- In Senate, **READ** and **PASSED**.

TABLED - January 13, 2026 (Till Later Today) by Representative COPELAND of Saco.

PENDING - **PASSAGE**.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **PASSED** in concurrence.

HOUSE DIVIDED REPORT - Majority (9) **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-800)** - Minority (3) **Ought Not to Pass** - Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** on Bill "An Act to Provide an Exemption from Pilotage Requirements for Passenger Ferry Service Between Bar Harbor, Maine and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia"

(H.P. 969) (L.D. 1477)

TABLED - February 24, 2026 (Till Later Today) by Representative ANKELES of Brunswick.

PENDING - **ACCEPTANCE OF EITHER REPORT**.

Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle moved that the House **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

Representative BISHOP of Bucksport **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Bucksport, Representative Bishop.

Representative **BISHOP**: Mr. Speaker, this bill began as an attempt to skirt Maine's longstanding maritime safety requirements. Our waters must remain safe for our fisheries, our coastal communities and all who depend on them. The ferry service operating from Nova Scotia to Bar Harbor is seeking to remove Maine pilots from its vessels, a move that appears driven by profit, not safety.

Maine pilots play a crucial role in navigating our challenging channels and bays. Their expertise should not be cast aside to cut costs. Over the past year, lobbyists for this project were unable to reach an agreement on the Carryover bill that we now have proposed. Now they propose striking the language and replacing it. The result of this is no longer the same bill that the working people along Maine's coastal waters came to testify on. In work session, a subsidy was proposed suggesting that if the ferry operators do not wish to bear the cost of complying with Maine's safety standards, the taxpayers of Maine should. This is not acceptable. Maine taxpayers should not be asked to subsidize the profits of Canadian corporate enterprise, especially when it comes to the expense of safety in Maine waters. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from St. George, Representative Matlack.

Representative **MATLACK**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also object to this bill.

The position of pilots aboard ships is a crucial one. They provide local knowledge and safety. And while I know that is no longer a part of this, the idea that the State of Maine would pay three hundred and some-odd thousand dollars to a corporation, a foreign corporation, in order to ensure that pilots are used seems to me to be a bit outrageous. So, I would encourage people to say no to this bill. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Bar Harbor, Representative Friedmann.

Representative **FRIEDMANN**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support LD 1477.

I represent the town of Bar Harbor, which is the host for the ferry from Nova Scotia to Bar Harbor. And for over 70 years, this ferry has been a marine highway connecting our State to the province of Nova Scotia and to the Canadian Maritimes. I would like to point out that Bay Ferries is a private operator working for the province of Nova Scotia, which has subsidized the ferry service to the tune of $18 to $20 million annually. They've bought and built all of the facilities required to dock the ferry in Bar Harbor and they actually pay 100% of

the cost of customs and immigration services in Bar Harbor for the ferry. Even though it only operates for less than six months a year, they pay the full year cost of Customs and Border Patrol.

This bill originally came up because the ferry had operated without pilots for decades, and when it shut down for a few years, the pilot association came in and passed a bill here to require pilotage between Yarmouth and Bar Harbor and when the ferry enters Frenchman Bay, a pilot has to board the boat and guide it into port. This seemed very unreasonable to both the town of Bar Harbor, which supports this bill completely, and to the province, because every day, pilots who are trained at Maine Maritime Academy, they come in every day and are completely familiar with the waters of Frenchman Bay. That was the reason that was sought to eliminate the pilotage requirement, it's the only ferry service in the State that's required to have pilots on board.

In addition, I have to point out that this is an extremely lucrative contract for the pilots. They spend a very short amount of time, less than an hour from when the ship enters the bay to when it docks, and they are paid over $300,000 a year for this limited service. So, we heard the concerns of fishermen and others about safety, and in negotiations, we agreed that the ferry service, Bay Ferries, would continue to pay for the pilotage, but is asking the State of Maine to cover that cost. The ferry is already spending millions of dollars to provide this very important service between our State and the province and U.S. and Canada.

This is a great benefit to the people of Maine. Tens of thousands of passengers and thousands of vehicles travel from Nova Scotia to Bar Harbor every year. Those passengers spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in, not only Mount Desert Island hospitality businesses, but as they travel through Maine, down the coast and throughout the State. We believe that this is a small price for the great benefit that the ferry service provides to the people of Maine.

Finally, I'd say that the Chief Executive spent some time this summer traveling from Maine through the Maritime Provinces and came on the ferry from Yarmouth to Bar Harbor with the Premier of Nova Scotia. And that was a very significant event in that it cemented in many ways the close relationship that our State has with the province and providing this service. So, I urge my fellow Members to vote yes on this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair will remind Members when referring to the Governor, refer to her as the Chief Executive.

The Chair reminded all members to refer to the Chief Executive as the Chief Executive.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Harrington, Representative Strout.

Representative **STROUT**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I think I'm very proactive about the safety and concerns of the fishermen, especially out in the water with the changing conditions and the fog comes in and things change. It's very important to have the pilot on those boats, and I'm glad that that at least will remain in the bill.

However, I do not feel that the taxpayers should be paying for a service that benefits a corporation, especially outside of the United States. There are lots of conversations that could happen and the business owners can figure out a way to add on to ticket purchases or such things without contributing that to the taxpayers. Money should be spent more on the safety of the fishermen and our own State, and that's why I'm opposed to this.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Dexter, Representative Foster.

Representative **FOSTER**: Mr. Speaker, I should know the answer to this, but I'm afraid I don't, I live below deck, so, I'm curious as to whether or not, if the captain of the vessel has the pilotage for Bar Harbor, if it's still a requirement that they use a State of Maine pilot to bring the vessel in.

The SPEAKER: The Representative from Dexter, Representative Foster, has posed a question through the Chair to any Member who wishes to answer.

The Chair recognizes the Representative from Winter Harbor, Representative Faulkingham.

Representative **FAULKINGHAM**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Maine's pilotage statutes, every foreign-flagged vessel must employ a Maine licensed pilot when entering. I fish in the waters there, it's very important that this vessel stays on track, it moves at very high speeds, it's very important that this remains and the taxpayers of the State of Maine shouldn't be subsidizing a Canadian corporation. So, there's nothing that should be changed here to help them out when it comes to that.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 630

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Beck, Boyer M, Brennan, Bridgeo, Crafts, Crockett, Dhalac, Faircloth, Friedmann, Gattine, Graham, Gramlich, Harriman, Hasenfus, Hepler, Julia, Kessler, Kuhn, Macias, Mathieson, McCabe, Moonen, Murphy, Osher, Pugh, Ray, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Sinclair, Skold, Zager.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Archer, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Bell, Bishop, Blier, Boyer D, Bunker, Campbell, Carlow, Caruso, Chapman, Cimino, Cluchey, Collamore, Collins, Cooper, Copeland, Cray, Daigle, DeBrito, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Drinkwater, Ducharme, Eaton, Eder, Farrin, Faulkingham, Flynn, Foley, Foster, Fredericks, Fredette, Frost, Gere, Gifford, Golek, Greenwood, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Hymes, Jackson, Lajoie, Lance, Lavigne, Lee, Lemelin, Libby, Lookner, Lyman, Malon, Mason, Mastraccio, Matlack, McIntyre, Meyer, Milliken, Mingo, Mitchell, Montell, Morris, Nutting, O'Halloran, Olsen, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Pomerleau, Quint, Rana, Rielly, Rollins, Rudnicki, Sachs, Sato, Schmersal-Burgess, Simmons, Smith, Soboleski, Stover, Strout, Swallow, Terry, Thorne, Tuell, Underwood, Wadsworth, Walker, Webb, White J, White R, Wood P, Wood S, Woodsome, Yusuf, Mr. Speaker.

ABSENT - Geiger, Lanigan, Pluecker, Supica, Warren.

Yes, 39; No, 105; Absent, 5; Vacant, 1; Excused, 1.

39 having voted in the affirmative and 105 voted in the negative, 1 vacancy with 5 being absent and 1 excused, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **NOT ACCEPTED**.

Subsequently, on motion of Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle, the Minority **Ought Not to Pass** Report was **ACCEPTED** and sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Following Communication: (H.C. 385)

STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER'S OFFICE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

March 3, 2026
Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
Dear Clerk Hunt:
Pursuant to my authority under House Rule 201.1 (H), I appoint Representative Holly B. Stover, of Boothbay to serve as Speaker Pro Tem to convene the House on Tuesday, March 3, 2026.
Sincerely,
S/Ryan D. Fecteau
Speaker of the House

READ and **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE**.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE
Refer to the Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Pursuant to Resolve

Report of the **Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development** on Bill "An Act to Support Municipal Enforcement of Residential Construction Laws, Codes and Regulations"

(S.P. 908) (L.D. 2225)

Reporting that it be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** pursuant to Resolve 2025, chapter 64, section 2.

Came from the Senate with the Report **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** in concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

On motion of Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield, the House adjourned at 11:53 a.m., until 10:00 a.m., Thursday, March 5, 2026, in honor and lasting tribute to Gary Getchell of Dresden, Lynne Gould Cianchette of Pittsfield and Gene F. Boyce of Anson.