



# BUSINESS

## NOTEWORTHY

What's new in local business

### ERA recognizes Poussard

AUBURN — Claire Poussard was recently recognized for her outstanding performance and exceptional customer service by the ERA of Maine Broker Council. She is ranked as a Top 25 Agent for 2010 in the ERA franchise system in Maine. She has been licensed with ERA Worden Realty, 473 Center St., Auburn, since 1988.

ERA Worden Realty also awarded Poussard with an outstanding agent award at its annual awards banquet. She has been consistently honored for her outstanding contribution to her clients and customers throughout her career. She handles all phases of real estate services: residential, multi/investment, land, new construction, condos and commercial for both buyers and sellers.

She is a life-long resident of Lewiston, is married and has two grown sons and one granddaughter. She can be reached at ERA Worden Realty 784-0159 ext. 325, cell 576-8444 or by email clairepoussard@eraworden.com



Poussard

# Logging-labor bills opposed

## Republicans criticized for being against bills dealing with Canadians

By STEVE MISTLER  
Staff Writer

AUGUSTA — Longstanding regional tensions over Canadian loggers working Maine woodlots have become the latest political flash point for Augusta lawmakers.

Earlier this month, Republican legislators rejected a bill that would penalize landowners for hiring foreign "bonded" laborers in harvesting operations. On Tuesday, Senate Republicans were poised to defeat another proposal that would award a \$250 tax break for each Maine worker hired by tree harvesting companies.

Senate Republicans argue that the latest bill, LD 338, is largely symbolic and ineffective against some logging companies' alleged exploitation of a federal program that allows them to hire Canadian labor if there are too few American workers.

But on Tuesday, GOP leadership unexpectedly tabled a vote despite having the numbers to defeat the measure.

The move followed a heated floor debate during which

*"The thing is, the Republicans are all about the free market," he said. "And here's a perfect example of where they're not letting the free market work because they're using a government regulation to get cheaper workers."*

Sen. Troy Jackson, D-Allagash, a logger

Democrats, for the second time this month, accused the GOP of abandoning their job-creation mandate to side with Canadian workers hired by companies taking advantage of subsidies within the state's Tree Growth Tax program.

Sen. Troy Jackson, D-Allagash, the sponsor of the two bills, said Republicans are nervous because they're on the wrong side of the debate.

Jackson, a logger, has pursued the bonded labor issue for several years. He called GOP resistance to his proposals "bogus" and "hypocritical."

"The thing is, the Republicans are all about the free market," he said. "And here's a perfect example of where they're not letting the free market work because they're using a government regulation to get

cheaper workers."

Other Democrats have echoed that sentiment, saying Republicans are essentially choosing subsidized foreign labor over jobs for unemployed Maine loggers.

Maine's Tree Growth Tax program offers tax breaks on land managed for timber. Employers are permitted by the state and federal government to hire foreign laborers when they cannot fill jobs with U.S. workers.

Jackson said the program is exploited by some companies that use the federal H-2A program to hire Canadian labor because those workers don't require health care or workers' compensation insurance. Such services are provided by the Canadian government.

"These things stack up

against the Maine worker," Jackson said.

Republican lawmakers and the forest industry counter that Canadian workers are used only when there aren't enough Mainers available to work in remote woodlots.

During a recent House debate over Jackson's first proposal, Rep. Peter Rioux, R-Winterport, said "employers favored Canadian labor in the woods because, frankly, they're more productive. They show up for work. It is closer to their home. They work harder. They complain less."

In the same debate, Rep. Jarrod Crockett, R-Bethel, said that "the reality is bonded labor keeps the price of wood down, it keeps mills open and it keeps a market for people like my dad who sell wood."

Jackson said the H-2A isn't supposed to lower wages.

There's been some indication that Republican leadership is concerned that the political aesthetics aren't in their favor.

Sen. Debra Plowman, R-Hampden, acknowledged that the debate was turning into "something that's an issue for the next campaign."

Plowman defended her party's stance on both bills. She said Jackson's proposals would undoubtedly resound with his constituency, but that enforcing labor laws wasn't the Legislature's role.

"If they (timber companies) are doing illegal practices, then there are avenues that do not involve the Legislature," she said. "There's compassion for the issue, but when we're giving out tax credits there has to be a bang for the buck."

Regarding the allegations against companies illegally hiring foreign labor, Plowman added, "We can't make laws by anecdote. We need proof."

The issue of companies hiring Canadian labor is an old

