

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senate Legislative Record
One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Legislature

State of Maine

Daily Edition

First Regular Session
December 1, 2010 to June 29, 2011

Pages 1 - 1494

The Chair laid before the Senate the following Tabled and Later Today Assigned matter:

An Act To Provide Administrative Support to the Citizen Trade Policy Commission

H.P. 716 L.D. 972
(C "A" H-249; S "A" S-353)

Tabled - June 29, 2011, by Senator COURTNEY of York

Pending - **ENACTMENT**, in concurrence

(In Senate, June 28, 2011, **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (H-249) AND SENATE AMENDMENT "A" (S-353).**)

(In House, June 29, 2011, **PASSED TO BE ENACTED.**)

PASSED TO BE ENACTED and having been signed by the President, was presented by the Secretary to the Governor for his approval.

Senate at Ease.

Senate called to order by the President.

The Honorable Paul R. LePage, Governor of the State of Maine, entered and addressed the Senate.

GOVERNOR LePAGE: Thank you very much. As the session comes to a close, I think it's important to reflect back over the last six months. Our mandate by the people of Maine was that they wanted to see change. They wanted to see reforms. For that, they put a Republican Governor, Republican Majority in the Senate, and Republican Majority in the House. In looking over the work that's been done in the last several months, I think there has been some great work done. I think some of the work that was done is excellent. I'm very, very pleased with the work that was done on L.D. 1. There was a lot of hard debate and some good compromises. I think the state is better for it. I think L.D. 1333 is, if I was to rate it, an A+ in my book. I think we've gone a long ways to lowering the cost of health care, particularly for the youth in the state of Maine so they can get into the system and they can get used to having insurance. Pension reform and tax reform, I think, are very, very good. I'm very, very pleased with the work that you've all done. I think that the budget we sent up, and with the work that was done in those areas and came, you've strengthened the process going forward, so I thank you all very much. I think there are a lot of things that need to be done. We can't forget that there is a lot to be done. We can't do it all in one session.

As you return home for the Summer speak to your constituents. I urge you all to please work with your constituents and speak to them because we are doing it on a monthly basis. We are getting an awful lot of feedback from all around the state on what people are really, truly looking for. The one area that I will tell you that I'll be coming back for in January is that I got a report yesterday that in 2010 we were ranked number twelfth in

the country with the highest electricity rates. I am not pleased to report that yesterday afternoon I received the latest report and we've climbed to number eight. The other New England states are slightly above us. We are way out of whack with the rest of the country. We are about 30% above the national average, as we speak today, before we add on all the state add-ons. I'm talking simply about energy transmission and distribution. We, as a state, have added on a fair amount of additional costs. I'm going to be looking at that very, very hard. Ken Fletcher and I are going to be working hard on that this Summer.

The other thing I'm going to ask you to think about, what we did in tax relief I think is very important to spur the economy. We've seen it already. We've had companies come in. We've got Carbonite, we've got ABS, and we're looking to reopen the mills in Millinocket. I will tell you, I met with the Counsel General in Japan and the first comment out of his mouth is that they'd love to put some plants here, but they can't afford our energy. I'm going to ask you to really, really look at that because it's vital.

We've lowered costs just slightly over last year. I think the budget net is about \$35 million less than it was last year, but we've made a significant reform in taxation. We're taking that on right now. We're going to be going this Summer and doing a complete zero-based approach to budgeting, and we're going to bring back a program because we know we have to make up some of the savings in the operations of state government, and we want to make it more efficient. We're going to need to lower spending. We cannot cut taxes without lowering spending because all you're doing is delaying the inevitable of increasing them again. I'd like to see those tax reforms stay for the long haul.

We're going to be back. There has been some real good work done on education. Steve Bowen, the Commissioner, is working with his department to make some major reforms to try to lower the cost of education while improving the quality and standards of our output. We'll be having some programs in those areas.

With that, there is one item that I'm going to ask, again, for in January. I would like you all to really check it because the current polls are showing in the 70% range. Fair share needs to go. We're negotiating. I understand that the union, MSEA, said, "Don't legislate it, it's a negotiable item." Well, this is what I've seen so far. Here's our current contract, please sign it for two more years. That's where we're at. Here's our contract for the last two years, please sign it. I don't see that to be fair negotiating. It's never going to be negotiated. If we're going to treat people fairly then we need to give my message to the unions, which is very simply, "Add value and people will come in flocks." If there is no value the fees that they collect then the only alternative is to force people to be in and I don't think that's the right way.

With that, I bid you all a good Summer. Rest up, and we're going to crunch you in January. Thank you all.

The Governor withdrew from the Senate Chamber. (Amid applause, the Members rising.)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Chair laid before the Senate the following Tabled and Later Today Assigned matter: