

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**Legislative Record**  
**House of Representatives**  
**One Hundred and Twenty-Third Legislature**  
**State of Maine**

**Volume II**

**First Regular Session**

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**Second Regular Session**

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Pages 682-1357

**Resolves**

Resolve, Relating to the Wells-Ogunquit Community School District

(S.P. 375) (L.D. 1123)  
(C. "A" S-175)

Reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed, **FINALLY PASSED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.

An Act To Amend Maine's Bottle Laws

(S.P. 603) (L.D. 1696)  
(C. "B" S-326)

Was reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed.

On motion of Representative FAIRCLOTH of Bangor, was **SET ASIDE**.

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

An Act To Allow a Tax Credit for College Loan Repayments

(I.B. 2) (L.D. 1856)  
(C. "A" H-414)

Was reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed.

On motion of Representative FAIRCLOTH of Bangor, was **SET ASIDE**.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on **PASSAGE TO BE ENACTED**.

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 Portland, Representative Adams.

Representative **ADAMS**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. The bill before us now is the petition drive that you would have known as Opportunity Maine. This is the GI Bill for Generation Next. Opportunity Maine arrived, here, at the Capitol, with over 70,000 signatures, born on 70,000 pairs of feet you may say. Opportunity Maine is a concept, and its several cousin bills about college debt arrived here just in the nick of time for Generation Next.

For those of the Greatest Generation, that is those who fought in World War II, the GI Bill, passed in 1944, was one of the most generous and farsighted gestures of a grateful nation. For the 112,000 Mainers, both men and women who fought World War II, it was the first rung up the ladder of American life: It boosted the State Agricultural College into a vibrant, bustling University at Orono; it swelled the ranks of the little Portland College into what is today the University of Southern Maine; and, in fact, it was in both cases the alma mater of many of the young students who brought the Opportunity Maine matter to such a successful petition conclusion.

Unfortunately, Generation Next is also a Greatest Generation, too; it graduates with the greatest amount of student debt in all of American history. According to figures at the University of Southern Maine, at least 75 percent of all students at USM receive some sort of financial aid, overwhelmingly it is federal dollars. About \$60 million is given out as a whole; only \$6 million in student aid at USM comes in private scholarships, about \$5 million in university scholarships. All the rest is federal, or from

the banks, or from the parents. Never has our state university system been so full or so loaded with debt, so what to do?

We all know that jobs cannot be found everywhere, but debt will follow you anywhere, and it does, and it has, right into the debate today, so what to do? I argue that we keep the students, the jobs, and the debt all in one place and that is in Maine where we can do something about all three, which is what Opportunity Maine proposes, so what to do?

Today, some of us are going to ask this House to do something that it has done only five times in all of Maine history. I would ask if we could, please, to have the handout, which is resting down front in the possession of the Assistant Clerk of the House at this time, distributed, which will break down the opportunity that is presented to us. The thing that some of us would ask is that we pass directly, a citizen initiated petition into law; that is pass Opportunity Maine, pass it outright as a law and own it as a Legislature. What we own as a Legislature, we can amend, we can fine-tune, we can keep faith in with the public that brought it to us, in light of changing times, and we have done it before. Five times in the history of the state, the Legislature has passed, outright, a petition presented by initiated citizen action. I was here as a fascinated freshman, the first time it was ever done in 1991. We knew we were making history; we stood and applauded when we did so. It is broken down on the colored sheet that will be handed out to you as we are speaking.

Maine was the first state east of the Mississippi to put the initiated referendum into its Constitution, 99 years ago, in 1908. It appears, for those interested, on page 23 of your little House Register booklets, where three options are listed, put there by our grandsires so long ago, when an initiated bill comes to us, we may a.) Pass the petition exactly as written; or b.) Reject it, send it out to the voters; or c.) Reject it and send it out to the voters with a competing measure, which we write. Now we do the latter two things all the time. We do option b.) quite often; we did it earlier this year. We have done the first only five times. Once thus passed, the bill can be parked and amended, as you can see eventually from the flyer that you will receive, we have always done in the past.

Now I say that jobs, youth, and debt, all combined, could be a remarkable chemical combination that results in a creative explosion if we are wise about the mix. Trading time for debt and for youth and for a commitment to Maine, and for those who choose to make their life here, I think, is a powerful chemical equation and a great commitment. Maine's high school population, you know, is predicted to diminish by over 20 percent, from the years 2008, to the years 2018. It is a sad thing that does reflect the aging of our state. Keeping the best of the young, who graduate from a Maine school, here, though their numbers are diminishing; keeping the best of their talent, here, in the years when it will do the state and themselves the most good to put down roots; and getting rid of their debt, here, in the best way that we can imagine, presents an opportunity no other state has done, because no other state is as active in this front and in this field, as is the State of Maine, or has acted, I think, often as wisely through citizen initiated petitions, as has the State of Maine.

Men and Women of the House, on several fronts you will be pleased to know that my written text runs out at this point, because the actions of the morning, but the future does not. Every single one of us knows somebody who came home from World War II, and using the GI Bill, built a life, built the house that you grew up in, built the career that made your college opportunities possible. They are our parents, our grandparents, our aunts, and our uncles; they completely changed the face of the State of Maine, the face of the United States. No nation has

ever done what we did with the GI Bill. No state has an opportunity in front of it like we do with Opportunity Maine, and the risk and the opportunity is just as great, whether we are speaking of the generation that fought the Second World War, or the generation that is going to take us into the 21st Century; and more to the point for some of you, the generation that is going to be deciding what home your are going to go into, in not too many years.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, this opportunity to make history today, to invest in a generation that stands in the hallway today, will be sitting in our seats in no small number of years, is an unparallel chance. So I encourage you to take that opportunity presented, pass it outright in to law, pick up the challenge, the debt, the youth, and the opportunity, and truly make, for the 21st Century, everything that this could represent. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Orono, Representative Cain.

Representative **CAIN**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. More then a year ago, I got a call from a friend, from a student member of the University of Maine System Board of Trustees, and she asked me if I would attend a meeting with a bipartisan group of students who had an idea. She asked me to come with an open mind, and to come with some thoughts on how they might be able to push an idea forward and bring it to the State of Maine. So I went to that meeting, and at that meeting I was asked if I could support a proposal to raise a penny on the sales tax, to create a loan repayment program for college students who graduated in Maine; they called it a Penny for Me.

We had a good meeting that day: We talked about the importance of coalition building; they had a vision and a plan for how they wanted to collect signatures, how they wanted to run a campaign; we talked about the importance of a simple message, about a message people could relate to; but we kept coming back to the idea of coalition building. We talked about how the only way this could pass is if others believed it was a good idea and would also help, because it is a lot of signatures to collect, and then I did not hear from them for a little while. But when I did, they had gone out seeking coalition members, and what they found was that a penny on the sales tax was not everybody's favorite idea; but that did not stop them.

They came back with a better idea, with a bipartisan idea, an idea that engaged college students, of college Democrats or college Republicans, all flavors of college students, Mr. Speaker; they engaged progressive groups, more conservative groups, because the message was right, they had gotten it right, which is: This is something that we can do for the future, this is something we can do that sends the right message.

Then they got to work, and then they started calling me more, because a large number of their volunteers lived in my district, and I will be honest, it was hard to find campaign volunteers for my own campaign because of Opportunity Maine this past fall; but I did not mind, because the message is right, and the signal is right. The message says that we want you to choose to stay here. The problem they are trying to solve, Mr. Speaker, is that people really do want to live in Maine, particularly young people, like me, like many of you in this Chamber. But, they say, Mr. Speaker, "I can get a job in Maine; I can get the same job in Massachusetts. But in Maine, my salary is a little bit lower, but the debt I have from college is the same."

There is no state average for debt that changes depending on which state you move to. That debt number, whether you live in Maine or Massachusetts, Vermont, California or Florida, pick your favorite state; of course, all of ours is Maine; that debt level does

not adjust to what the average income is in those states. They thought here is a place we can make a difference, here is how we can take the edge off. We want people to come to Maine and stay in Maine, who have done their college work, who have the debt, and we want to make sure we can support them when they come here, and that is how they came back after going back to the drawing board from a Penny for Me, to Opportunity Maine, and to the bill before you that is here today. I joined them in the Hall of Flags when they collected the signatures, it was an exciting moment.

I think this bill, if we can pass it today, especially, I think we should pass it today, does send the right message. It says we know this does not solve the problem; this is not a silver bullet, but it takes the edge off for future generations. It is not retroactive; no one is asking for anything, we are just asking to send the right message going forward to future students, to future graduates to say, yes, we want to help you to stay here, this is something we can do to help take that edge off and to help give you a little bit more opportunity in Maine. I urge you all to support the pending motion, and I look forward to pressing my green button. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Kittery, Representative Wheeler.

Representative **WHEELER**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I am Representative Walter Wheeler, and I am a proud Navy veteran of Normandy and World War II. When my generation came back from World War II, we had the GI Bill waiting for us. We used it; I used it. I went to trade school on the GI Bill and it changed my life. It made my career, my family, and my future possible. Now it is a new generation's turn. Let's keep our young people home, let's keep the talent in Maine, let's help them find their future right here in Maine. Investing in young people is better than investing in banks. The payoff is in people, not in percentage points, my generation proved that. Now a new generation steps up to the opportunity. Opportunity Maine is a door for that new generation, and I say let's push that door open. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Livermore Falls, Representative Knight.

Representative **KNIGHT**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I stand before you in support of this initiative. I will be succinct; it is not the pen that is here, but it is a good start. I think you have all received now, an off add I wrote in the *Sun Journal* a week ago, it should be before you, and I point out in that that the weakness in the bill, in my opinion, is it is parochial. That is to say we do not address those students who are educated out of the state, who are from Maine, left the state, who might want to come back; but that would add to the fiscal note.

I think this is a very good beginning, there is no more important resource to us than our young people and our students, and despite some of who might have alleged in the past that I do not support students, I would like to disenfranchise them; quite the contrary: I am here to tell you that I support students. This is a terrific initiative. It went before the Taxation Committee, by a 12-1 vote; the one vote was from a person who basically does not like tax credits and it has nothing to do with the initiative in general. It had great support from the Committee, and I hope that we have great support in this House. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Waterboro, Representative Jacobsen.

Representative **JACOBSEN**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I think this is a wonderful bill, I think the idea behind it is great, but when I look at the figures on students entering colleges from the high schools in

Maine, it is very low; I believe it is among the lowest in the Northeast.

My concern is in a time of tight money, that if we have money to spend, we should spend it on getting more students through the front door of the colleges, and getting them into college, because once they are there, there is a very good chance they will stay there and graduate, whether it is a two-year program or four-year program. But we need to encourage more marginal students that are undecided, to get into college. I will say again: If we have any money to spend or put out there, put it out there to encourage these children to get through the front door and get started on their education; when they graduate, they should be making more than the average graduate of high school. That is my theory on this. Let's get them in the front door.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Eddington, Representative Pratt.

Representative **PRATT**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. I do rise today in support of the pending motion and do wish to speak, as we all like to speak, briefly on it. I also would, first off, certainly recognize the good efforts of the Taxation Committee, and my good friend and colleague from Livermore Falls, Representative Knight, who has been a staunch supporter of this since it came to the Taxation Committee, and I personally want to thank him for his support of college students here in this House.

It is very hard, obviously, to follow the good Representative from Portland, Representative Adams, because he says it certainly better than most of us ever could, but I would like to reiterate just a couple of points that I feel need to be hammered home, and that is we do have an opportunity right here, today, to do something significant, something really significant, something that affects a lot of people in a good way. I believe that this bill is going to do nothing but help encourage getting more students through the front door.

One of the biggest obstacles, one of the biggest hurdles students have here in the State of Maine is our monetary hurdles, as tuition rates continue to go up, as the cost of going to college increases, more people are turned away solely based on the monetary issue. Anything we can do to help alleviate that is something, I feel, this House should be in support of. This is truly an investment, an investment in the future, an investment in our young people, and, I believe, sends a message to the folks, to our students in the State of Maine, that we believe in them and we want them to pursue higher education and bring higher incomes and higher tax bases and the revenues back to this state, because we are losing them, and we are losing some of our good folks. I am very lucky, I am very privileged, to be able to be back here in the State of Maine, and I would like to see that continue for as many students as possible. I thank you for your time, and I urge you, please, please, support the pending motion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Berwick, Representative Burns.

Representative **BURNS**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. This is a bill that has the support of many Chambers of Commerce throughout the state and from Labor. Labor and the Chambers have come together in support of this bill; I encourage you to do so. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Yarmouth, Representative Woodbury.

Representative **WOODBURY**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. I am not one who is generally inclined to support new tax deductions and credits that complicate the tax code; this one, however, is different.

The dream and vision by this bill, and it is a dream, addresses two of our more elusive economic changes in Maine: First, raising the educational attainment and skills of our workforce, a critical prerequisite of increasing incomes in Maine; second, keeping young people in Maine, who are often drawn for economic reasons to other places, even when they want to stay in Maine. Opportunity Maine faces both of these challenges head on in a very creative way. I urge your support. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Wells, Representative Chase.

Representative **CHASE**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I also want to rise in support of LD 1856. It was a great opportunity for us in Taxation to listen to these people come forward, these young people, and I am greatly encouraged. As a small business owner in Maine, I think it is a wonderful opportunity for those of us who do have small businesses, to do our share in keeping some of the Maine people here in Maine. I urge you to support this bill. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Portland, Representative Harlow.

Representative **HARLOW**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. We have tax credits for everything. Why not, what we say we value the most in our society, youth, and education?

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Enactment. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

#### ROLL CALL NO. 174

YEA - Adams, Annis, Austin, Ayotte, Babbidge, Barstow, Beaudette, Beaudoin, Beaulieu, Berry, Berube, Blanchard, Blanchette, Bliss, Boland, Brautigam, Browne W, Bryant, Burns, Cain, Campbell, Canavan, Carter, Casavant, Cebra, Chase, Clark, Cleary, Connor, Conover, Cotta, Craven, Cray, Cressey, Crockett, Crosthwaite, Curtis, Dill, Driscoll, Duchesne, Dunn, Duprey, Eaton, Eberle, Edgecomb, Emery, Faircloth, Farrington, Finch, Finley, Fischer, Fisher, Fitts, Fletcher, Flood, Gifford, Giles, Gould, Grose, Hamper, Hanley S, Harlow, Hayes, Hill, Hinck, Hogan, Hotham, Jackson, Jacobsen, Jones, Joy, Kaenrath, Knight, Koffman, Lansley, Lewin, Lundeen, MacDonald, Makas, Marean, Marley, Mazurek, McDonough, McFadden, McKane, McLeod, Miller, Millett, Mills, Miramant, Muse, Nass, Norton, Patrick, Pendleton, Peoples, Percy, Perry, Pieh, Pilon, Pingree, Pinkham, Plummer, Pratt, Prescott, Priest, Rand, Rector, Richardson D, Richardson W, Robinson, Samson, Savage, Saviello, Schatz, Silsby, Simpson, Sirois, Smith N, Strang Burgess, Sutherland, Sykes, Tardy, Theriault, Thibodeau, Thomas, Tibbetts, Treat, Trinward, Tuttle, Valentino, Vaughan, Wagner, Walcott, Walker, Watson, Weaver, Webster, Weddell, Wheeler, Woodbury, Mr. Speaker.

NAY - NONE.

ABSENT - Gerzofsky, Greeley, Haskell, Moore, Pineau, Piotti, Richardson E, Rines, Rosen.

Yes, 142; No, 0; Absent, 9; Excused, 0.

142 having voted in the affirmative and 0 voted in the negative, with 9 being absent, and accordingly the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENACTED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.