

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LEGISLATIVE RECORD

OF THE

***One Hundred and Eleventh
Legislature***

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

Volume I

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

December 1, 1982 to May 13, 1983

Gentlemen of the House: I would like to thank Representative Sproul for moving to reconsider.

The State Government Committee has been corresponding with the Attorney General's Office the last five or six weeks on some particular points with this legislation and we are today, as a committee, still uncertain in regards to the latest interpretation as to how this bill might affect state employees who happen to be paid with federal monies, and it is exactly that question which I am now asking the Attorney General for an official opinion, and until that time, I would hope that somebody would table this bill unassigned, until we can get that ruling.

Whereupon, on motion of Mr. Diamond of Bangor, tabled unassigned pending the motion of Mr. Sproul of Augusta to reconsider whereby the Bill was passed to be enacted.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Portland, Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS: Mr. Speaker, is the House in possession of Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Undedicate the Highway Fund, House Paper 1087, L. D. 1430?

The SPEAKER: The Chair would answer in the affirmative, having been held at the gentleman's request.

The gentleman may proceed.

Mr. HIGGINS: Mr. Speaker, I move that we reconsider our action whereby we adhered to our previous action whereby the Bill was referred to the Committee on Transportation, and I further move that this be tabled for two legislative days.

Whereupon, on motion of Mr. Higgins of Portland, tabled pending his motion to reconsider and specially assigned for Tuesday, April 19.

On motion of Mr. Carter of Winslow, the House reconsidered its action of earlier in the day whereby Bill "An Act to Provide Continued Funding for the Determination of Ground Water Quality in the State's Sand and Gravel Aquifers," H. P. 1113, was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

On motion of the same gentleman, the Bill was referred to the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, ordered printed and sent up for concurrence.

On motion of Mr. Carter of Winslow, the House reconsidered its action of earlier in the day whereby Bill "An Act to Authorize the Department of Environmental Protection to Continue to Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities and other Quasi-municipal Entities Regarding Solid Waste Management," House Paper 1114, was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

On motion of the same gentleman, the Bill was referred to the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, ordered printed and sent up for concurrence.

The Chair laid before the House the following matter:

Bill "An Act to Require Annual Disclosure of Interest in Agricultural Land in Maine" (H. P. 871) (L. D. 1125) (C. "A" H-131) which was tabled and later today assigned pending adoption of Committee Amendment "A".

Mr. Michael of Auburn offered House Amendment "A" to Committee Amendment "A" and moved its adoption.

House Amendment "A" to Committee Amendment "A" (H-136) was read by the Clerk.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Auburn, Mr. Michael.

Mr. MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker and Members of the House: This amendment corrects a mistake in the drafting of the committee amendment.

Thereupon, House Amendment "A" to Committee Amendment "A" was adopted.

Committee Amendment "A" as amended by

House Amendment "A" thereto was adopted.

The Bill was assigned for second reading tomorrow.

Mr. Carter of Winslow moved that House reconsider its action whereby Bill "An Act to Provide for Compensation for Law Enforcement Officers Making Administrative Appearances in the Same Manner as Court Appearances," House Paper 1118, was referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

On motion of the same gentleman, tabled pending his motion to reconsider and tomorrow assigned.

House at Ease

Called to order by the Speaker.

At this point, the Senate entered the Hall of the House and a Joint Convention was formed.

In Convention

The President of the Senate, Gerard P. Conley, in the Chair.

On motion of Senator Pray of Penobscot, it was

ORDERED, that a Committee be appointed to wait upon His Excellency, Governor Joseph E. Brennan, inviting him to attend the Convention and make such communication as pleases him.

The Chairman appointed:

Senators:

NAJARIAN of Cumberland
PEARSON of Penobscot
McBREAIRTY of Aroostook

Representatives:

NELSON of Portland
BRODEUR of Auburn
MANNING of Portland
RICHARD of Madison
CARROLL of Gray
MELENDY of Rockland
PINES of Limestone
WEBSTER of Farmington
MAYBURY of Brewer
SEAVEY of Kennebunkport

Subsequently, Senator Najarian, for the Committee, reported that the Committee had delivered the message with which it was charged, and the Governor was pleased to say that he would forthwith attend the Convention.

At this point, the Honorable Joseph E. Brennan, Governor, entered the Hall amid the applause of the Convention, the audience rising, and addressed the Convention as follows:

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of the 111th Maine Legislature:

In recent years, the quality of medical care in Maine has improved dramatically.

Well-trained health professionals are delivering more and better care to Maine people than ever before, and all of us have a right to be proud of this accomplishment.

But at the same time, the cost of this care has grown so fast that it has become a grave financial crisis for our state and the nation.

In this state alone, the cost of hospital services has grown from \$149 million in 1974 to an expected \$550 million this year. In other words, it went up by more than 250 percent at a time when the Consumer Price Index increased at the considerably slower rate of 98 percent, and government pays half of that bill.

The increase this year alone is expected to be more than \$60 million.

For that same \$60 million increase, you could pay for the entire state's share of the cost of the University of Maine.

The fault for these staggering increases does not lie solely with Maine hospitals.

The problem is the payment system that was created in part by government — and that has continued to be tolerated by government.

It is a system without restraints, a system without incentives.

I can think of no comparable situation where expenses to the taxpayer are allowed to increase by millions and millions of dollars each and every year with no real oversight by government and no real public accountability.

We have only two choices. We can continue to give our medical institutions a blank check, or we can enact a system of restraint.

As each of you knows, I have already decided which course I believe State government must choose, but the final decision belongs not to me, but to you, the men and women of this Legislature.

L. D. 1353 will have its public hearing two weeks from today. And yet already it has been the subject of emotional rhetoric, heavy lobbying and contradictory claims.

An important public service industry sees itself under attack. Dedicated healers are being told — inaccurately — that their ability to apply their skills for the benefit of their fellow man will be compromised. And concerned public spirited citizens serving on hospital boards are being warned — inaccurately — that State government wants to take away their ability to make decisions affecting their communities.

It is unfortunate that Maine hospitals feel that they have been singled out for attack, for that simply is not the case.

Our hospitals have earned, and well deserve, the high degree of trust and confidence which they now enjoy.

They have dramatically improved the quality of medical care available to Maine people.

They are staffed and administered by dedicated, caring professionals.

Many of us have members of our families and close relatives who have dedicated their working lives to taking care of the sick.

Most of us know people whose lives have been saved, or whose health has been restored, because of the outstanding care that is available in Maine hospitals. And none of us wants to dilute—in any way—the ability of our hospitals to deliver quality care to our people.

As Governor of Maine, I want to see our hospital standards continue to improve.

As legislators, each of you, I am sure, wants to do the same.

Together, we are committed to supporting the best possible hospitals for our state. But that does not mean we can continue to say our hospitals: "Your work is important, you are doing a good job. Spend as much as you want, and the taxpayers will foot half the bill, no matter how high it goes."

That policy must end.

The day of the blank check, where we just let the hospitals fill in the numbers, must come to a close.

For the first time ever, we propose to give hospitals some cost controls.

We now have a system that rewards unnecessary spending.

We propose instead a system that would reward efficiency.

This is how we propose to do it.

A health care finance commission will be charged with three major responsibilities. First, to contain the growth of costs. Second, to set hospital revenues at responsible levels, levels that will meet the reasonable financial requirements of all Maine hospitals. And third, to promote equity among all those who pay hospital bills.

In the weeks ahead, you will hear the arguments that are being raised against this plan.

Today, I would like to address each of these objections.

You will hear that government has no business telling hospitals what their revenues should be.

Imagine for a moment how you would react if the schools, fire departments, and police departments simply announced one day: "Our services are essential, and you have no business telling us how much we can spend."