

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LEGISLATIVE RECORD

OF THE

*One Hundred and Sixth
Legislature*

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

Volume III

June 6, 1973 to July 3, 1973

Index

KENNEBEC JOURNAL
AUGUSTA, MAINE

Passed to Be Engrossed

Bill "An Act Appropriating Funds for Sheltered Group Care Home for Girls" (S. P. 595) (L. D. 1878).

Bill "An Act Providing Minimum Retirement Benefits for Certain Teachers" (S. P. 353) (L. D. 1049) (C. "A" S-194).

Bill "An Act Appropriating Additional Funds to Various Departments for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1973" (H. P. 1603) (L. D. 2034).

Were reported by the Committee on Bills in the Second Reading, read the second time, passed to be engrossed and sent to the Senate.

Bill "An Act Changing the Dates for Registration of Automobiles" (H. P. 1537) (L. D. 2023)

Was reported by the Committee on Bills in the Second Reading and read the second time.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Poland, Mr. Dunn.

Mr. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: I signed the "ought not to pass" on this bill. It is quite a complicated bill. I know my good friend Mr. Stillings has worked hard on this, but I think there is still some work to be done on it. If you notice, it has quite a price tag on it. Also it requests 16 new employees. After this program is in effect they can do away with six of those employees so they will still have nine extra employees in that division. I am not sure whether it is worth it now. We have more registration offices in the state, and I believe there are nine or ten more that have been referred to a study. It seemed to me maybe this could go along with it if we were going to have this staggered registration. It doesn't seem to me we would need the offices or vice versa.

This is supposed to help the public so they wouldn't all go down on the last day and stand in the cold waiting. Well, whatever the date is, those same people are going to wait until the last minute before they get their registration.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Lewiston, Mr. Jacques.

Mr. JACQUES: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: I signed the minority "ought not to pass" report on this particular legislation. The Maine Municipal Association sent a representative opposing that bill in its present form. But I imagine there were some amendments presented. I don't see it here. But ladies and gentlemen of the House, this thing would upset a lot of these towns budgets and municipal budgets. And you would be walking to pay your excise tax and you would be paying for 12 months, and some of these people would be getting a nine month registration instead. This is just for the first year.

But I felt that an eight cent stamp could take care of your registration if you wanted to have it on time or just send it in. We have refused a lot of these registration boards all over the state. As a matter of fact, we have I think six or seven new automobile registrations that needed registration bureaus, but we refused them because of money involved.

Now this would involve a lot of these town budgets. Their money wouldn't be coming in at the time expected to be coming in. They would have to borrow money, and this is the same thing for the municipalities, that they would be involved in a lot of money transactions that they thought they would be getting but they wouldn't be getting at the time that they were supposed to get.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to hear some of the members of the committee on this particular bill, because I think it would upset a lot of these town budgets.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Perham, Mr. Bragdon.

Mr. BRAGDON: Mr. Speaker and Members of the House: I just happened to glance at this bill, and I note that in the Statement of Fact it says that it will create a million dollars more revenue in the second year of the biennium. I would like somebody that is familiar with the bill to explain how this comes about. I assume it is the same registration.

I also note that the considerable cost added, a matter of around \$300,000, which I assume is because of added registration offices. It seems to me this is somewhat expensive for the extra services that this bill provides.

The SPEAKER: The gentleman from Perham, Mr. Bragdon, poses a question through the Chair to anyone who may answer if he wishes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mexico, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. FRASER: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: This extra million dollars is money that would be received almost as advance payment just for the first year only, because in order to get these dates staggered through the year, some people would have to pay a year and one month and others a year and 11 months in order to get the same on the month that they were to be paying after that. So that million dollars is what we call a one shot deal; it wouldn't happen again.

I signed this "ought to pass" because I think it would level off the workload throughout the year. The same bill came before us last session and the big objection was the collection of the excise tax. We were told by the Maine Municipal Association and some town clerks were at our meeting, and they said the problem could be adjusted and if they could adjust the collection of the excise tax, I don't see any problem.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Perham Mr. Bragdon.

Mr. BRAGDON: Mr. Speaker and Members of the House: Just to comment briefly. From the explanation, I don't know as anyone can tell who is going to fall in that year that has to pay two years' registration. I am just assuming that it is going to be a certain number of people that are going to be extremely unhappy because they do have to pay a year in advance.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Union, Mrs. McCormick.

Mrs. McCORMICK: Mr. Speaker and Members of the House: I would like to answer Mr. Bragdon's

question here. This does not take effect, I believe, until the 1975 registration. You will have new license plates next year and this is staggered not only by the last letter on your license plate or the last number on your license plate. In 1974, I believe when the registrations are made there will be notices so that you can look across and find exactly when your next month is going to be. There is also, all town clerks and people that collect excise taxes will have a chart there and they can tell you what this is going to amount to. My only suggestion is that if you plan to buy a new car, you had better wait until after your registration on the staggered system.

I personally am in favor of this. Nobody likes change for change alone. But I think this would help the situation as far as registrations go.

As far as the added employees, which Mr. Bragdon also mentioned here, these are keypunch operators in order to get this through the computer system and onto a staggered registration.

There are also seasonal employees which the department has at the present time which they put into effect from January through March to get out the present registration form. Once the staggered system is in effect, these 12 people will not be needed as seasonal help. The 16 will not stay permanently, because once the system goes into effect, as people get to the retirement age, they will not be replaced by someone else in the slot they are in now, these people will be moved down. So it will take two or three years to get them back to where they are originally, but these are key people, you can't take people that are presently in the department and put them into keypunch operation.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Fryeburg, Mr. Trumbull.

Mr. TRUMBULL: Mr. Speaker and Members of the House: To begin with, this \$1 million they are talking about is nothing but swapping one dollar from one

pocket to the other in reality. In the long run, you are not increasing the revenue any with this type legislation.

What bothers me more than anything else about this legislation is the fact that I don't think the people in the long run are going to know when they can register their cars, when they are supposed to and so forth. I think that you will be about like you are with your inspection sticker right now, by this stagger system. It used to be in October and then we went and changed it so that I don't know how many of you have run into this situation before, but I suddenly gazed upon my windshield and I find out that I am either right at the very end or have just passed over or something else, and this is the curse of this staggered system, that nobody ever remembers when something is supposed to be done.

I think we are doing a very great disservice to the people of the State of Maine if we pass this bill and get them involved in something that is more confusing. Based upon this, I now move that this bill and all its accompanying papers be indefinitely postponed.

The SPEAKER: The gentleman from Fryburg, Mr. Trumbull, moves the indefinite postponement of L. D. 2023 and all accompanying papers.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ellsworth, Mr. McNally.

Mr. McNALLY: Mr. Speaker and Members of the House: I suppose all bills we have come in here have some good points about them and all of them have some bad ones. Now, in this particular case, what runs always in the back of my head is when you take on 15 or 16 new people, there is always a reason when the end comes that they tell you it is going to be the end, it never is. They have some reason so that they can continue. So you might as well say if that is what they have got to start with, that is what they are going to keep on going with. That was the first thing.

Now, the next thing in my mind, when it comes down to the bottom fellow that is going to buy a license

for a year and 11 months, and that is what he is going to do, he might not be financially flush right at that time. The dollar might be devalued a whole lot more than it is right now by the time that happens.

Then, there was quite a lot of discussion went on from the Maine Municipal Association about how they ought to have a pilot project, that they ought to try some municipality, pick out some municipality and let them try doing the whole thing, selling the excise taxes and also the licenses in the different municipalities. The talk was pretty good and sounded all right. Then they came out and they made the remark that you would have to have a special table set up in order for the different municipalities, if this bill is passed, to know what they are going to charge for an excise tax. When they start in the first year they know what this is. But if it is 11 months, 12 months and so on, 13 months, and 14 months and so on up to a year and 11 months, then they have to have a different excise tax, and are they going to have two years, for instance, or are they going to have one year and 11 months excise charge, or what is it going to be?

In other words, this is something that came in the latter part of the session, maybe on purpose in hopes that folks wouldn't have a chance to know too much about it and it would slide by easily. So due to the fact that there is going to be an investigation, there is going to be considered some of the things, I hope, that we have talked about, in the Transportation Department going along with the Motor Vehicle Division, and I had hoped that perhaps there could be a little bit more investigation than two days in the committee. And not having anybody tell you exactly how much it is going to cost to even make the tables out to go to the different municipalities as to what they are going to charge for a tax, that is all the reasons why I think it hadn't ought to pass at this present time.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Lewiston, Mr. Cote.

Mr. COTE: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: It just so happens that I was chairman of a subcommittee of the Research Committee which studied this bill and also studied the anti-theft act that we have here this morning.

We in the committee did not make a recommendation at this time for the passage of this bill, but in talking with Mr. Wyman who felt that this was very much required and so did the state police, we did not make a recommendation, as I said, but I told him at that time that I would support such a bill, because I feel that there is a demand by the public for this type of bill.

Other states have gone into this type of legislation, and we have heard no repercussions from other states about it except, naturally, in the first year, when the transition period comes, that it will take a little bit of adjustment.

Now, we talked about the excise tax here this morning. It just so happens again that I have an order in for the study of the excise tax structure, and I feel that we have some good recommendations to make to the research committee when this comes about as far as the excise tax structure is concerned, and it will be good again for the people of the State of Maine.

Now, as far as the million dollars that was mentioned, it is true because of the transition it will bring in a million dollars for the first time around.

Now, as far as the employees are concerned, I think Mrs. McCormick covered that very very well. I feel that there is a demand for this in the public. I have spoken to quite a few people about it in my home town. I have gone around to different organizations, and I have talked about this, and there seems to be a demand for staggered automobile registration to keep them out of the cold at the last minute like we do in the months of February and March before they get their plates with long lines of people waiting.

Now, there is no question in my mind it is going to take a little readjustment, but as far as study-

ing this bill is concerned, it just was studied by the Research Committee this last session; and as I said, we made no recommendation on this bill, but I personally feel that this is a good bill, and I am going to support it.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Perham, Mr. Bragdon.

Mr. BRAGDON: Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, in regard to the comments of the gentleman from Lewiston, I might say that the individual state-wide could correct the matter of long lines standing in the cold if they anticipated a week or so ahead that the deadline was coming. I don't think this would cost anybody any money.

In light of the debate and the explanations that I have heard here this morning with regard to this bill and in light of the fact that I have not been aware that there was any great problems with our present method of handling this, I heartily concur with the indefinite postponement of this bill at this time, and let's defer this added expense another two years at least.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Belfast, Mr. Webber.

Mr. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: I signed this bill "ought to pass". We had quite a study of it in the Transportation Committee, and I call it a good bill. I oppose the indefinite postponement motion.

I would like to answer Mr. Trumbull and say if he recalls in his operator's license, he gets a notice from the Secretary of State before it expires. You are going to get the same notice on your registration.

Now, if we don't pass this bill, you will see in the next legislature or the legislature after they will come out with more registration offices here and there and everything. In the end, it will cost us more money, and Mr. Wyman has assured us after this thing is all set up that, as Mrs. McCormick says, the help will drop down, and we will have a better operating procedure.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Enfield, Mr. Dudley.

Mr. DUDLEY: Mr. Speaker, Members of the House: I think this would be a good bill, but I am forced to vote to indefinitely postpone it for these reasons: It employs about six more people, and I am against hiring more people anywhere in state government at the present time.

Now, let me tell you the story they will probably try to tell you. They have told it before, and for 20 years I have been around here, and I have heard this on numerous occasions. This is just temporary, these six people, until we get this thing working. But nobody was ever laid off in the 20 years I have been here once they were hired. They would find another job for them, nothing more than sweeping the floor or sharpening pencils, but they never lay them off.

If I could have some assurance that this would happen once in 20 years that they would get this working and lay these six people off, I might buy the bill. But I am not so naive as to believe that they are going to, so I hope that the motion to indefinitely postpone for that reason does prevail, because I know it will never come to pass. Once you hire people on the state payroll, they are there for a lifetime, and it goes on and on forever, and as soon as they are there for a little while, they find they need assistants and assistants to the assistant, and this is the way it goes. This is how we have had it in the years I have been here, build this monstrosity next door and buy one across the street, and I see that later on we will build some more buildings.

So this is how it goes. It is like a creeping cancer. It grows so fast that it gets beyond control, six men and a dozen somewhere else temporary. But the temporary in the past 20 years, I have never known one case where there was ever anyone laid off.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Berwick, Mr. Stillings.

Mr. STILLINGS: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: The question that Mr. Dudley raised has already been answered, I believe, by Mrs. McCormick, but I would just like to repeat that in the first year there will be 16 employees added to the department but 7 of those will be seasonal. They won't be employed for the full year. The second year the number of employees will be reduced to nine or possibly six but it is nine in the L. D.

In the second year, there will also be, as has been pointed out, the elimination of 12 seasonal employees that must be employed now during the rush period.

The third year of the staggered system, there will be no employees. So there will be a reduction in the number of employees, and it will be caused by the automation of registrations, which is essentially what this bill is all about.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Farmington, Mr. Morton.

Mr. MORTON: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: You have heard the gentleman from Enfield point out that this was probably a pretty good bill, and he raised an objection which I think was a legitimate one, but I think that objection has now been answered pretty well and accurately by the gentleman from Berwick.

Now, most births are accompanied by some travail, and this is always true, but when you are going to get something better, it is time to make a move. It applies only to passenger cars, this bill does, and these passenger cars make up the bulk of the yearly registrations. A big volume of business is going to be handled in an automated way if you pass this legislation. Why should we stay in the horse and buggy days when we have modern equipment with which to work?

The present system adversely affects business and commerce in that people tend to delay trading their automobiles at the approach of the end of the year or the

September half-year half-fee half-price break comes up. This bill will certainly smooth out the transition that people are having to use in their registrations.

Now, I say people are ready for it and are familiar with the staggered licensing procedure, and they like it. Now, this is good, modern legislation, and I urge you to vote against the motion to indefinitely postpone and support us.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mexico, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. FRASER: Mr. Speaker, Members of the House: In answer to the remark made by my good friend, Mr. Dudley, regarding once a person is hired, he is never fired. Of course, it was brought up in the hearing, too, and Mr. Wyman says that is no great problem, because they already have about a 30 per cent turnover. So once a person is hired, there is always room for him someplace.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from East Corinth, Mr. Strout.

MR. STROUT: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: I just want to bring out a point that the gentleman from Lewiston, Mr. Jacques brought up. On some occasions I think he missed the executive meetings. This is a redraft of L. D. 606, and I would like to inform him that the Maine Municipal Association now is in favor of this bill.

The big problem they had was on the excise payments that were going to cause problems to the various towns on the staggered payments; that the towns were going to lose money from some of these excise payments, people might move away.

Now, in this redraft on page 3, this has been taken care of. Your staggered excise payments are going to be handled the same way as your staggered registrations.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentledady from Madison, Mrs. Berry.

Mrs. BERRY: Mr. Speaker, Members of the House: I think something ought to be corrected that has been said, and that was that this was pushed through at

the last minute. Now, this is not so. We have had this bill for a long time. We have had people in three and perhaps four different times to talk to us. Perhaps the redraft in which the clerks, town clerks and the Maine Municipal finally got things straightened out was along the last session, and I might say we have had a great joke about it in our committee. Probably Mr. McNally was in Labor some of those times when we were — he had that for an excuse many times. He is a member of the Labor Committee.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Chelsea, Mr. Shaw.

Mr. SHAW: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: Since I have been here, we have extended the deadline twice I think it is for people to register their vehicles. The main reason was the weather was so bad, they just couldn't get in, and we didn't want them all taken into court for not having their vehicles registered. So I went to the Secretary of State to change the deadline to June or some reasonable time when people would be able to get in and out of the registration bureau, and he told me they were studying this particular bill, and it would be coming in shortly. I think this makes quite a lot of sense.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oakland, Mr. Brawn.

Mr. BRAWN: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: I have just heard one statement here that isn't quite right. This is on staggering licenses. We have just been told that everyone gets a notification when their license expires. I wish they would check the name of Brawn down there. There is a birthday coming right up, and they sure haven't got theirs yet, and I don't know when they are going to get it.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Fryeburg, Mr. Trumbull.

Mr. TRUMBULL: Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: I just want to remind you once more, you are talking in terms of no additional revenue for

the state but at a cost of over \$300,000 if you vote this in.

Also, it has been brought up that you are going to get this notice every year. That is an additional cost.

Also, at the same time, another thing is that a man who owns a pickup truck would have to be registered under the old system where he registered his car under the new system, and that makes it much more complicated again.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Waterville, Mr. Carey.

Mr. CAREY: Mr. Speaker, I have gone through the bill, but I am having a slight problem trying to figure out what we would end up paying for plates on the annual rate once this thing is in, and I would like to have someone try to explain to me first of all, what are we paying now for plates and what would we be paying if there is, in fact, an increase?

Also, there seems to be shown here that the additional revenues in the second year of the biennium would be \$1 million, but I would also assume that in the first year of the next biennium, there would be almost a like reduction.

The SPEAKER: The gentleman from Waterville, Mr. Carey, poses two questions through the Chair to anyone who may answer if he or she wishes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Berwick, Mr. Stillings.

Mr. STILLINGS: Mr. Speaker and Ladies and Gentlemen of the House: In answer to the gentleman's question, cost of registration would not change, it would remain the same. If you look at page 3 of the L. D., which is 2023, it will show you the month in which you would register based on the last digit or the last letter on your plate and the amount that you would pay on a pro rata basis for registration.

With regard to the million dollars, it is quite correct. No one has ever claimed this bill brought in an additional million dollars. It does not. It simply moves a million dollars from one year of the biennium to another year of the bien-

nium. It is a one-time occurrence, as is registration.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Bridgewater Mr. Finemore.

Mr. FINEMORE: Mr. Speaker, Members of the House: I wonder if the people in the House have read this bill? This isn't the only change in this bill. There are a lot of other changes. There is one change on here that changes the half registration fee on some vehicles. It changes it from September to November, extended to February.

There are several changes in this bill, and it says — there are some changes in the expiration of this bill. I would say the whole bill is treacherous. I hope some of you read it before you vote.

The SPEAKER: The pending question is on the motion of the gentleman from Fryeburg, Mr. Trumbull that L. D. 2023 be indefinitely postponed. All in favor of that motion will vote yes; those opposed will vote no.

33 having voted in the affirmative and 77 having voted in the negative, the motion did not prevail.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Lewiston, Mr. Jacques.

Mr. JACQUES: Mr. Speaker, Members of the House: I have a question here on the new draft on 2023. It says reported by Mr. Stillings from the Committee on Transportation. I didn't know that Mr. Stillings was a member of the Transportation Committee.

Thereupon, the Bill was passed to be engrossed and sent to the Senate.

Bill, "An Act Relating to the Cost of Operation of and Venue in the Superior Courts" (S. P. 603) (L. D. 1897) (C. "A" S-219).

Was reported by the Committee on Bills in the Second Reading, read the second time, passed to be engrossed as amended and sent to the Senate.

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