31 March 2017

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 213 “An Act To Provide Funds for Access for Veterans Seeking Health Care.”

For many years Maine has not been compliant with the federal REAL ID Act. Because of this, Mainers, including many veterans, are being denied access to federal healthcare facilities because Maine state identification does not meet federal REAL ID standards.

However, veterans are not the only Mainers who are being denied entrance to federal installations. Business owners are reporting that their truck drivers cannot deliver goods to military installations. There are also reports of first responders unable to attend training at secure federal buildings. Of course, if Maine does not become REAL ID compliant, then Mainers will not be able to use their state identification to board domestic commercial flights.

Unfortunately, this bill only fixes a small portion of the problems presented if Maine does not become REAL ID compliant. The bill proposes a program that will be very difficult for the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management to administer using existing resources. Though I agree with the sentiment to help veterans seeking medical care, we cannot forget all the other groups that have experienced problems due to REAL ID.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to not provide case-by-case carve-outs for groups being effected by REAL ID. Rather, my advice to the Legislature is to speedily pass LD 306, "An Act To Require State Compliance with Federal REAL ID Guidelines", which would help all Mainers adversely affected by REAL ID.

While there appear to be reasonable arguments on both sides of the REAL ID debate, due to the federal insistence on enforcing its harsh terms and a complete lack of interest—or perhaps will—in Congress to amend or repeal the REAL ID Act, I believe we, as elected state officials, must unite in going forward with implementation.
Because this bill proposes only a limited fix to a much larger, much more complex issue, I cannot support it. For this reason, I return LD 213 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul R. LePage
Governor