14 April 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 172 “An Act to Improve Officer Safety at Roadside Incidents.”

This bill would allow police to use red emergency lights on their vehicles. The bill specifies that 50 percent of the emergency lights on police vehicles may be red. My objections to this bill are many. First, and most importantly, we need to have uniformity when it comes to emergency lighting. It would be bad policy to have such a multitude of different colored lights on emergency vehicles that motorists are not able to identify one type of emergency vehicle from another.

Second, different colored emergency lights are treated differently by motorists. Since becoming Governor, I have had the privilege of being driven around the State by my Executive Protection Unit. Because I do not have to concentrate on driving, I have been able to watch the driving habits of my fellow citizens. In my travels, I have noticed motorists pull over much less frequently for red lights than they do for blue lights.

And the third flaw with this bill is that it allows red lights, but does not mandate them. Because of this, some departments would likely allow red lights and some would not. This patchwork approach would lead to confusion. Finally, if we were to mandate the use of red lights by police, then the Legislature should fund this local mandate.

Because LD 172 fails to take into account these important public safety hazards, I cannot support it. For this reason, I return LD 172 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage
Governor