13 June 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 1306, “An Act to Create the Small Communities Tourism Fund.”

This legislation puts Maine at risk of potentially losing future revenue. The Maine Office of Tourism does an excellent job using our precious tax dollars to market Maine to new, out-of-state visitors. One of the reasons they are successful is because marketing decisions are not specifically prescribed by statute. Instead, those decisions are directed by quality research and hard data. LD 1306 sets the dangerous precedent of mandating a “carve out” for how future funds are dispersed in the Tourism Enterprise Marketing Grant Program. This program exists to help market smaller or more focused tourism projects in communities all across Maine.

If and when the marketing changes and the Tourism Office needs to adjust how to best help communities and groups market events, they will first need to convince the legislature to change state law. This is micromanaging at its worst, and it puts tourism marketing decisions more in the hands of politicians than the experts who know the industry and whose decisions are based on actual data.

There are more than two dozen tourism-related sectors in Maine. Imagine if every sector started asking for what they feel is their piece of the marketing pie. Our ability to effectively market Maine as a four-season tourist destination would be severely hampered, and revenues would plummet. Visititation to Maine has increased annually since the Office of Tourism introduced its new marketing plan in 2012. Let’s leave marketing to the experts and keep politics out of an industry that supports nearly 106,000 jobs and has an $8.9 billion economic impact in Maine.

For these reasons, I return LD 1306 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage
Governor

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