



STATE OF MAINE
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04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

December 14, 2015

Honorable Michael D. Thibodeau
President of the Senate
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Honorable Mark W. Eves
Speaker of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senate President Thibodeau and Speaker Eves:

I am writing to clarify my position and future intentions regarding bonding in 2016. I now have the authority to and will issue \$5 million in Land for Maine's Future bonds, which were ratified in 2012. Authority to issue another \$6.47 million in LMF bonds was allowed to expire in November, due to Legislative inaction.

My position all along has been that if rich Mainers, wealthy landowners and well-funded conservation organizations are going to benefit from selling their often over-valued properties to the taxpayer-funded LMF program, then senior citizens and other low-income Mainers should get a commensurate benefit. Politicians pay lip service about helping the poor, but this whole issue demonstrates yet again that when forced to choose, legislators will give into environmental special interests to the detriment of Maine's poor every time. I have proposed a reasonable initiative that could truly assist poor and low-income Mainers, but you still prefer to engage in petty politics.

While heating fuel prices may have fallen, our lowest-income households continue to struggle, and prices will surely go up again. You are content to watch seniors and other poor Mainers freezing in their homes while you cater to special interests so the rich can enjoy walking trails and scenic views funded by the taxes of the very people you refused to help.

Under your leadership, the Legislature has failed to provide even a modest amount of funding for low-income Mainers to upgrade to more affordable and efficient heating systems. You may not know what it's like to be cold in the winter, but I do. It's a feeling you never forget. Since the Legislature under your leadership has repeatedly turned its back on our Mainers in need, the Executive Branch will find a way to help them.



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In addition, the Legislature has failed to heed our repeated warnings about the impending infestation by the spruce budworm, which could devastate our northern forests. The Legislature has chosen to forget the devastation of the last infestation in the 1970s and '80s, but I haven't. I was there, and I saw how it ravaged the industry. The insect ruined nearly 25 million cords of wood—if that happens again because of your failure to act, the outcome will be disastrous to one of our state's most important assets.

Since politicians in Augusta stubbornly refuse to learn from the past, the Legislature is constantly in reactionary mode, always lurching from crisis to crisis, instead of creating solutions to easily foreseen calamities. Legislators would rather play the political angles of a hot-button issue than do what's right for our state and the Maine people. As politicians are so fond of saying, never let a serious crisis go to waste.

Ironically, while the Legislature under your leadership eagerly lobbies to take large tracts of land off the tax rolls, you are willing to ignore the destruction of the Northern forest—a beautiful and vitally important natural resource. Since it is more politically expedient for you to preserve scenic views for wealthy Mainers than to protect our forests and harvest valuable timber before it is decimated, the Executive Branch will take action to find a way to do it.

Finally, it is my duty to protect all Mainers, especially low-income earners and those on fixed incomes, from an onerous tax burden. Politicians in the Legislature constantly carp about rising property taxes in their communities, but they are part of the problem. They are giddy to approve bonds that raise taxes on the Maine people and prevent tax-generating activity on millions of acres. When all of this land is taken off the tax rolls, the Maine people get hit twice: their local property taxes increase to make up for the lost value of the land, and they must pay higher state taxes to pay for the debt on these bonds.

All of this combines to increase the overall tax burden on the Mainers who can least afford it: middle-class families, the working poor, senior citizens and others on fixed incomes.

Make no mistake; I respect the will of the people. They elected me twice to bring fiscal responsibility and common-sense reform to state government, which includes managing our state's debt and rooting out greedy politicians. Be assured, I will continue working to defend the Maine taxpayer and find ways to assist our neighbors in need.

Sincerely,


Paul R. LePage
Governor