

From: Governor

Sent: Tuesday, August 02, 2016 4:11 PM

Subject: Memo from Governor Paul LePage for All State Employees

Dear State Employees,

Recently, the print media and the union bosses at the Maine State Employees Association would have you believe that in the next biennial budget I will be sending pink slips to thousands of state employees, all in an effort to lower the income tax rate to 5.75 percent. They are simply wrong. I want to be perfectly clear: the overall goal of our next budget is to create a more affordable and efficient government that is accountable to the taxpayer and controls spending and reduces taxes.

Here are the facts: the Maine Legislature authorized money for more than 13,000 state positions in the last budget. The state fills between 11,000 to 12,000 of those positions. Many positions are “limited-period”, meaning they have an end date associated with their funding source. I have instructed our commissioners to assess all positions based on the value of the program or service they provide to Mainers. The lowest-valued programs and services may result in a non-renewal of those positions. In previous years and in previous administrations to achieve savings, the State has implemented periodic hiring justification reviews. We have done this again. There are exceptions for certain fields, including law enforcement and health care among other essential positions.

One of the goals of the hiring justification review is to correct an injustice created by the Legislature in the current biennial budget. In a purely political move, the Legislature authorized significant salary increases for employees at the state’s two psychiatric centers. The money for the increases comes directly from the account that provides salary increases to all state employees based on future labor negotiations. Unfortunately, the Legislature’s politically motivated move diminished that account. Implementing a hiring justification review may allow the state time to rebuild the resources needed for that account for our upcoming labor negotiations for employees’ wages and benefits.

Finally, from a broader perspective, a significant number of state employees with critical knowledge in vital positions are eligible to retire in 5 to 10 years.

At the same time, government jobs are changing. We must start now to lay the foundation for the future workforce of state government.

In the long term, Maine's employment strategy will include a smaller, more technologically savvy workforce of people who value portability of benefits and flexibility on work schedules. To move in that direction, the state must place more emphasis on better trained employees with more competitive wages compared to the private sector. To achieve that goal, we must continue to right-size our workforce to meet those challenges.

Once, again, please do not give credit to the media headlines. The goal of our administration is to provide the necessary resources to our workforce so we can continue to efficiently and effectively serve the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul R. LePage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Paul R. LePage
Governor