

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION
4th Legislative Day
Tuesday, January 27, 2026

The House met according to adjournment and was called to order by the Speaker.

Prayer by Pastor Tony Trussoni, Poland Baptist Church.
National Anthem by Waterville Senior High School Chorus.
Pledge of Allegiance.

Medical Provider of the Day, Colin McCabe, MSN, FNP-BC, Camden.

The Journal of Tuesday, January 20, 2026 was read and approved.

Under suspension of the rules, members were allowed to remove their jackets.

The following items were taken up out of order by unanimous consent:

**PETITIONS, BILLS AND RESOLVES REQUIRING
REFERENCE**

Bill "An Act to Replace the Maine Waterway Development and Conservation Act with the Maine Renewable Energy and Associated Transmission Development and Conservation Act" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 1462) (L.D. 2174)

Sponsored by Representative KESSLER of South Portland.
Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Committee on **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System"

(H.P. 1465) (L.D. 2177)

Sponsored by Representative GATTINE of Westbrook.
Submitted by the Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** and ordered printed.

Sent for concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Housing Developments and Accessory Dwelling Units" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 1461) (L.D. 2173)

Sponsored by Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield.

Cosponsored by Senator CURRY of Waldo and Representatives: Speaker FECTEAU of Biddeford, ROBERTS of South Berwick.

Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** suggested and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** and ordered printed.
Sent for concurrence.

Pursuant to Statute

Department of Education, State Board of Education

Representative MURPHY for the **Department of Education, State Board of Education** pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 8072 asks leave to report that the accompanying Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education, State Board of Education (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 1463) (L.D. 2175)

Be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** and printed pursuant to Joint Rule 218.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Resolve was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 218.

Sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Windham, Representative Bagshaw, who wishes to address the House on the record.

Representative **BAGSHAW**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, I just wanted to welcome Adelynn Elway of Windham, the 2026 American Miss National Jr. Teen. I am pleased to recognize her for her efforts in the community as well as the school. She created her own platform called Share a Smile, where she addresses anti-bullying and mental health issues. She shares her story to educate and encourage kindness and create a safe space for everyone. She attends church and enjoys her youth group. I appreciate all her creativity and willingness to share herself with others.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

Change of Committee

Representative SACHS from the Committee on **ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY** on Bill "An Act to Lower Electric Rates for Maine Ratepayers by Requiring the Payment of Certain Costs from the General Fund"

(H.P. 798) (L.D. 1223)

Reporting that it be **REFERRED** to the Committee on **TAXATION**.

The Report was **READ** and **ACCEPTED** and the Bill was **REFERRED** to the Committee on **TAXATION**.

Sent for concurrence.

CONSENT CALENDAR

First Day

In accordance with House Rule 519, the following items appeared on the Consent Calendar for the First Day:

(H.P. 1351) (L.D. 2021) Bill "An Act to Add an Online Option for Reporting of Suspected Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Adults" Committee on **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** reporting **Ought to Pass**

(H.P. 1359) (L.D. 2029) Resolve, to Name the New East Main Street Bridge in Dover-Foxcroft in Honor of Private Willard Merrill and Private Barton Merrill, Jr. Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** reporting **Ought to Pass**

Under suspension of the rules, Second Day Consent Calendar notification was given.

There being no objection, the House Papers were **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED** and sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

At this point, the Chair recognized the Representative from Arundel, Representative PARRY, and he was added to the roll call of the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

SPECIAL SENTIMENT CALENDAR

In accordance with House Rule 519 and Joint Rule 213, the following items:

Recognizing:

Alexa Largay, of Raymond, who was named American Miss National Royalty. We extend our congratulations and best wishes;

(HLS 538)

Presented by Representative OLSEN of Raymond.

Cosponsored by Senator NANGLE of Cumberland.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative OLSEN of Raymond, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Raymond, Representative Olsen.

Representative **OLSEN**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize two remarkable residents of Raymond who are making Maine proud, not just through their professional talents, but through their immense hearts. Twins Alison and Alexa Largay are with us today, and their journey is one of resilience. Born at 34 weeks, they began their lives as NICU warriors. Today, they are returning that gift of life and care tenfold to their community.

Alison Largay currently serves as the American Miss National Pre-Teen. She has turned her title into a mission of literacy and comfort, donating over 60 books to the NICU families through her platform. Whether she is volunteering at the Animal Refuge League or pursuing her dreams of becoming a veterinarian, Alison embodies the spirit of Maine service.

Her sister, Alexa Largay, is a force of nature in the performing arts. From national CVS commercials advocating for women's health, to the hallowed stages of Radio City Music Hall, where she performed at the 100th anniversary of the Rockette Christmas Spectacular, Alexa is a true ambassador for Maine's creative talent.

But what's most impressive, Mr. Speaker, is what these two do together. They haven't forgotten the care they received at birth. Together, they advocate for the Barbara Bush

Children's Hospital, collecting toys and funds for the NICU patients and their families. They are ensuring that even in the most stressful of times, families at Barbara Bush feel the support of their community. In Alison and Alexa, we see the best of our youth; a blend of ambition, creativity and a deep-seated need to give back.

I ask this Body to join me in congratulating them on their many achievements and thanking them for their service to the families of Maine. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House join me in congratulating Alexa Largay on her national title and thanking her for her incredible contributions to the State.

The SPEAKER: The Chair would inform the Member I believe the folks that the Representative just spoke to, as well as the Representative from Windham, are still down in the Other Body. When they come down here, I will recognize them again in the Gallery, so that they're both recognized. So, hopefully, they make it back from the Other Body.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **PASSED** and sent for concurrence.

In Memory of:

Betty I. Johnson, of Lincolnville. Mrs. Johnson had a nursing career before dedicating herself to public service and serving as an elected official at both the town and county levels. Most recently, she was completing her fourth term as a Waldo County Commissioner. She was actively involved with her community throughout her life, contributing her time and energy to many causes close to her heart. Mrs. Johnson will be long remembered and sadly missed by her family, friends and community;

(HLS 535)

Presented by Representative RAY of Lincolnville.

Cosponsored by Senator CURRY of Waldo, Representative DODGE of Belfast, Representative MALON of Biddeford, Representative MOONEN of Portland.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative RAY of Lincolnville, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Lincolnville, Representative Ray.

Representative **RAY**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Colleagues of the House, Betty will indeed be missed in Lincolnville, Waldo County and in the State of Maine.

Betty exemplified the full package, I believe, in public service. It was wrapped warmly and very kindly, in a demeanor that was quiet and humble, persistent and with a very prodigious knowledge of procedure and transparent process. She did this through her decades of elected, appointed and volunteer activity, focusing on making things just a little better for folks in the community at large.

Betty was a mentor and an obliging assistant to many, many people who entered service. Her advice helped make a true impact. There are many folks currently trying to continue her mission that are standing on her shoulders. Personally, I know that a call to Betty with this or that question always came back with some great advice and encouragement. Right now, I see a core of that younger generation stepping up as a result of Betty's kindness.

This Sentiment, by necessity, lists only a fraction of the boards, commissions and elected positions Betty held. In all of these, she kept the values that she represented, summed up in the maxim that local leadership really does matter on the floor, and as a result, I tend to think that Maine's in a better place.

So, Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, I just want to thank Betty Johnson for all the time and effort that she put into helping out her neighbors. I wish to extend heartfelt condolences to Betty's family and many friends. Everyone who knew her knew that she truly cared. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **ADOPTED** and sent for concurrence.

At this point, a message came from the Senate borne by Senator DUSON of Cumberland of that Body, proposing a Joint Convention of both branches of the Legislature to be held in the Hall of the House at 6:45 in the evening for the purpose of extending to Her Excellency, Governor Janet T. Mills, an invitation to attend the Joint Convention and to make such communication as pleases her.

Thereupon the House voted to concur in the proposal for a Joint Convention to be held at 6:45 in the evening and the Speaker appointed Representative MOONEN of Portland to convey this message to the Senate.

In Memory of:

the Honorable Kathy Irene Javner, of Chester, Representative of House District 29. A passionate follower of Christ, Representative Javner not only professed her faith but lived it daily. She and her husband Chris dedicated years of their lives to serving in Senegal, West Africa, where they founded Legacy International, a nonprofit that focused on vocational training and medical relief for malnourished children. A devoted educator, Representative Javner taught and mentored young people, encouraging her students to discover their passions, recognize their gifts and believe in themselves. Her commitment to service extended into public life. She served in the Maine House of Representatives from the 129th Legislature to the 132nd Legislature, 2018 to 2026. During her tenure, she served on the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources and Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, of which she was the Ranking Member. She worked tirelessly for the betterment of children in foster care, our veterans and our older adults and in pro-life advocacy. Representative Javner will be long remembered and sadly missed by her family, friends, colleagues and community; (HLS 536)

Presented by Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor. Cosponsored by Representative MILLIKEN of Blue Hill, Representative MINGO of Calais, Representative MITCHELL of Cumberland, Representative MONTELL of Gardiner, Representative MOONEN of Portland, Representative MORRIS of Turner, Representative MURPHY of Scarborough, Representative NUTTING of Oakland, Representative O'HALLORAN of Brewer, Representative OLSEN of Raymond, Representative OSHER of Orono, Representative PARRY of Arundel, Representative PAUL of Winterport, Representative PERKINS of Dover-Foxcroft, Representative PLUECKER of Warren, Representative POIRIER of Skowhegan, Representative POMERLEAU of Standish, Representative PUGH of Portland, Representative QUINT of Hodgdon, Representative RANA of Bangor, Representative RAY of Lincolnville, Representative REYNOLDS of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Representative RIELLY of Westbrook, Representative ROBERTS of South Berwick, Representative ROEDER of Bangor, Representative ROLLINS of Augusta,

Representative RUDNICKI of Fairfield, Representative RUNTE of York, Representative SACHS of Freeport, Representative SALISBURY of Westbrook, Representative SARGENT of York, Representative SATO of Gorham, Representative SAYRE of Kennebunk, Representative SCHMERSAL-BURGESS of Mexico, Representative SHAGOURY of Hallowell, Representative SIMMONS of Waldoboro, Representative SINCLAIR of Bath, Representative SKOLD of Portland, Representative SMITH of Palermo, Representative SOBOLESKI of Phillips, Representative STOVER of Boothbay, Representative STROUT of Harrington, Representative SUPICA of Bangor, Representative SWALLOW of Houlton, Representative TERRY of Gorham, Representative THORNE of Carmel, Representative TUELL of East Machias, Representative UNDERWOOD of Presque Isle, Representative WADSWORTH of Hiram, Representative WALKER of Naples, Representative WARREN of Scarborough, Representative WEBB of Durham, Representative WHITE of Guilford, Representative WHITE of Ellsworth, Representative WOOD of Greene, Representative WOOD of Norway, Representative WOODSOME of Waterboro, Representative YUSUF of Portland, Representative ZAGER of Portland, President DAUGHTRY of Cumberland, Senator BAILEY of York, Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot, Senator BEEBE-CENTER of Knox, Senator BENNETT of Oxford,

Senator BERNARD of Aroostook, Senator BICKFORD of Androscoggin, Senator BLACK of Franklin, Senator BRADSTREET of Kennebec, Senator BRENNER of Cumberland, Senator CARNEY of Cumberland, Senator CURRY of Waldo, Senator CYRWAY of Kennebec, Senator DUSON of Cumberland, Senator FARRIN of Somerset, Senator GROHOSKI of Hancock, Senator GUERIN of Penobscot, Senator HAGGAN of Penobscot, Senator HARRINGTON of York, Senator HICKMAN of Kennebec, Senator INGWERSEN of York, Senator LAWRENCE of York, Senator LIBBY of Cumberland, Senator MARTIN of Oxford, Senator MOORE of Washington, Senator NANGLE of Cumberland, Senator PIERCE of Cumberland, Senator RAFFERTY of York, Senator RENEY of Lincoln, Senator ROTUNDO of Androscoggin, Senator STEWART of Aroostook, Senator TALBOT ROSS of Cumberland, Senator TEPLER of Sagadahoc, Senator TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin, Senator TIPPING of Penobscot, Speaker FECTEAU of Biddeford, Representative ABDI of Lewiston, Representative ADAMS of Lebanon, Representative ALBERT of Madawaska, Representative ANKELES of Brunswick, Representative ARATA of New Gloucester, Representative ARCHER of Saco, Representative ARDELL of Monticello, Representative ARFORD of Brunswick, Representative BABIN of Fort Fairfield, Representative BAGSHAW of Windham, Representative BECK of South Portland, Representative BELL of Yarmouth, Representative BISHOP of Bucksport, Representative BLIER of Buxton, Representative BOYER of Poland, Representative BOYER of Cape Elizabeth, Representative BRENNAN of Portland, Representative BRIDGE of Augusta, Representative BUNKER of Farmington, Representative CAMPBELL of Orrington, Representative CARLOW of Buxton, Representative CARUSO of Caratunk, Representative CHAPMAN of Auburn, Representative CIMINO of Bridgton, Representative CLUCHEY of Bowdoinham, Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield, Representative COLLINS of Sidney, Representative COOPER of Windham, Representative COPELAND of Saco, Representative CRAFTS of Newcastle, Representative CRAY of Palmyra, Representative CROCKETT of Portland, Representative DAIGLE of Fort Kent, Representative DANA of

the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Representative DEBRITO of Waterville, Representative DHALAC of South Portland, Representative DILL of Old Town, Representative DODGE of Belfast, Representative DOUDERA of Camden, Representative DRINKWATER of Milford, Representative DUCHARME of Madison, Representative EATON of Deer Isle, Representative EDER of Waterboro, Representative FAIRCLOTH of Bangor, Representative FARRIN of Jefferson, Representative FLYNN of Albion, Representative FOLEY of Wells, Representative FOSTER of Dexter, Representative FREDERICKS of Sanford, Representative FREDETTE of Newport, Representative FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor, Representative FROST of Belgrade, Representative GATTINE of Westbrook, Representative GEIGER of Rockland, Representative GERE of Kennebunkport, Representative GIFFORD of Lincoln, Representative GOLEK of Harpswell, Representative GRAHAM of North Yarmouth, Representative GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, Representative GREENWOOD of Wales, Representative GRIFFIN of Levant, Representative GUERRETTE of Caribou, Representative HAGGAN of Hampden, Representative HALL of Wilton, Representative HASENFUS of Readfield, Representative HENDERSON of Rumford, Representative HEPLER of Woolwich, Representative HYMES of Waldo, Representative JACKSON of Oxford, Representative JULIA of Waterville, Representative KESSLER of South Portland, Representative KUHN of Falmouth, Representative LAJOIE of Lewiston, Representative LANCE of Paris, Representative LANIGAN of Sanford, Representative LAVIGNE of Berwick, Representative LEE of Auburn, Representative LEMELIN of Chelsea, Representative LIBBY of Auburn, Representative LOOKNER of Portland, Representative LYMAN of Livermore Falls, Representative MACIAS of Topsham, Representative MALON of Biddeford, Representative MASON of Lisbon, Representative MASTRACCIO of Sanford, Representative MATHIESON of Kittery, Representative MATLACK of St. George, Representative MCCABE of Lewiston, Representative MCINTYRE of Lowell, Representative MEYER of Eliot.

On **OBJECTION** of Representative QUINT of Hodgdon, was **REMOVED** from the Special Sentiment Calendar.

READ.

At this point, Representative COLLAMORE of Pittsfield performed a rendition of *Amazing Grace*.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Hodgdon, Representative Quint.

Representative **QUINT**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the Good Representative's physical presence is gone, her memory lingers and will continue to do so. The House that we shared together in Augusta is no longer filled with her infectious laughter, but her gentle testimony and wisdom remain. I am a better person for knowing and for caring for her.

Kathy was such an inspiration that the SHE Leads Committee; that's an organization that trains Republican women; created an award specifically for her while she was living. Not a lifetime achievement award, but a woman of achievement award for who she was at that precise time. I am quite sure that that award will probably be renamed in her honor as the Kathy Javner Woman of Achievement Award. She is the perfect example of that. Her kindness, her love, her gentleness was amazing. Kathy is very missed and very loved still.

To all those who attended Kathy's memorial service, you were able to hear of Kathy's life of ministry. I would like to share just a portion of that with you now. When we presented Kathy with the award, I had asked her husband, Chris, to send me some background information, and there was a little bit of it that I didn't even know about that he shared, and so, I would like to read to you the words that were used when we presented her with this award.

Outstanding Woman of Achievement, Kathy Javner. He put that part in himself, too. Kathy Javner's life is a reflection of compassion, courage and unwavering dedication to others. A graduate of Bethany College of Missions, with a bachelor's degree in biblical studies, Kathy's heart for missions began as a teenager and shaped her life's journey. She has served on short-term missions' teams in Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Morocco, and later committed 13 years as a full-time missionary in Senegal, West Africa. As the co-founder of Legacy International, Kathy helped establish programs that provided vocational training and medical relief for malnourished babies in Senegal, West Africa. While serving on the Legacy International team, she managed the medical relief efforts firsthand, opening her home to care for infants until they were stabilized and healthy enough to return to their families.

When returning stateside, Kathy continued to live out her faith through her service. She was an active member of the women's jail ministry team in Superior, Wisconsin, and served for years with the KidCare of America after-school program in Lincoln, Maine. As a fourth-grade teacher at two private academies, Kathy inspired students and parents alike with her creativity, joy and passion for learning, creating unforgettable experiences such as the cherished class trip to Prince Edward Island. Kathy served her community as a Maine State legislator, a role that she has held with integrity and compassion for seven years. On her days off, she continued to substitute teach, investing in the next generation with the same devotion she has shown throughout her life.

Kathy was a proud mom of three remarkable children, each a reflection of her dedication as a mother, teacher and mentor. She home-schooled her children, instilling in them a love for learning, integrity and service. Under her guidance, they have grown into extraordinary young adults. Captain Christopher Javner, a pilot for SkyWest Airlines, RN Sahara Javner, an entrepreneur and University of Maine student, Katahdin Javner, who also serves as a SkillsUSA state and national officer, Maine State cabinet maker and SkillsUSA national gold medalist in extemporaneous speaking. I'm sure he's much better at public speaking than I am. Their accomplishments and character stand as a living testament to the values that Kathy has lived and taught throughout her life; faith, perseverance and a commitment to excellence.

Through every chapter of her life; missionary, teacher, legislator, wife, mother and friend, very dear friend; Kathy has devoted herself to loving deeply, teaching passionately, serving faithfully and inspiring others to do the same. The overwhelming love and respect returned to her from those who know her best is a testament to her remarkable character and her enduring legacy of kindness, faith and service. Truly, an outstanding and remarkable woman.

And now, the Javner family will have the opportunity to hear from those who worked with her, the impact that she had in their lives. And also, I just want, again, I want to thank the family, the Javner family, for sharing her with us and for sharing her with the State of Maine. We are truly blessed to have had her in our service.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Winterport, Representative Paul.

Representative **PAUL**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a floor speech I hoped I'd never have to give, but today, I rise in mourning and in gratitude for the life of my friend and my seatmate, Representative Kathy Javner.

Maine has lost one of its brightest spirits, and this Chamber has lost one of its truest public servants. Kathy fought a long and courageous battle with cancer, but she never let that struggle define her. What defined her was her unwavering faith, her spunk, her grit and her cheerful determination to serve others, even on the hardest days. She carried a quiet strength. You could feel it in the way that she listened, the way she spoke gently but firmly and the way she put her whole heart into the work she believed mattered.

To me, Kathy was so much more than a colleague, even more than my seatmate, even though that is a special bond; she was an inspiration. She was the epitome of what a public servant should be; humble but fearless, compassionate but strong, principled but kind. From day one, we hit it off and developed a beautiful friendship, and how thankful am I that of all people, we ended up being seatmates. She was so patient with me, with my newbie freshman legislator questions, guiding me, teaching me and grounding me. I will miss her infectious laugh, the kind that lit up the entire row. I will miss her witty humor, and you never have to wonder what she was thinking. She knew exactly what she believed and why and she would never be shaken. She fought for what was right courageously and faithfully. And I'll miss the simple, small things, too. Like the way she'd open her desk drawer and pull out a seemingly endless supply of the best-smelling hand lotions known to man. And how genuinely excited she would get when I would find her some new organic lip balm or a hand balm and get her to try it out, and she loved that. She made even the tiniest moments joyful and we made so many wonderful memories together that I will cherish, always.

I am sure I'm not alone in feeling this way, but in these halls, her absence is felt as sharply as her presence was. I've heard it said that you should strive to leave such a mark on the world that your absence shakes it as much as your presence ever strengthened it. That is how it feels now. Her seat beside me has never felt more empty. The colors in this place seem a little less vibrant. It feels as though there's simply less good in the world today because someone truly good has left it. And yet, even though through the sorrow, we hold onto the hope that Kathy herself carried every single day. We find comfort in knowing that she is now resting in the arms of our Savior, where pain has no place and joy is made whole. Scripture captures her journey in 2 Timothy 4:7-8. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness." Those words fit Kathy's life more perfectly than any I could choose. She fought bravely, she ran faithfully and she finished well.

I am so incredibly thankful that I got a chance to visit with Kathy and her husband, Chris, a few weeks before her passing, and I will always treasure those final moments. But the one thing I took away from the last time I saw Kathy was that we all knew her as Representative Kathy Javner. That I got to see Kathy as a wife to a husband who absolutely adores her and showed me an example of, quite honestly, one of the greatest love stories I have ever seen. It was palpable and real, everyone knew it, everyone could feel it and in this world, real is so rare.

Being there with Kathy brought back all the sweet memories of our adventures. Traveling all over the country to different conferences and even being stranded in the Chicago

airport and having to sleep on the floor. The last conference we went to last year, we had a layover in Minnesota and Kathy got a chance to see her son, who's a pilot there. And I cannot explain to you the absolute joy that exuded from Kathy when she saw her son and embraced him. And there, I got to see another side of Kathy, as a Mom. What I'm trying to say is that I got to see her in many circumstances; as a legislator, as a wife, as a Mom; but every single one of those was marked by one word: love. Love radiated out of every aspect of her life. She was an authentic example of the Proverbs 31 woman. She was clothed in strength and dignity and she laughed without fear of the future. She opened her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness was always on her tongue. And she lived a life that honored God and blessed everyone around her.

Kathy lived a life marked by service across cultures, in her community, in her family and right here in the People's House. She reflected Christ's love in the way that she worked, in the way that she listened and the way she cared for people others overlooked. And now, with all sincerity, we can all say the words she lived her whole life striving to hear; well done, good and faithful servant. We thank God for her witness, her courage, her kindness and her legacy, and we pray His peace and comfort over her husband, her children, her family, her community and all who loved her. I count it as one of the biggest blessings of my life that God saw fit to make Kathy my seatmate. She changed my life forever.

We mourn Kathy's passing, we honor her memory and we give thanks for the blessing of having walked even just a short stretch of our lives next to her. May God hold her close until we meet again. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from East Machias, Representative Tuell.

Representative **TUELL**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The one I'm going to read is a column that I wrote for my local newspaper. For those who don't know, I'm a contributor to that newspaper and do a weekly column titled "Downeast Dispatches." This was written last week and I will do my best to get through it without stumbling.

"A Woman After God's Own Heart," by Will Tuell. On Saturday, January 10th, my friend and colleague, Representative Kathy Javner, Republican of Chester, passed away after a years' long battle with incurable breast cancer. I first met Kathy on the campaign trail in 2018, when she was running to represent a House district that stretched from her home in Chester, down through the winding back roads of interior Washington County and all the way to Dennysville and Edmunds, on the coast.

Kathy drove the two and a half hours from her home to participate with the Washington County Republicans in the Eastport Fourth of July parade that year and was a ball of energy, passion and positivity. A few months later, all the candidates representing Washington County were summoned to the University of Maine Machias for a candidate's forum. That same passion, commitment and positivity came off her in waves, and I knew she was as good as in.

No surprise, Kathy won her first election with 70% of the vote. She could've left it at that, or the fact that she was assigned two Committees; Health and Human Services and Marine Resources; she could've let that go to her head. Instead, she pumped those of us on the Marine Resources Committee for information. She pumped the Department of Marine Resources for info, she questioned not for the sake of hearing her own voice, but out of genuine knowledge and a desire to do the best work she could for her constituents, whose livelihoods depended on a working waterfront, which she, again, lived two

and a half hours away from. In other words, she was not just a campaigner, she was a worker. She knew what she didn't know and wanted to learn. She was humble. She relied not solely on her own understanding, not solely on her colleagues' understanding, not solely on those who came to testify's understanding, but above all else, on Christ's understanding.

Kathy, first and foremost, was a born-again Christian. She believed wholeheartedly in the Word of God and that her role on this Earth, for whatever time she had, was to further His eternal kingdom. The passion and energy I saw on the campaign trail translated to governance, because she was a servant. She was seeking Godly wisdom and was dedicated to living out her faith in a world that challenged that faith at every turn. More incredibly, even when challenged, Kathy did not take offense at her detractors. She may not have agreed with what they promoted, certainly spoke against it with clarity and conviction, but just as easily had conversation with them about life, the Legislature, work, relationships, friends and family. She cared about the people she served with in a genuine, unpretentious sort of way. Not to get ahead, not with an agenda, not because it could benefit her or even her constituents, but because it was what Christ called her and all Christians to do.

She attended our prayer caucus whenever she could. She shared her faith openly, but not overpoweringly. She let you know where her hope was, and the more you got to know her, whether she shoved a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in front of you while lovingly admonishing you for not taking the time to stop by the cafeteria on your way to committee or just listened to you vent about your committee, you realized her mission was to lead by example, make everybody better, give them the confidence to aspire for more.

I learned about Kathy's passing midway through church the day after. While sitting there trying to process what I knew months ago was going to happen, our pastor spoke of various figures in the Bible and their attributes, but spent the bulk of the sermon on one Barnabas, a friend of the Apostle Paul who was known for offering an encouraging, uplifting word to those who professed a belief in Christ. Barnabas also brought many unbelievers to Christ, reflecting our Lord's love through his actions and is one of the key figures of the New Testament. As the sermon went on, it hit me; Kathy was a Barnabas. She personified many of the qualities of a first-century believer, of someone who not only read the Bible, but knew the why of it and could apply that to her life and the world we lived in.

Kathy successfully battled cancer once before. The second time around, she gave it all she had, but knew it was not going to be enough. She went through unimaginable pain and suffering and still managed to come to the Legislature every day to do her job, even if it meant she curled up in a ball on a couch in the Retiring Room when we were on breaks. She made time for the committee members she worked with. As a top House Republican on the HHS Committee for five years, Kathy's job was not only to prepare colleagues, but to communicate with the majority. Many times, she would be the bridge between the two sides and find a compromise or a way forward that everyone could live with or understand. When she couldn't, she would talk with her counterparts on the other side of the aisle and let them know what was coming. People debated, had their say and moved on, because Kathy bore no offense and kept things pretty even keel. She was a counselor, a friend, a lady of incredible strength, even when she really didn't feel like being that person.

As I said online following her passing, Kathy was the best of us. But more than that, she was a woman after God's own heart. Because she knew where she was going, she refused to let the bonds of this turbulent, angry, unforgiving, sinful world in

which we live weigh her down. She prayed, she read the Bible, but more than all of that, she lived the Bible. There is a saying in Christian circles that you are the only Bible some people will ever see. That's not to say you are a substitute for the Bible or God Himself, but rather to say that as a Christian, you should always be striving to be more and more like Christ to the point where other people see it reflected without you ever being aware of it.

Kathy might say she barely squeaked through the eternal gates, that it wasn't any works or good deeds that got her into Heaven, but her faith in Christ. That's true for all of us who are Christians, if we're being honest with ourselves, but it is also true that she bore the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; throughout the entire time I knew her. That's why she picked her battles and only debated when there was nobody else who could say it quite like she did. Her last speech, opposing changes to the doctor-assisted suicide law, was perhaps her most poignant, because there was no one in the House Chamber on either side of the debate who didn't know they were staring down a terminal illness with months to live. She not only said it openly, but spoke eloquently for her cause and diffused what could have been a deeply charged debate that brought out the worst in us.

I say all of this to say that it was an honor to know and to serve with Kathy for six of her eight years in the Legislature. She should've been our caucus leader. I told her that and have told others the same thing over the years. But ironically, never saw herself in that role and refused to run, despite numerous attempts by myself and others to get her to. For all of that, she set the standard and will be deeply missed, both by legislators and fellow Christians who took inspiration from her unflinching faith. Kathy Javner, rest in peace.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Fairfield, Representative Rudnicki.

Representative **RUDNICKI**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to compete with my Colleagues that are very eloquent.

I just want to say Kathy was an inspiration. She was an inspiration to all of us because she showed up. She showed up in this building at the worst possible time in her life, but she showed up. And that alone is such an inspiration to all of us.

Kathy said to me a few years ago, and she actually said to a lot of us, that she felt that all legislators should substitute teach at least once. And guess what? She convinced me. So, I did a couple years ago, I signed up to substitute teach. It's something I'll do occasionally, but nowhere near the dedication that Kathy has to it. And she was like, what grades did you get? And I said, kindergarten up to third grade is what I was subbing at different times. It's not the grade level I thought I'd be good at, but it worked out and it's something that I will, in honor of Kathy, continue to do occasionally.

In October, I had the honor to present Kathy with the Outstanding Woman Achievement Award for SHE Leads. And when I decided, or when I put her up for this award, I knew a lot of what she had done, but man, oh man, did I find out some more. Representative Quint reached out to Chris and we arranged for Kathy to be able to come to that award to actually get it and it was great, it was a surprise, she had no idea and I think that that was something that we all just thought it was amazing, that even in everything she went through, that she could do this.

I want to thank the Javner family for sharing her with us. She will be greatly missed.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Pittsfield, Representative Collamore.

Representative **COLLAMORE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to honor my very good friend and colleague; and she was my seatmate first, Representative Paul. I am so eternally grateful that God saw fit to make her my seatmate my first term, the COVID term. I was trying so hard to learn things, and when I ran for office, I was like, I'm not there to make friends, I'm there to represent my people and do a really good job and learn everything I can learn and if I make friends, great, if not, I don't care, because that's not why I'm there. And you can't know Kathy and sit next to her for as long as I did without becoming her friend. And then we had our third musketeer, too, and we had our wonderful legislative date nights, we called them, and sometimes, we allowed others to join us and we called them honorary date night members. One of our members, the Good Representative Dana, came along and we called him one of the honorary women that night and took a group picture and we just had so much fun.

Kathy and I thought it was a really fun game to see how many movies we could get Representative Quint to go to that we didn't think she would ever go to without us prodding her to do so. We'd go through the different trailers and we'd say, ooh, let's do this one. And there were Tuesday nights that we were in there and we were the only three people there. And oh, my God, did her laugh fill that entire theater. I think of all of the things that I'll miss most about her, other than her kindness, will be that laugh that was so infectious and you couldn't help but laugh when she laughed, even if the thing she was laughing at, you were like, that's not really funny. But you were laughing because she was laughing.

I'll never forget the night we convinced Representative Quint to go and see *Sonic* at the theater. And oh, my God, that was such a funny movie, and I think the only reason that Representative Quint was laughing was because Kathy and I were laughing. And I'm going to really, really miss those. I think we got to go one time last session as she battled. And we really wanted to try to go to more, but we wanted her to rest, because there was still hope that maybe, just maybe, we'd get another session with her.

I've experienced some great loss, Mr. Speaker, and when she was coming to the end and really having a hard time leaving her house, she made the really long drive down to be with me during my time of loss and I will never ever forget the strength she showed that day when I knew that she was having a hard time. And her husband, Chris, when my Mom was trying to get to know everybody who came, the thing that stuck out to my Mom was that Chris said, I'm just the arm candy. And all of that will stick with me forever and ever, and I thank God every single day that he let me be next to Kathy in my first term. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Gardiner, Representative Montell.

Representative **MONTCELL**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Colleagues of the House. I know I mentioned last week that I did have the privilege of working with Kathy on the Legislative Memorial Scholarship Fund and that, you know, I did get to know her a little bit, but I never imagined how well we would get to know her at her service, particularly from her husband, Chris. And to hear about, as some other speakers have said, about their partnership, their love, their devotion to their community and their devotion to repairing the world. I was just really, really just inspired. So inspired that at the end of the reception, the Representative from Belgrade and I, Representative Frost, went over and talked to Chris for quite a while. And Chris kind of

warned us, he said, you know, you could be here for a while. Because there's just so much to tell and so much to learn and it just reminded me that life, if we just take the time to get to know people and hear their experiences, that we can be inspired, there's so much to learn, there's so many people that give so much, in so many ways, and we kind of encouraged him to continue to tell her story, maybe chronicle it. It's; you know, and he also spoke about some of the challenges they had, you know, traveling all over the world as they did, there was great challenges, it wasn't always easy and Chris, please, I know you're up there, I saw you and I want to see you afterwards, please continue to tell Kathy Javner's story. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Fort Kent, Representative Daigle.

Representative **DAIGLE**: As a new legislator, I had much to learn and Kathy was the best teacher, leader and role model I could've asked for. I'm very grateful for the privilege to be there and work with Kathy, and the opportunity to pray with her and for the way too short time I had to spend with her on the HHS Committee. I really cherish her friendship. And there's a whole lot more I could say about Kathy, but she liked things short, sweet and to the point, and I will comply. Because that's my nature.

I want to thank you, Chris and family, for sharing this remarkable lady with us. It was the greatest experience of my life as a legislator, though it's short. Her work on Earth is now done and she's enjoying the reward in Heaven God has prepared for all who give their lives to following Jesus Christ. Her devotion to Christ was real and her reward is well deserved. Thank you, Jesus, for this exceptional lady.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Camden, Representative Doudera.

Representative **DOUDERA**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Colleagues here in the House, and the family of Representative Javner. I first met Kathy in November of 2018, when we all showed up here newly elected and really looking at each other and wondering what the heck we had got into. And, you know, back then, we didn't know, I had no idea who was what. We were not Republicans, we were not Democrats, we were not Independents. We were just two women sort of saying, okay, what happens now? Where do I go? Where are the bathrooms?

I sometimes think fondly of those days and I try to remember that to kind of remove any labels that maybe we've accumulated over the years, because that was, to me, what it was really all about, people showing up to do good work for the State. And Kathy and I made a little connection and a little bond, and what I saw in her was a kindness, first off, and a determination. She also struck me, and I feel this is odd, as somebody who was sophisticated. And I think about that because we really usually think of people as being sophisticated who are from a big city or; but the root word of sophistication, the original Greek meaning, is a wise person or a master. And I think it was that wisdom that I saw in her, because her life experiences, traveling as she did and trying to help people as she did and then, let's face it, her fighting cancer. Her life experiences gave her that kind of a mastery over life and over the little piddly things that we all think are so important, she really had a sense of what really was worth worrying about. And I want to remember her for her strength, for her very wry sense of humor, the way her mouth would kind of curve up and she'd say something, I loved that. Her kindness to me after the death of my husband, she would meet me and say, I'm praying for you, kind of grab my hand. And once my numbness kind of wore off and it kind of hit me, she's going through something, too, I would say, I'm praying for you, too.

And the last thing is that once in a while, I would venture into the Retiring Room in the Cross Building and she would always try to feed me, which I always love somebody who tries to feed me. So, Kathy, I'm going to remember you very fondly and I, too, thank her family for sharing her with us, and may she rest in peace.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Carmel, Representative Thorne.

Representative **THORNE**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're all brought together for this portion of our lives to work with some incredible people. But I didn't realize until this weekend at Kathy's Celebration of Life just how incredible this woman was. We all have different committees that we serve on, we all have different things that we're involved in, so, we kind of brush up against each other in the hallways and in the caucus rooms. And then you find out, like I did, I was in the presence of greatness. She really was. She lived a life that was incredible, that you don't know just by looking at her. Her modesty, the way that she went about her daily life.

I sat in the back of this room my freshman term as legislator and looked in front and saw Kathy there and knew that she was in pain, knew that she was struggling with an illness that was taking every last ounce of energy from her body. For years, Mr. Speaker. And I couldn't help but think this weekend at the gathering to celebrate her life, the only person missing was Kathy. She would've loved being around all the people that were there, all of her close friends, colleagues, best friends, childhood, family, constituents. Everybody that she touched along her storied life. And there was a reading from Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31-40, that I'd like to share with everybody today. And although it was said that she didn't live her life ruled by this passage, it epitomized how she did live her life.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit with you?' The King replied, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

We will miss you, Kathy.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from North Yarmouth, Representative Graham.

Representative **GRAHAM**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, my friends. Last Saturday, I had the honor of attending the memorial service of our friend, Kathy Javner. It was cold as many of us on both sides of the aisle, including you, Mr. Speaker, traveled to the beautiful part of Maine that Kathy called home. We came to say thank you and goodbye.

It was there that Kathy's husband, Chris, and many others shared with us what an extraordinary human being Kathy was. Mr. Speaker, the word extraordinary keeps popping into my brain whenever I think of Kathy. The definition of extraordinary

people; extraordinary people have a wisdom and a way of being and inspires and commands respect. They energize you with their wisdom and their empathy. You want them to be your friend, your neighbor, co-worker, manager, mentor or community leader. What moved me greatly was that Kathy spent many years as a missionary in Africa. She set up a nursery for babies who were malnourished. Starving babies. And she nursed them back to health and helped the babies' families. She gave from her heart in Africa and continued to do so her entire life until her last breath.

It seemed fitting that this Sunday after my return from the Great North, we sang a song at my little church that fit what I think was one of the beliefs Kathy held dearly. It's entitled *Lord, Listen to your Children*, by Ken Medema. Here are the first few verses: "Lord, listen to your children praying. Lord, send your spirit in this place. Lord, listen to your children praying. Send us love, send us power, send us grace."

As we were leaving the memorial service, one of my colleagues, a dear friend, said, quote, "we all need to be more like Kathy." I couldn't agree more. Particularly during these troubled times in our State, in our country and in our world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my friends in this Chamber for allowing me to share my thoughts. May we carry Kathy in our hearts as we work for the people of Maine.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Rumford, Representative Henderson.

Representative **HENDERSON**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon, or morning, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, and the Javner family and friends. There are many in this room, probably most in this room, who spent much more time with Kathy than I did or were much closer with her than I was, but I would be remiss if I didn't just stand and talk about my reflections.

Only half of this room today ever got the opportunity to hear Kathy pray. And oftentimes, she would open caucus in prayer. And as someone who spent a lot of time listening to people pray, not just in this room, it was quite evident it was something that she did frequently. Prayer flowed out of her like it was a second language. And Saturday, we witnessed a mirror of that with Chris Javner, when he ended Kathy's service in prayer. And the words that came out of his mouth were, God, I love you. God, I trust you. Thank you for everything that you've given us. Thank you for Kathy. And the humbleness and sincerity in a prayer in a moment of such great loss proves the depth of relationship with God that Chris had, and we saw that daily here with Kathy.

When I first met Kathy, I, too, was; I jokingly called myself to her a bumbling idiot, a baby legislator, a freshman and I was a replacement candidate in July of '22, the first time I met her was in December of that year, after I had somehow won my election. And I was under the impression, having never interacted with legislators before, that in order to be an effective legislator, you had to always be in control, you had to always be stately and never show emotion and just speak facts and; now, granted, Kathy spoke facts and she was very stately, but I can promise you, she spoke with emotion and she spoke with passion. And the first time I met her, I was introduced with just how passionate she was on a certain subject. But a couple months later, and I'll end with this, but a couple months later, after having spent just a couple months in the Judiciary Committee, it was a pretty tough day in Judiciary, your people had beat me up pretty good, Mr. Speaker; you know, some days I hold my own, but some days, I don't, and I was feeling pretty beat up, pretty sorry for myself and I texted the Representative from Alfred, Representative Sampson, and just said, 'look, I just need to be with someone that's stronger than me right now,

where are you?' She said, 'well, I'm meeting Kathy over in the Cross Building,' so, the famous Cross Building room where all of her suit jackets are kept and her snacks and her changes of shoes. And so, I went over there, and there was Kathy, having already stripped out of her suit jacket and she was in a flannel shirt, with her feet kicked up on the table and she was eating some snack. And her and Heidi were talking through, you know, whatever the flavor of the day was. And I plopped myself down and I just went through the whole day and everything that had happened and all the reasons I could feel sorry for myself and all the things that we thought we were fighting and just, as a young legislator, facing some really difficult things. You know, everyone I'm speaking to that's legislated, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You can probably look back on the very first bill that you lost at and you're like, wow, that really impacted you. And Heidi sat there and listened, and Kathy sat there and munched and listened and, you know, she was gentle and she was kind, but the Representative from Winterport quite eloquently gave her remarks, but in the remarks she said that Kathy was gentle but firm. And Kathy was gentle, but her undertone was something like, suck it up, Henderson, you're running with the big dogs now, so, you're gonna have to find a way to get over yourself by tomorrow, because committee starts at 10. And I just appreciated that. That space that she gave me to be able to just express myself, but also the realization that you can't stay there for too long, because the stakes are high and things that we do here matter.

So, to the family, the Javner family, you know, it's been said before, but thank you so much for sharing her with us, with the State, but sharing her with us knowing that her life was short. Kathy sacrificed a lot to be here and to fulfill her oath that she took to the people of her district. She sacrificed time, which was the greatest commodity that she had left. And she left an impact not only on the State of Maine, the lives that are here, and she left a Godly impact on just how you can come in as a legislator and be a Godly woman and a Godly example and stand up for the principles that you believe in. So, I'm proud to know her, I'm proud to have served with her and thank you, thank you, deeply, to the Javner family.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Eliot, Representative Meyer.

Representative MEYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Women and Men of the House, Javner family. For eight years, Representative Javner and I served on the Health and Human Services Committee, six of those as House Chair and Lead. We've spent a great deal of time together, we've worked through some tough policy, we've listened to one another, talked through many difficult issues. We've laughed, we've cried, we agreed to disagree, we often found common ground and ways forward. I will miss our work together. I will miss Kathy.

In a political climate that far too often rewards the loudest voice or the sharpest jab, Kathy was a different kind of legislator. Thoughtful, inquisitive, kind, she took the work seriously, enthusiastically, she was bright and articulate. She was committed to her constituents and to working on their behalf. She showed up for them for four terms, through two courses of chemotherapy. That's extraordinary public service.

We agreed long ago not to let the divisive noise outside of our committee room dictate the character of the work inside it. She didn't just work toward better policy; she advocated for a better way of being public servants. Our goal was a well-functioning committee where we were respectful of one another and all those who came before us. By her example, she challenges every one of us to be better, to listen longer and more

intently to one another, to rise above the noise and to remember why we were sent here in the first place.

The members of the HHS Committee, our nonpartisan staff and everyone who worked with the Representative from Chester, we are all having a very difficult time referring to this courageous woman of grace and dignity in the past tense. May her memory and the example she set guide our work on behalf of Maine people. I know that is what she would want from each of us. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Winter Harbor, Representative Faulkingham.

Representative FAULKINGHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to honor my friend, Kathy Javner. I do think that all the words we could ever speak will never do justice to what a great person Kathy was, but it's good to try. So, I want to try to add my own words to that.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the best leadership is that which is by example, and Kathy was certainly an example of that here in the Legislature. And the reason why is because she had a leadership which was grounded in faith, Mr. Speaker. A faith that was so strong and started very early in her that attracted her husband, Chris, to her because of that faith. He told me the other day when he saw this beautiful girl with her arms raised up, praising God, that he wanted that. He wanted the girl, but he also wanted what she had. He wanted that faith. And I can tell you from what I saw at her funeral, that he has that. Because it's easy to praise God and thank God in the good times, but when you can praise God and thank God in the very worst times, it shows you what kind of faith that they shared together, Mr. Speaker. It was a faith and a leadership which led them to travel to Africa for years, to have children there. I can't even imagine the conditions and the poverty, and to leave home like that, but to do that to spread their faith not only there, but other places in the world, too, that is the leadership that Kathy Javner had, and it was an honor that she brought that leadership here for a time and I just want to thank the Javners for sharing her with us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Mexico, Representative Schmursal-Burgess.

Representative SCHMERSAL-BURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The words in here today are just amazing, and how do you compete when there's no competing in the race.

Kathy was stoic, she was tenacious. Kathy was truly a wonderful person, she was my seatmate, and somehow, she always managed that role with patience, grace and a quiet smile, even when she had to put up with me. She was an incredible teacher, the kind who didn't just teach lessons, but taught people. She was a loyal friend, the kind that you can count on no matter what. Someone who always had your back. But above all else, Kathy stood firmly for truth. She lived it, she believed in it, she shared it with those around her. If this world had more people like Kathy Javner in it, it would be a kinder, stronger, far better place to live in. I'm blessed to have her as a seatmate and thank you, the Javner family, for sharing her with us. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: I just want to share; I shared this with some members of Representative Javner's family over the weekend, but I had seen a headline from one of the newspapers or the TV stations that said "Representative Loses Battle with Cancer." And I think what you've all heard here today, and what I heard at her service on Saturday, is exactly the opposite of what losing looks like.

Representative Javner, I think, showed all of us what winning looks like in the face of a terrible disease. And I just want to extend my gratitude to the Javner family for being here

today, as mentioned many times, sharing her with us. I think it was apt. Time was her greatest commodity, and she gave it up to be here to represent the people of Maine, the district she represented, and I just want to thank you, because I know what that sacrifice looks like on a family. So, thank you for being here, thank you for sharing her with us.

Subsequently, this Expression of Legislative Sentiment was **ADOPTED** and sent for concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

Subsequently, Representative MOONEN of Portland reported that he had delivered the message with which he was charged.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Following Communication: (H.C. 322)

**STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0001**

January 5, 2026
Honorable Mattie Daughtry
Senate President
3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
Honorable Ryan Fecteau
Speaker of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

I am honored to accept your invitation to deliver the State of the State Address before a Joint Convention of the Legislature on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

For the past seven years, it has been my honor and privilege to serve as Governor of this great state. I am proud of the progress we have made together, but, as we all know, there are still many challenges ahead. Maine people are struggling to get by, and by working together, we can take action to help them and to make life more affordable for folks across our state.

I have always strongly believed that lawmakers, regardless of party affiliation, share a deep desire to improve the lives and livelihoods of Maine people, and I am optimistic that we can continue to have productive and respectful debates with one another and make important progress on issues that matter to the people we faithfully serve.

I look forward to addressing the Joint Convention of the Legislature and to working with you during the upcoming session.

Sincerely,
S/Janet T. Mills
Governor

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 329)

**SENATE OF MAINE
132ND LEGISLATURE
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

January 22, 2026

Honorable Robert B. Hunt
Clerk of the House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt,

Pursuant to my authority under Title 23, MRSA, Chapter 304, §3036, I am pleased to appoint Amanda Egan of Bath to the *Abandoned and Discontinued Roads Commission*, effective immediately.

On this board, she will serve as a representative member of the commission representing woodland property owners.

If you have any questions regarding this appointment, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

S/Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry

President of the Senate

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 323)

**STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
COMMISSION TO RECOMMEND METHODS FOR
PREVENTING DEED FRAUD IN THE STATE**

January 16, 2026

The Honorable Matthea E.L. Daughtry, President
Maine State Senate

The Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau, Speaker
Maine House of Representatives

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to Resolve 2021, c. 104, the Commission to Recommend Methods for Preventing Deed Fraud in the State is pleased to submit its final report. Copies of the full report have been distributed to committees or individuals as directed by law and copies have been placed on file with the Law and Legislative Reference Library. Others may access the full report on-line through the website of the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis at <http://legislature.maine.gov/opla>.

Sincerely,

S/Sen. Henry Ingwersen

Senate Chair

S/Rep. Adam Lee

House Chair

READ and with accompanying papers ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (H.C. 324)

**STATE OF MAINE
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD
OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CHAIR
442 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 100
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0027**

January 20, 2026

Honorable Matthea Daughtry

President of the Senate

3 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable Ryan Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: Annual Report of the Workers' Compensation Board
Pursuant to 5 M.R.S.A. §12023(2)

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to 5 M.R.S.A., §12023, please consider this the
transmittal letter for the required report from the Workers'
Compensation Board due by February 1, 2026.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional
information.

Sincerely,

S/John C. Rohde

Executive Director

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED
PLACED ON FILE.**

The Following Communication: (H.C. 325)

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

January 22, 2026

Honorable Matthea Daughtry

President of the Senate

3 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable Ryan Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to 5 M.R.S.A., Section 12023, please consider this the
letter of transmittal for the required report from the CDS Annual
Legislative Report due by February 1, 2026.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional
information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

S/Dan Hemdal

State Director of Child Development Services

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED
PLACED ON FILE.**

The Following Communication: (H.C. 326)

MAINE CONNECTIVITY AUTHORITY

January 22, 2026

Honorable Matthea Daughtry

President of the Senate

3 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable Ryan Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear President Daughtry and Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to 5 M.R.S.A., Section 12023, please consider this the
letter of transmittal for the required report from the Maine
Connectivity Authority due by February 1, 2026.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional
information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

S/Andrew Butcher

President

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED
PLACED ON FILE.**

The Following Communication: (H.C. 327)

STATE OF MAINE

CLERK'S OFFICE

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

January 27, 2026

Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to Joint Rule 310, the following Joint Standing
Committees have voted unanimously to report the following bills
out "Ought Not to Pass:"

Environment and Natural Resources

L.D. 754 An Act to Ban the Sale, Use and Possession of
Single-use Electronic Cigarettes and to Review
Extended Producer Responsibility Options for All
Batteries

Health and Human Services

L.D. 943 An Act to Require the ASPIRE-TANF Program to Be
Administered by State Employees

L.D. 1418 An Act to Protect Access to Reproductive Health
Care, Including Fertility Treatments and
Contraceptives

Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

L.D. 910 An Act to Collect Data to Better Understand the
Consumer's Health Insurance Experience

L.D. 1301 An Act to Prohibit the Use of Artificial Intelligence in
the Denial of Health Insurance Claims

Judiciary

L.D. 1761 An Act to Prohibit Indemnification Agreements
Labor

L.D. 653 An Act to Allow Teachers to Qualify for Overtime Pay
Transportation

L.D. 2047 Resolve, Regarding Online Driver Education

Sincerely,

S/Robert B. Hunt

Clerk of the House

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.**

The Following Communication: (H.C. 328)

**STATE OF MAINE
CLERK'S OFFICE
2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002**

January 27, 2026

Honorable Ryan D. Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Speaker Fecteau:

Pursuant to Joint Rule 310, the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs has approved the request by the sponsor, Senator Pierce of Cumberland, to report the following "Leave to Withdraw:"

L.D. 2045 An Act to Amend the Education Laws Regarding the State Board of Education's Authority Concerning Degree-granting Institutions

Pursuant to Joint Rule 310, the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs has approved the request by the sponsor, Representative Gramlich of Old Orchard Beach, to report the following "Leave to Withdraw:"

L.D. 615 An Act Regarding Elections

Sincerely,

S/Robert B. Hunt

Clerk of the House

READ and with accompanying papers **ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.**

The Following Communication: (S.C. 733)

**MAINE SENATE
132ND LEGISLATURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

January 20, 2026

Honorable Ryan Fecteau

Speaker of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333-0002

Dear Speaker Fecteau:

In accordance with 3 M.R.S.A. §158 and Joint Rule 506 of the 132nd Maine Legislature, please be advised that the Senate today confirmed the following nominations:

Upon the recommendation of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

- Elaine Clark of Cumberland Foreside for appointment, as the Commissioner of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services.

Upon the recommendation of the Committee on Labor:

- Joan M. Morin of Whitefield for appointment, to the Maine Labor Relations Board,
- Jessica Maher, Esq. of Brunswick, for reappointment to the Maine Labor Relations Board,
- Michael D. Miles of Westbrook, for reappointment to the Maine Labor Relations Board,
- Alyssa Tibbetts, Esq. of Scarborough, for reappointment to the Maine Labor Relations Board,
- Nicholas Fuller Googins of Portland, for appointment to the Maine Public Employees Retirement System Board of Trustees,

- John Kimball of Norway, for reappointment to the Maine Public Employees Retirement System Board of Trustees,
- Richard Metivier of Lewiston, for reappointment to the Maine Public Employees Retirement System Board of Trustees,
- David Barber of Cape Elizabeth, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority,
- Maria Fox, Esq. of Portland, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority,
- Benjamin Grant, Esq. of Portland, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority,
- Samuel Hight of Skowhegan, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority,
- Jay Naliboff, M.D. of Chesterville, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority,
- Jenni Tilton-Flood of Clinton, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority,
- Christopher Washburn of Windham, for reappointment of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority.

Best Regards,

S/Darek M. Grant

Secretary of the Senate

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

The Following Communication: (S.C. 734)

**MAINE SENATE
132ND LEGISLATURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

January 20, 2026

Honorable Robert B. Hunt

Clerk of the House

2 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Clerk Hunt:

Senate Paper 803, Legislative Document 1228, "An Act to Clarify Certain Terms in and to Make Other Changes to the Automotive Right to Repair Laws," having been returned by the Governor, together with objections to the same, pursuant to Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, after reconsideration, the Senate proceeded to vote on the question: "Shall this Bill become a law notwithstanding the objections of the Governor?"

10 voted in favor and 24 against, and accordingly it was the vote of the Senate that the Bill not become a law and the veto was sustained.

Best Regards,

S/Darek M. Grant

Secretary of the Senate

READ and ORDERED PLACED ON FILE.

ORDERS

On motion of Representative HEPLER of Woolwich, the following Joint Resolution: (H.P. 1464) (Cosponsored by Senator MOORE of Washington and Representatives: ARATA of New Gloucester, DOUDERA of Camden, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, OSHER of Orono, POIRIER of Skowhegan, RUDNICKI of Fairfield, Senator: GROHOSKI of Hancock)

JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE LATE UNITED STATES SENATOR MARGARET CHASE SMITH

WHEREAS, in 1940, Margaret Chase Smith won a special election to the United States House of Representatives following the death of her husband, Representative Clyde Smith. She went on to win the general election in her own right just 3 months later and was re-elected for 3 additional terms over the next 8 years; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, Representative Smith played a key role in getting the Nurse Corps Bill passed through Congress, granting women the opportunity to have permanent status in the United States military for the first time; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Chase Smith was sworn into the United States Senate on January 3, 1949, becoming the first woman to be elected to both houses of Congress; and

WHEREAS, in her Declaration of Conscience speech made on June 1, 1950, Senator Smith spoke out against the cruelty of McCarthyism and the "national feeling of fear and frustration" and called on her fellow Legislators to avoid hatred and character assassination and to honor the right to criticize, the right to hold unpopular beliefs, the right to protest and the right of independent thought; and

WHEREAS, in 1954 and 1955, Senator Smith took a world tour at her own expense and not as a representative of the United States government, visiting numerous European, African and Asian countries and interviewing over 20 world leaders. Many of the interviews were recorded and sent back to the United States to be broadcast on Edward R. Murrow's program "See It Now" on CBS. The Overseas Press Club of America later honored the "See It Now" segments with the Best Presentation on Foreign Affairs award. Senator Smith accepted the award on behalf of CBS and officially became an award-winning foreign correspondent; and

WHEREAS, Senator Smith debated former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt on "Face the Nation" in 1956, a few days before the 1956 Presidential election. They were the first female guests on this news show and debated the 1956 Israeli-Egyptian war over the Suez Canal, the Soviet invasion of Hungary and civil rights; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, after being told that the White House was not ready for a female chief executive, Margaret Chase Smith became the first woman to be placed in nomination for the presidency by a major political party, ultimately losing the nomination to Barry Goldwater; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Margaret Chase Smith opened the library that houses her papers for researchers of all ages. Upon her death in 1995, her Skowhegan home was turned into a museum open to the public so that we might continue to learn from the example of civility and leadership her life evinced; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Thirty-second Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize the life of Margaret Chase Smith, her accomplishments in Congress, her fight against injustice and her extensive contributions to the civil rights and equal rights movements.

READ.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Woolwich, Representative Hepler.

Representative **HEPLER**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2016, I applied for a sabbatical at the University of Maine at Farmington, where I was happily teaching history. I'd just written a book about McCarthyism in the suburbs, as I called it. I wanted to follow up with a book on McCarthyism in Maine. Instead, I ran for election to this Body and I set that project aside, and here I am.

At the time, I was interested in Margaret Chase Smith as a historical figure, as someone who, as we have heard in this Joint Resolution, stood up to her colleague in the U.S. Senate when she had just begun her second year in that body. My book on McCarthyism traced the experiences of a children's librarian accused of being a communist. I wrote about the impact of McCarthyism in small towns, not the halls of Washington, D.C. I'm not a Margaret Chase Smith scholar. And when I taught Maine history, we talked about Smith's historical significance. Every Maine student, it seems, knew who she was. I even had a couple of students who, when they were seventh graders, were lucky enough to interview her at her home in Skowhegan. While at UMF, I also thought about Senator Smith in terms of her library and the many public policy programs offered by the library that bears her name.

Serving in this Body, I began to think about Senator Smith differently. I'm not someone who talks a lot about role models, but she's probably as close as anyone I could think of as a model for public service. I watched the *Face the Nation* episode mentioned in the Joint Resolution, a debate between Senator Smith and former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and heard an informed discussion of a number of foreign policy issues. In fact, I had the sense that both Smith and Roosevelt would've preferred to keep talking about foreign policy if they hadn't been continually interrupted by reporters asking about the upcoming presidential elections.

In short, I learned that Senator Smith was more than her Declaration of Conscience. She was committed to public service, she did her homework and listened to those who agreed with her, but also to those who offered different perspectives. She spoke her values in a way that did not close doors. When the Representative from Winter Harbor last week spoke in honor of Martin Luther King Day, he called for dialing down the political divisiveness. It made me think of Senator Smith and the way that she did her work, how she worked with her colleagues and constituents throughout her long career to make the world a better place. I know I'm lucky to have found her as a model for my political career, and while I also know I fall far short more than I'd like to admit, I'm proud to aspire to be more like her.

Finally, on a personal note, when I thought about Co-sponsors to this Joint Resolution, I wanted to somehow memorialize when I began my service in the 129th Legislature, so, I sought out colleagues who similarly began their service in 2018. It's not a hundred percent, for those looking closely at the Co-sponsors, but the person whose name is missing should be in the spot I left blank. The name of the Representative from Chester, Representative Javner should be there also. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Bar Harbor, Representative Friedmann.

Representative **FRIEDMANN**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Distinguished Members of this Body, I rise today to thank my Colleague from Woolwich for introducing her motion honoring that remarkable daughter of Maine, Margaret Chase Smith.

And I rise today to encourage my colleagues to follow her example. Margaret Chase Smith is rightly remembered for her independence of thought. At a time when our nation faced great strain, she fearlessly put aside politics and party so that she could speak out for what is right, speak against what is wrong and speak up for the people of Maine.

Today, Mainers are again in need of such strong and brave voices. Today, our State's most vulnerable residents are facing serious hardships because the decision makers down in Washington don't seem to appreciate that their actions are causing real-world harm. In just this past year, they've passed laws or supported policies that give big handouts to the wealthy while forcing the less fortunate to pay more for housing, pay more for health care, pay more for food and pay more just to keep warm in the winter. In my own district, my neighbors are facing catastrophic increases in the cost of their health insurance. Our hospitals and clinics are being forced to reduce services or close. Our food banks are seeing increased demand. Some of those being hurt are Democrats, some of those are Republicans or Independents. Some don't vote at all. It doesn't matter to me, because they are all Mainers and my job is to speak up for them.

Across this State, our State, more than 50,000 won't get adequate health care this year because of cuts to Medicaid and Affordable Care Act credits. Thousands of Mainers --

Representative **LIBBY**: Point of Order.

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Chair will inquire as to why the Representative from Auburn, Representative Libby, rises.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I could wax eloquent about how Democrats have raised the cost of energy and increased our budget by 65%, I don't think that's appropriate given that we're discussing Adoption of a Joint Resolution recognizing the life and accomplishments of U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith. If we could stick to the topic at hand.

On **POINT OF ORDER**, Representative LIBBY of Auburn asked the Chair if the remarks of Representative FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor were germane to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Chair will ask the Member to bring his comments to relevance to the accomplishments of the late Margaret Chase Smith.

The Chair reminded Representative FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor to stay as close as possible to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **FRIEDMANN**: The good news is that if we stand up together as Mainers, we can protect our State's most vulnerable residents from the reckless decisions being made in Washington. This Legislature has the authority to direct resources to those most in need. And in fairness, we can ask those benefitting the most from today's policies to help those who are being harmed.

I understand that here in the Chamber, some of --

Representative **LIBBY**: Point of Order.

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Chair will inquire as to why the Representative from Auburn rises.

Representative **LIBBY**: I have seen this Chamber request very specifically that we stick to the topic at hand. Having experienced that request from the other side, I would request that the Good Representative stick, again, to the topic at hand.

On **POINT OF ORDER**, Representative LIBBY of Auburn asked the Chair if the remarks of Representative FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor were germane to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Chair would remind the Member; I hope the Member is getting to a point where you're bringing the Good Senator to relevance in your comments.

The Chair reminded Representative FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor to stay as close as possible to the pending question.

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **FRIEDMANN**: Margaret Chase Smith understood that there are times when you must fearlessly put aside politics and party so that you can speak out for what is right, speak against what is wrong and speak up for the people of Maine. This is one of those times. Let's honor her memory by pulling together and working together for all of Maine's people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Skowhegan, Representative Poirier.

Representative **POIRIER**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. First, I'd like to thank my good friend from across the aisle for submitting this recognition.

Margaret Chase Smith is embedded not only in political history, but in the heart of my community. Many know Senator Smith for her political tenure and accomplishments, but her accomplishments and strong work ethic started long before she served as our voice in Washington, D.C. She came from humble beginnings. Her father was the town barber. Her mother was a waitress, a worker at a shoe factory and a store clerk. Margaret's upbringing instilled a strong work ethic even as a youth. At 12, she actually worked at the local Five and Dime. She worked at her father's shop when he was busy or away. She attended Skowhegan Area High School, graduating in 1916, and she loved basketball so much, she earned the position of captain her senior year.

She continued working at her high school, she was a substitute telephone operator, a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse and even coached the basketball team. She met her soon-to-be husband, Clyde, when she was working as a circulation manager at the weekly newspaper he owned. This sparked her interest in business, and she founded the Business and Professional Women's Club in 1922. She married Clyde in 1930, and when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, she worked as his office manager and even wrote a lot of his speeches. Before he died, he let his intentions be known and asked her to run for his seat. Of course, we all know what happened next. Margaret Chase Smith, a woman from Skowhegan, Maine, became the first woman to serve in both Houses of Congress. She was also the first woman to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency.

Senator Smith was a champion for women in the military, playing a significant role in passing the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act, ensuring women's permanent status in the military. She was an advocate for free speech and a strong supporter of our country's military defense. Until the early '80s, she also held the record for most consecutive roll call votes at 2,941.

Senator Smith retired to her home in Skowhegan in 1973. I actually have fond personal memories of her. My first memory was in grade school, she invited my class to visit her library, which was attached to her home. We showed up and we were able to sit in a circle around her, and she told us stories not just about government and politics, but stories of my community that we'd never heard before. She obviously loved Skowhegan very deeply.

I was fortunate to sit with her on many occasions. Once I brought her a rose pin. Anybody who's seen her picture, she always had a rose pin. I knew how much she loved the red rose,

and I brought that. Shortly after, I received a handwritten postcard, handwritten and signed, thanking me for the gift. I still have that postcard and cherish it even today.

Senator Smith loved seeing and speaking to the people of our community. I remember conversations with her in her glassed-in sitting area in front of her house. A car would drive by and she'd stop what she was saying so she could wave to them. She waved to everybody. And I always looked forward to seeing her in the Skowhegan Log Days parade. She'd wave and greet community members with her bright smile. My father was her driver in a lot of those parades. She liked my parents' Redeye Roxy convertible, she thought it looked cool. My father would always talk to her during that ride, and she would send a note home with him with her signature and ensure that he gave it to me. I still have many of those as well. And those little sentiments meant a lot to a little girl from Skowhegan.

It's an honor to recognize the life and accomplishments of Senator Smith. She was strong, kind and willing to stand up for what's right, even when it's unpopular to do so. So, I urge you all to visit her library. Her home is a wealth of history and so many memories. And in closing, I want to share a short quote. We should all listen and take heed. Senator Margaret Chase Smith said, "As an American, I want to see our nation recapture the strength and unity it once had when we fought the enemy, instead of ourselves." Thank you.

The **SPEAKER**: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Orono, Representative Osher.

Representative **OSHER**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and Colleagues of the House, Margaret Chase Smith consistently backed the establishment and strengthening of Medicare, viewing it as essential social security for seniors. She supported expanding Medicare and advocated for broader access to health care during her long career in Congress. Her legacy of pragmatic, bipartisan problem solving is continued today by the Margaret Chase Smith Center at the University of Maine Orono, which studies health care policies, including insurance subsidies. It is my hope that we, the Members of the Maine Legislature, will honor her and embody her wisdom and courage as we work to ensure that Mainers will all have access to health care.

The **SPEAKER**: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Madison, Representative Ducharme.

Representative **DUCHARME**: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many in this hall, I knew Margaret Chase Smith, knew her fairly well. In our office at home and in my wife's office at her business, on the wall hangs her creed. My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly, it must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation, with full recognition of every individual's right, and that the national spirit of our country shall be one of religious and racial tolerance.

As folks have recounted stories of their interactions with the Senator, I've probably told many of you this. My first real interaction was on January 12, 1983, when I first became president of the Skowhegan Chamber of Commerce. My wife was in Thayer Hospital in Waterville, or Seton Hospital, I believe, having had our oldest son the day before, and my inauguration as president was the next day. So, I went there and at the head table, there was a seat for me and a seat for my wife. So, she was in the hospital. And I saw Senator Smith come through the door, and I went up to greet her and spoke with her a little bit, and I said, 'do you have someplace that you're sitting,' and she said, 'no, I just figured I'd look around.' I said, 'well, I've got a seat for you, you can sit with me.' So, one of my favorite Margaret Chase Smith stories was spending my first

inauguration as president of the Skowhegan Chamber of Commerce with Senator Smith.

The second story about her is in that conversation that night, we talked about my oldest son having just been born and her admonition to me was, you better bring that little boy up, so I can bounce him on my knee in my library. And so, when he was about three months old, when Joe was about three months old, we took him up there and we have pictures at home of him sitting on Margaret Chase Smith's knee in her library.

As I come here every day, which I've been doing now, I think I'm in my third term, so, six years, when I walk into the building, I usually come in the side door and the first place I go is the Hall of Flags. And the first picture I look at is Margaret Chase Smith. I try to let her legacy, her creed, be my North Star. Thank you.

Subsequently, the Joint Resolution was **ADOPTED** and sent for concurrence.

On motion of Representative LAJOIE of Lewiston, the following House Order: (H.O. 38)

ORDERED, that Representative Joseph F. Underwood of Presque Isle be excused Jan 20 for health reasons.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that Representative Stephen J. Wood of Greene be excused Jan 7 and 13 for health reasons.

READ and PASSED.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH.**

The following items were taken up out of order by unanimous consent:

SENATE PAPERS

The following Joint Order: (S.P. 882)

ORDERED, the House concurring, that when the Senate and House adjourn, they do so until Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 10:00 in the morning, or until the call of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, respectively.

Came from the Senate, **READ and PASSED.**

READ and PASSED in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Create a Right to Judicial Review Under the Maine Civil Rights Act for Persons Erroneously Detained"

(S.P. 881) (L.D. 2176)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **JUDICIARY** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **JUDICIARY** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Establish the Independent Office of Tax Appeals and Make Other Changes to the Laws Governing the Tax Appeals Process"

(S.P. 883) (L.D. 2178)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **TAXATION** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **TAXATION** in concurrence.

Bill "An Act to Amend Certain Motor Vehicle Laws"

(S.P. 884) (L.D. 2179)

Came from the Senate, **REFERRED** to the Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** and ordered printed.

REFERRED to the Committee on **TRANSPORTATION** in concurrence.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

At this point, the Senate came and a Joint Convention was formed.

In Convention

The President of the Senate, the Honorable Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry, in the Chair.

The Convention was called to order by the Chair.

On motion of Senator PIERCE of Cumberland, it was **ORDERED**, that a Committee be appointed to wait upon the First Family of the State of Maine, inviting them to attend this Joint Convention now assembled in the Hall of the House for the purpose of extending to Governor Janet T. Mills, an invitation to attend and make such communication as she may be pleased to make.

The **ORDER** was **READ** and **PASSED**.

The Chair appointed the following:

The Senator from Penobscot, Sen. BALDACCI
The Senator from Knox, Sen. BEEBE-CENTER
The Senator from Oxford, Sen. MARTIN
The Representative from Westbrook, Rep. SALISBURY
The Representative from Old Orchard Beach, Rep. GRAMLICH
The Representative from Saco, Rep. COPELAND
The Representative from Augusta, Rep. ROLLINS
The Representative from Jefferson, Rep. FARRIN
The Representative from Wales, Rep. GREENWOOD
The Representative from Lebanon, Rep. ADAMS
The Representative from Standish, Rep. POMERLEAU
The Representative from Presque Isle, Rep. UNDERWOOD
The Representative from East Machias, Rep. TUELL

Subsequently, Representative SALISBURY of Westbrook, for the Committee, reported that the Committee had delivered the message with which it was charged and that the First Family of the State of Maine would attend forthwith.

The Chair welcomed in the House Gallery the First Family and friends of the State of Maine.

On motion of Senator PIERCE of Cumberland, it was **ORDERED**, that a Committee be appointed to wait upon the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, and Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill, extending to them an invitation to attend this Convention, and to extend to Governor Janet T. Mills an invitation to make such communication as she may be pleased to make.

The **ORDER** was **READ** and **PASSED**.

The Chair appointed the following:

The Senator from Cumberland, Sen. CARNEY
The Senator from Cumberland, Sen. TALBOT ROSS
The Senator from Penobscot, Sen. HAGGAN
The Representative from Falmouth, Rep. KUHN
The Representative from Auburn, Rep. LEE
The Representative from Bath, Rep. SINCLAIR
The Representative from Gorham, Rep. SATO
The Representative from Portland, Rep. PUGH
The Representative from Brewer, Rep. O'HALLORAN
The Representative from Skowhegan, Rep. POIRIER
The Representative from Rumford, Rep. HENDERSON
The Representative from Caratunk, Rep. CARUSO
The Representative from Fort Fairfield, Rep. BABIN
The Representative from the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Rep. DANA

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the Constitutional and Statutory Officers of the State of Maine: Attorney General Aaron Frey; State Treasurer Joe Perry; and State Auditor, Matt Dunlap.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery, Maine's Tribal leaders: Chief William Nichols, Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township; Chief Sheila McCormack, Mi'kmaq Nation; and Chief Pos Bassett, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery, foreign dignitaries: Conor McGuinness, Irish Envoy to Maine.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery the leaders of higher education for the State of Maine: Dannel Malloy, Chancellor of the University of Maine System; Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President of the State of Maine; Craig Johnson, President of Maine Maritime Academy; Betsy Libby, President of Central Maine Community College; and Trish Riley, Board of Trustees Chair of the University of Maine System.

The Chair recognized in the House Gallery, members of the Governor's Cabinet, Commissioners and Department heads: Dale Doughty, Laura Fortman, Melanie Loyzim, Pender Makin, Judy Camuso, Mike Duguay, Carl Wilson, Joan Cohen, Sara Gagne-Holmes, John Rhode, Randall Liberty, Amanda Beal, Mike Sauschuck, Dan Burgess and Diane Dunn.

Subsequently, Senator CARNEY of Cumberland, for the Committee, reported that the Committee had delivered the message with which it was charged and that the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, accompanied by Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill, would attend forthwith.

The Chair welcomed to the Convention the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, accompanied by Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court.

The Chair thanked the evening's Herald: Technical Sergeant Cole Dubois of the Maine Army National Guard.

The Chair welcomed the Honorable Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, to the rostrum.

Governor Mills then addressed the Convention.

Governor **MILLS**: Madam President, Mr. Speaker, Madam Chief Justice, Mr. Attorney General, Mr. Treasurer, Mr. Auditor, Chief Nicholas, Chief McCormack, Chief Bassett, members of my Cabinet, Members of the 132nd Legislature, friends and members of my extended and beloved family and Maine people watching and listening at home. On July 4, 1976, shortly after 4:30 a.m., about 500 farmers stood in the darkness before the dawn, and when the first rays of the rising sun shone on Mars Hill, they cheered and raised the flag as the first Americans to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of this nation. A celebration that began in Mars Hill soon stretched from coast to coast as millions of people expressed their love for our country after years of division and difficulties. Shootings at Kent State had rocked the nation. The Vietnam War had finally come to an end and Americans looked forward to peace in our time. Our country had survived the national scandal of Watergate and had put behind us the crime and coverups of those who valued political loyalty over their duty to the courts and to the Constitution. One observer watching the crowds that July 4th day in 1976 said proudly, "the backbone of America is out there."

As the Wabanaki people know, our backbone here in Maine is the mountains from which we draw our common strength and fortitude. We are the product of many hills, the irregular glacial terrain, the eskers, erratics and the roaming boulders that form the character of our people and the destiny of our State.

This very Capitol building towers over the grounds of Capitol Park, where Governor Israel Washburn in 1861 mustered the boys of Maine to preserve the Union and end the horrible practice of slavery. And from this place, we too can see, as did those courageous men, the quiet prominence of Howard Hill, which looks down on us today and which forms the rugged skyline of this capital city.

Every part of Maine dares us ever to climb, to be discontent with the flat spaces and plains and seek higher ground at every turn, and to be tireless in the defense of our people, our State, our nation. It is an instinct, an attribute and mark of our character, a reflection of our natural strength that is as enduring and deep as the granite bedrock of Mount Katahdin. It is what compels us to stand fast against injustice, to rise against tyranny, to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

It is an instinct that is as important as ever in this very moment, as people in this State are speaking with moral clarity to protect their neighbors and their communities against federal agents who seek to intimidate and silence us. Today, I say to the people of Maine, we will not be intimidated. We will not be silenced. And to anyone outside these halls, including any federal officials, I say if you seek to harm Maine people, you will have to go through me first.

We will climb this hill together, you and I, just as we have over the past seven years; confronting dangerous terrains and stepping out of treacherous places in order to secure a foothold

for Maine people in the upward climb of progress. And so, we enter this, the 250th year of our nation's birth, with continued respect for our founding principles and a commitment to democracy, with an unequal determination to preserve the future of our country and our constitution.

Tonight marks my eighth and final time addressing a Joint Session of the Legislature, and every moment that we have gathered in this Chamber, it has been my profound honor, yes, an honor and privilege to be elected to serve the people of Maine; you, who are the very backbone of our State; as your Governor. I sought this office with one goal in mind, and it wasn't to break a glass ceiling by becoming the first woman Governor, though I'm proud to help show others, including young girls, that it is possible. It was also not to become the first Governor from Franklin County, though I'm proud to claim it as my home, along with legendary Maine Guide Fly Rod Crosby and earmuff inventor Chester Greenwood and others. But it is the people of Maine who are and always have been my North Star. And I sought this office because I believe they deserve better from their government.

And it would've been easy for me, it would've been easy for all of you to sit back and allow others to carry the burdens of leadership. But as Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., once said, it is more comfortable to sit content in easy approval of friends and of neighbors than to risk the friction and the controversy that comes with public affairs. And so, we have assumed the mantle of controversy that comes with public affairs. But surely, no one could even have predicted seven years ago the friction and controversies we would encounter, we would confront the dangers, the crises, tragedies and heartbreaks that we would endure. Climbing mountains to overcome obstacles and keep Maine people safe. Well, ultimately, Maine people will judge how well we met these moments. But tonight, I want to tell you what these moments have meant to me.

I'm convinced that history will show that when we faced emergencies, we were steady and strong, and when we found ways to make life better for Maine people, we were bold and brave and we climbed those hills together. Beginning in the first year of my Administration, we restored nursing and other critical public health staff to respond to emergencies, after years of cuts by the previous administration, and thank God those nurses were there, along with our National Guard and our health care workforce, retired and active, to answer the call when a worldwide pandemic struck. Thanks to them, thanks to the scientists who developed the vaccines and to all the people who rolled up their sleeves, our State achieved one of the lowest COVID death rates in the country. Very simply, we saved lives. You all survived because of those vaccines. And a few years later, when a horrific act of violence in Lewiston robbed us of 18 loved ones and caused our State immeasurable pain, we stood together, with one another, with the families of victims and the deaf community, the survivors, the wounded and the heroic members of law enforcement and first responders, and we did not let the vitriol and heated rhetoric surrounding the issue of gun violence immobilize us. Instead, we took meaningful steps to prevent violence, to protect public safety and expand mental health services. And later, when deadly storms devastated communities across the State, we responded with the largest investment in storm relief in State history, revitalizing our working waterfronts, reinforcing infrastructure and rebuilding local businesses to better withstand extreme weather. We came together to enact bipartisan legislation, sponsored by every legislative leader, to protect homeowners and businesses and prepare for the storms we know are to come.

So, the backbone of this State, Maine people, met these emergencies with strength and courage, in some cases, risking their own lives to save others and then offering their help with quiet kindness and selfless acts of grace.

As we reflect upon these moments, let us also remember those we lost this year, including our beloved 'Lobster Lady,' Ginny Oliver of Rockland, Penobscot Tribal Elder and distinguished decorated veteran Charles Norman Shay, lawmakers such as Kathy Javner, Denise Harlow, Stan Gerzofsky, Linda McKee, Dick Gould, Carol McElwee, Bill Diamond, Karl Turner, Ruth Foster. Along with DOT workers James Brown and Dwayne Campbell, who tragically lost their lives recently while serving the people of Maine. And let us pause to remember two young children, Brayden Callahan of Rockland and Simon Gonzalez of Standish, who lost their lives in the everyday act of just getting on or off the school bus. Thank you.

Well, as is tradition, tonight I'm proud to stand before you one final time and say that despite our challenges, I believe the state of our State is strong.

Let me talk about the economy first. Under my administration, Maine's economy has grown at a faster rate than many other states. It's true. In fact, we've experienced more economic growth in my first six years of office than we did in the entire 14 years before that. And I'm proud to say we've seen an increase of 16,200 private sector jobs in our State. And last year, nearly 15,000 new businesses filed to operate here in Maine. And many other businesses, like the Taste of Maine potato chip company in Limestone, are experiencing significantly expanding their workplace, their workforce and their footprint. Through my Jobs and Recovery Plan, more than 20,000 men and women enrolled in job training programs, many of them earning a new license or credential and a higher paying job like in health care, electrical, welding, plumbing, construction and other good-paying occupations.

Oh, and Maine's unemployment rate has been below four percent for nearly four years, one of the longest stretches ever. And it's consistently below both the New England and the national unemployment rates. Our State's credit ratings have been upgraded to the second-highest possible rating, after being downgraded during the previous administration. An upgrade which the credit agencies say is due to our strong fiscal governance. You're welcome.

At the same time, we've also focused on the infrastructure that you need, you rely on to go to work every day, to go to school or just to get around. We've repaired nearly 200 bridges, repaved nearly 8,000 miles of roads everywhere and, working with hundreds of internet service providers and communities, we've connected more than a quarter million homes and businesses with the internet. As a matter of fact, right now, every person who wants an internet connection has access to one thanks to the good work of the Maine Connectivity Authority, fulfilling the promise I made to you here in 2022. You're welcome.

We're making it easier for people to live, work and do business everywhere in Maine. Everywhere. People like Rob and Alice, a couple who wanted to move to a small town in Maine, but they needed high-speed internet for work. Seven years ago, there was no way they could've moved to a place like Bremen, Maine, and have fast enough internet. But thanks to our investments in broadband, that's exactly what they did. Now, Alice and Rob are deeply involved in their community and just this past fall, they welcomed a baby boy to their family. We're growing here, folks, we're growing.

I'm proud of this economic progress, but like every other state, we have our fair share of hills to climb. One of the biggest obstacles for many people today, whether you're a new college grad, a young parent, an older person on fixed income, one of the biggest obstacles is the high cost of living. From health care to housing and utilities to the price of a pickup truck, groceries and life-saving medicines, costs are too high. And Maine people, like millions of people across the country, are feeling it. Well, today, tonight, I propose we do something about it.

First, let's remember over the past seven years, on several occasions, we have put money back in the pockets of Maine people to help them get through difficult times. With bipartisan support, in 2021, for instance, during the pandemic, we sent over half a million people a Disaster Relief Payment, \$285. Again in 2022, again with bipartisan support, we sent Inflation Relief checks of \$850 to 880,000 people. And in 2023, again with bipartisan support, we sent 880,000 people an Energy Relief check of \$450. That's a total of nearly \$1.3 billion in relief that we delivered to Maine people to deal with high costs. But we did this in recognition of tough times and our recognition that each family, each person, has different needs. Giving money directly back to them allows them to decide how best to address these needs. For 80-year-old Peg in Pembroke, for instance, who lives on Social Security, her \$850 relief check meant a tank of heating oil to help get her through the winter. While for Terri in Hampden, her relief check paid for food and gas and much-needed car repairs. She said, quote, "please know that all of you have helped at least one person breathe easier," end quote.

Well, that's what this is all about, helping Maine people breathe easier. So, over the past few months, my Administration put together the supplemental budget and it will come before you soon. We asked ourselves again and again, how can we help people in the fastest, most direct, most meaningful way? And we thought, well, why reinvent the wheel? Why create a new process, new forms or new hoops to jump through? So, tonight, I propose that we help Maine people breathe a little easier with what we can, where we can, by sending them an Affordability Relief check for \$300 each, drawn from our record-high Rainy Day Fund to offset in some small way the cost of goods and groceries that are increasing because of tariffs and other circumstances beyond our State's control. An estimated 725,000 Maine people will be eligible for the Affordability Relief check, and as in the past, we would cap it at an income of, say, \$75,000 for single filer, \$112,000-something for head of households and \$150,000 for joint filers. We're putting tax dollars back in your pockets and you will have the freedom to decide what to do with it. You're welcome.

And let me explain, our Rainy Day Fund, thanks to good bipartisan work of the Legislature, stands at its legal maximum of more than a billion dollars. A balance that is nearly five times greater than when I took office. The fund is in a strong position, sufficient for us to draw upon it to meet some of the immediate needs of Maine people. I ask that you promptly approve this measure.

And while we're at it, let's continue to tackle one of the most significant issues facing Maine people; the high cost of housing. The prospect of home ownership used to be a cornerstone of the American Dream, a gateway to financial stability. But today, that dream is out of reach for many. The median price for a home in Maine is at \$405,000, a record high. It is only slightly lower than the national price of \$414,000 and some change. The national news is filled with stories about the difficulties in renting or buying a house from California to Connecticut. Almost 30% of all Americans are house poor. That is, they spend 30% or more of their incomes on housing. The

entire nation is short millions of units of housing for rent or for sale. High interest rates, supply chain constraints and labor shortages have made the situation even worse. And the President's tariffs on aluminum, steel and other building materials have driven up costs and slowed new construction at a time when we need it most.

Since I took office, my administration has authorized nearly \$315 million to help with housing, nearly five times more than the State of Maine spent on housing production from 2000 to 2018. In the past year alone, my Administration and Maine Housing have financed more than 1,000 affordable homes, mostly new construction. One of those developments is Wilbur's Woods in Brunswick. It's 21 new single-family homes which have sold for well below the median home price in Cumberland County. Kathy Amsden has lived and worked in Maine all her life, but when she was getting ready to retire and ready to downsize, she couldn't find a smaller place within her budget. When Wilbur's Woods became available, she was one of the first people to move in. Another new housing development built with State funds is Congress Square Apartments, a 48-unit apartment building in Belfast. One young woman named Linda who works at a local business said she was really relieved to find a place to rent that was within her budget. Those affordable apartments will keep more young people living and working in Maine. And together, we enacted historic legislation to knock down barriers to housing in Maine and we created the Mobile Home Preservation Fund, helping mobile home residents purchase their own parks before the wealthy out-of-state corporations could move in, swoop in and buy them out from under them and evict the residents. And so far, residents have purchased 13 mobile home parks in Maine, creating long-term stability for those people. You're welcome.

More will follow. In fact, just yesterday, residents of a mobile home park in Jay became the first to sign an agreement to purchase their own park under our new Right of First Refusal Law. And a member of the Blueberry Fields Cooperative in Brunswick; this happened in Brunswick; had been afraid that his rent was going to be going up by 400 to 500 dollars a month if his mobile home park went up for sale. As someone on a very low fixed income, he knew he couldn't pay that and neither could his neighbors. But with State support, the Blueberry Field Cooperative purchased their mobile home park, protecting it as affordable housing for years to come. As that man put it, quote, "we are now in charge of our destinies here," end quote.

It's been said that life is measured not by what you build, but by who you lift. Well, here in Maine, we're both building and lifting lives up, so that people can be in charge of their own destinies. We can't give up on the American Dream, not when young families can't find a house that fits their budget, not when retirees want to downsize but can't find a smaller place at a reasonable cost, not when businesses are losing workers because they can't find housing nearby. So, tonight, I'm announcing a \$70 million American Dream proposal to further expand housing in Maine. First, I propose two new pilot programs backed by \$17.5 million in one-time funds from the Rainy Day Fund, administered by Maine Housing, to build 530 new homes and apartments for middle-class families. Second, with another one-time infusion from the Rainy Day Fund, I propose that we increase our investments in those very successful housing programs that we already have by \$52.5 million, which will in turn trigger at least \$15 million in matching funds. In total, this American Dream proposal will result in 825 new homes all across Maine. It's the American Dream.

Now, let's talk about education, which represents about 41% of the entire State budget, as you know. In the last seven

years, we've built a strong pipeline from classroom to career for young people across Maine, from pre-K to postgrad. We've increased research and development funding for the University of Maine, which in turn has earned a prestigious R-1 designation, placing it among our top research universities in America. You're welcome. And during that period, the University of Maine System has conferred 42,416 degrees and credentials, including a record-high number of degrees in high demand fields like engineering, computing, health care, business, teaching and new technologies. And as a result of our investments and UMaine's good work, the University System is realizing its seventh straight semester of increased enrollment. And Chancellor Malloy, President Ferrini-Mundy and Board of Trustees Chair Trish Riley, I believe you're here tonight and I want to thank you for the great work you've been doing. And I want to congratulate the University of Maine, the University of Maine Graduate Workers Union, UAW, for recently negotiating their first-ever collective bargaining contract. Thank you for that hard work. And, of course, we've also increased funding for the Maine Maritime Academy for campus improvements and operations over the past seven years, making it an extremely attractive institution for an increasing number of students, graduates who will go on to good-paying careers in the maritime industries. I believe the president of Maine Maritime Academy, Craig Johnson, is here with us tonight, and I want to thank him for his work, too.

And finally; oh, yeah, we made community college, two years of community college free. We did! You're welcome. More than 23,000 students have taken advantage of our free community college program to date, with many more scheduled to achieve a degree or certificate over the next two years. Nearly 2,000 of those students have transferred to the University of Maine or other four-year colleges. Free community college grads have gone on to work in Maine. Grads like Tori Wile. Tori grew up in Gray, building things with her grandfather in his woodworking shop and she knew that someday, she wanted to be a builder herself. She couldn't afford to go to college, but our free community college program allowed her to get a degree in building construction technology. And Tori recently helped build a new electrical lab at Central Maine Community College in Auburn. Tori and Vice President of Maine Community College System, Dr. Betsy Libby, are here with us tonight and I want to acknowledge and congratulate them on their great work.

The free community college program has made a life-changing difference for thousands of Maine young people, and that's why as part of my budget last year, I had proposed making it permanent. Well, the Legislature, in balancing many considerations, agreed to continue it through the class of 2025. Look, education opens doors of opportunity. And so, tonight, I'm taking another swing at it. Let's make community college free in Maine permanently.

Look, these three proposals; distributing relief checks, building more homes and making free community college permanent; will provide both immediate and long-term cost relief. Now I want to talk about a few other ways that Maine people can save money, especially as we head into tax filing season.

Well, as many of you know, there is significant tax relief in our current budget to keep costs down for Maine families. When I took office 2019, there was \$388 million in direct tax relief for Maine families in the biennial budget. We increased that to nearly \$1.1 billion in tax relief. What does that mean for the people of Maine? It means more money back in your pockets. In Maine, if you are working and raising a child, you may very well qualify for \$650 through the State's Earned Income Tax

Credit. That's \$650 directly back into your pocket. What's more, you may also qualify for Maine's \$305 Dependent Exemption Tax Credit for your child, and this year, if your child is under the age of six, that credit doubles to \$610 thanks to Senate President Mattie Daughtry. Thank you, Senate President. Or if you're a graduate who's paying off your school loans, you probably qualify for a Student Loan Tax Credit, once known as Opportunity Maine, which gives you a refundable tax credit of up to \$2,500 a year. This is one of the most generous programs in the country for tax relief for people paying off their student loans. Or if you're an older citizen, senior citizen, you might qualify for property tax relief up to \$2,000 through our Property Tax Fairness Credit. And your pension itself might well be exempt from income taxes. That's all real money back in your pocket. And I want every person in Maine to take advantage of these benefits, of these refunds.

So, another way we're fighting to hold down costs is by fully funding the State's share of education. In 2022, we met the State's obligation to pay 55% of the cost of education for the first time in history. You're welcome. Then, in 2023, we also met the State's obligation to fund revenue sharing at five percent, after the previous administration had slashed it to two percent. You all heard from the towns and cities, that means more money goes back to the towns and cities to pay police, firefighters, road crews and local services, so that less of that cost is borne by the property taxpayers, and the towns and cities appreciate it. My Administration prioritized education and revenue sharing because the voters and the taxpayers demanded it.

Property taxes are still too high for far too many. And of course, we have a commission created by the Legislature and signed into law by me working on that very issue today. But I know that the State of Maine has got to do whatever it can to hold down property taxes, which is why I'm including another \$46 million in my supplemental budget General Funds to maintain our commitment to pay 55% of the cost of education. I don't want to see any of those costs passed on to your property taxes.

But let's talk about a few other things that we've done in education and for our schools and for public education. So, first, we're providing free school meals for all public school students statewide. You're welcome. And we've helped more than 120 school districts provide healthy, locally-grown food from Maine farms. Pretty sensible. We're also repairing crumbling school infrastructure across the State, and we've expanded early childhood education with more children enrolled in pre-K than ever before. And we raised the minimum teacher salary and we added a thousand teachers to the workforce. Great teachers. For the first time in decades, we upgraded equipment at the career technical education centers and enrollment at the CTEs is at its highest level ever. We expanded early college programs to serve 65,000 kids and counting. That's a lot of high school kids getting the college experience and going on. And Maine's high school graduation rate is the best it's ever been. And surveys are showing that Maine students are actually healthier and happier than they were just two years ago, with a significant number of them reporting an improvement in their mental health and a decrease in the need to drink, smoke or use other substances to cope with stresses in life.

Still, like many people across Maine, I was concerned when the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed declining test scores from a sampling of 1,800 Maine students in the fourth and eighth grades back in January 2024, two years ago. Well, as the daughter of a long-time public school teacher and someone who raised five daughters who went to public schools in Maine, it's important to me that every child acquires

math and reading skills to set themselves up for success. Happily, Maine's own achievement test, which tests all fourth grade and eighth students twice a year, actually show much better results, with scores that track and even surpass the national norms. And while that broader data is encouraging, we want to do more to make sure that our students are getting the best education they can. And so, I directed the Maine Department of Education to strengthen students' reading and math skills in every way they can. The Department then created the Maine State Reading and Math Action Plans to bring more evidence-based instruction, educator training and academic partnerships into Maine classrooms and improve student skills. This effort builds on a \$10 million investment we made in 2024 to encourage schools to adopt the highly successful Science of Reading approach, teaching kids how to read. It has turned around poor literacy rates for kids across the country, and it's doing the same here in Maine. The Department of Education has also worked closely with individual schools to improve their students' scores. So, like Indian Township school principal Molly Newell wrote us, thanking us, saying that what she's seeing is not just better scores, but increased student confidence, deeper understanding of scientific concepts and stronger preparation for future academic success.

And while I'm talking about educational attainment, there's something else that stands in the way of student success, I believe. Something's been on the top of my mind and the mind of many teachers across Maine, and that's cell phones in the classroom. We know that social media can be very disruptive, especially during the school day, and disruptive to the mental health of young people. So, it's time to get cell phones out of classrooms. Tonight, I propose that we enact a statewide ban on cell phone use during the school day, bell to bell, to reduce distraction and disruption and keep children's attention focused on learning. When cell phones are removed from classrooms, research shows that student performance improves, test scores improve, behavior improves, attendance improves and social dynamics improves. Makes sense.

Now, some students might be upset with the idea of a ban on cell phone use in school, and it'll be a significant change for some. But I was encouraged by one senior at Morse High School in Bath, who told a news station that when his school implemented the cell phone ban, he wasn't fond of it at first. But then, he realized it actually was giving him more time to talk with his friends in person, including over lunch, instead of everybody looking down at their phones every minute of the school day. Change isn't always easy, but if the past seven years have taught us anything, it's that we have to be able to adapt to new challenges.

This past weekend brought another reminder of our need to adapt when dangerously cold temperatures and wind chills tested our electric grid, just as other extreme weather events have done the past few years. While the average price of electricity in Maine is typically the lowest in New England, that's of no comfort to Maine people who are suffering under the weight of high energy bills. I get my CMP bill in Farmington and like a lot of folks, it's not fun to open. And that's also exactly why my Administration opposed a massive rate hike request from CMP that the PUC rightly rejected out of hand. But the high price of electricity is not, as some Republican friends would say, driven predominantly by renewable energy policies. Instead, it's driven by our significant over-reliance on fossil fuels, primarily natural gas, to generate electricity; read the studies; especially during peak periods such as this cold spell. In fact, more than half of the electricity produced in New England is generated by burning natural gas. Look at the prices. What Maine needs to

do is keep diversifying our energy sources by welcoming more clean energy onto the grid in order to offset the price of natural gas. It was like the British House of Commons for a second there. That is why we're procuring more cost-effective clean energy like wind and solar here in Maine, in Northern Maine, in particular, and hydro from Canada while pursuing energy storage as well. And at the same time, Efficiency Maine Trust and my Energy Department will be making available rebates for high efficiency water heaters as well as heat pumps, and for weatherization and other energy upgrades, because, after all, the best dollar saved on electricity is the one not spent.

Take the Lovewell family in Caribou, for example. Their 100-year-old family home just wouldn't stay warm in the winter. Snow was blowing through the old, cracked windows and electric heating bills were in the thousands. But with weatherization funds from the State, the Lovewells replaced 14 outdated windows, insulated their home and made other upgrades which have made their home warm and comfortable and saved them a lot on home heating bills. Quote, "not only did it give new life to an old home," they said, "it gave comfort, safety and enjoyment to our family."

Their story is not unique. Maine has one of the oldest housing stocks in the country. And while we love these old houses, like I love mine, they're a bear to heat, especially with oil. So, I'm proud to say that since I took office, we've actually cut our reliance on heating oil down from 62% of all homes to 52%, with still a ways to go. Let's lower our energy costs by lowering our reliance on fossil fuels and make all our homes safer and more weatherproof.

Another driver of high cost for Maine people, of course, is health care, especially right now. Here in Maine, we've worked hard to expand health care to more people, to small businesses, to the self-employed and to families across Maine. And we have fought to make coverage more affordable. On my first day in office, I expanded Medicaid, ending my predecessor's adamant opposition to following the will of the people. And thanks to that move, nearly 230,000 people, all told, have gotten access to health care in Maine, including preventative care like cancer screenings. In 2020 and 2021 alone, Medicaid expansion reduced the cost of uncompensated care for Maine hospitals by \$126 million. You're welcome.

One primary care doctor in Machias wrote to me about a patient whose life had been changed because of Medicaid expansion. A young woman with significant health issues was able to restart medications because she now had health insurance. Now, he said, she's finishing her GED and going on to nursing school. He said, quote, "our State needs more workers desperately," the doctor wrote, "but people need good health to work and MaineCare expansion has made this reality possible," end quote.

Besides expanding Medicaid, we've also expanded access to private health insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Together, we enacted the Made for Maine Health Coverage Act, which established the State-based health insurance marketplace, CoverME.gov, and which made many preventative care visits free or less costly. And we codified the protections of the ACA, for instance, barring an insurance company from refusing to cover you on account of a pre-existing condition. I mean, life is a pre-existing condition, isn't it? And while the U.S. Supreme Court and the federal government have rolled back the right to reproductive health care, we in Maine have fought to protect it and to expand that right. And we're not backing down. You're welcome.

You want to protect women and girls, then fully fund health care for women and girls and fully fund domestic violence

shelters and fully fund sexual assault service, if you really want to protect women and girls. You're welcome.

We also expanded health coverage for postpartum care, a full year of postpartum, and we increased funding for family planning services provided by organizations like Planned Parenthood and Maine Family Planning, which so many people rely on for primary and preventative care. And earlier today, I was proud to announce that, once again, where the federal government has fallen down, Maine will stand tall. And I propose in my supplemental budget a one-time appropriation of two and a quarter million dollars in General Funds to replace the money that this President and Congress have cruelly cut from Planned Parenthood and Maine Family Planning's primary care for services. We'll do it.

Look, the progress we've made in health care at the State level is in jeopardy, though, because of the President and the Congress. As you know, Congress passed and the President signed legislation that I'll call the 'big bad bill.' A bill that cut billions of dollars in health care funding over the next decade in order to finance tax breaks primarily for billionaires who don't want them, don't even need them. What a backward policy. And while Maine will receive \$190 million through the Rural Health Transformation Program; and we'll use those funds well, we'll put them to good use; God, those funds pale in comparison to the estimated five billion dollars in health care funds that Maine will lose over the next 10 years. What's that about? Because of the federal government's actions, upwards of 33,000 people across Maine are likely to lose access to health care. And that means missing out on basic preventative care, cancer screenings, treatment for addiction and the fundamental basic care that every person in this State and this nation deserves. The loss of health care for those folks will lead to increased uncompensated care that will be absorbed by our hospitals first, and they're already in difficult financial straits, and they'll be forced to pass those costs onto consumers, onto Maine people, who will pay more for health insurance or out-of-pocket care as a result. See the fixure here? See the formula? And I haven't even mentioned Congress's failure to extend the enhanced ACA subsidies, which has already caused 8,500 people in Maine to abandon their health insurance altogether and driving up the cost for 10s of thousands more people who are ensured through the marketplace. And the number of people forced to drop their health coverage because they can't afford to pay their premiums is only expected to increase in the coming months.

One man from Cumberland told us that if his premiums increase as he expects, health insurance will be the single largest expense for his whole family; more than his mortgage. A grandmother from York who's raising her two grandchildren told us that if her insurance rates go up, she'll have to go without health insurance. This is entirely unnecessary. It's wrong. And I want to be clear; people will die because of this.

But look, even the ACA, which has become such a political football, it's only a Band-Aid on the whole problem of health care in America. And what health care really needs in this country right now is not a series of Band-Aids, it needs major surgery. Each individual state cannot, should not be left alone to grapple with this national crisis, because health care is a human right. We know it, most people know that now. Look, the federal government is capable of big things. It was the federal government that created Social Security and then Medicare. The federal government passed the Civil Rights Act. It was the federal government that built the Interstate Highway System in the 50s under Dwight Eisenhower. The federal government sent a man to the moon. It's time for the federal government to take its head out of the sand and address the crisis of health care

head-on, and nothing short of universal health care is acceptable. It's an idea whose time has come.

If you don't have to deal with health care, that's wonderful, but listen, one more thing; oh, you bet it is, Jim. It's the State of the State because everybody in this room has to deal with health care, and you can't be blind to that, and the cost on the states all across America and what's happening in Washington is putting huge burdens on all of us to try to do the humane thing and keep people alive and keep people healthy. It's basic human rights.

But listen, lastly, it is appropriate to pause to share a few reflections on the moment we find ourselves in. In doing so, I'm speaking to you now not as a Democrat or even as your Governor, but as a mother and a grandmother and a proud native of Maine, and very simply, an American citizen who, like you, deeply loves this nation and this State. But I worry about the future of our country and the fate of our democracy. I worry about the standing of our country in the eyes of the world and the standing of our country in the eyes of our own citizens. I believe we're at a dangerous moment in our history, a moment where the very idea of America is in peril. Maine's U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith once told us that the four principles of Americanism were the right to criticize, the right to hold unpopular beliefs, the right to protest, the right to independent thought. She was right. But today, I see a nation where our federal government uses its immense power to intimidate and to punish, to silence those who dare to criticize or question it. A federal government that has deployed mass law enforcement onto the streets of America, including here in Maine, stoking fear in our communities and killing American citizens in Minnesota and arresting people not on public safety grounds, but based on quotas, on skin color, on accents and religion and ethnic origin. A federal government that outright ignores the constitutional rights that are guaranteed to all of us, that undermines the rule of law and even attacks the courts who uphold it. And for those who may be unconcerned by the federal government's abuses of today, affecting our State, I only ask you to consider this, what happens when the federal government finds you to be the problem tomorrow?

This isn't partisan, this isn't about whether you're a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent. This is not about whether you live in a blue state, a red state, a purple state, a city, a suburb, a farm or a small rural town. It is about Margaret Chase Smith's principles of Americanism. It is about the very essence of America and the fundamental tenet that here, power comes from the people. Here, the rule of law reigns. Here, everyone is treated equally under the law, and here, we have no kings.

What will our chapter of the American story be as our history is read to our children and grandchildren and to generations yet to come? That choice is ours today. And I have hope. Because when the dawn seems furthest away, one star hangs in the night sky whose light keeps us from stumbling in the darkness. And that North Star will always help us find our way home. That North Star is the people of Maine. Over the past seven years, I've seen people run towards gunfire to save the lives of children in Lewiston, I've seen firefighters rush to the aid of a town rocked by a deadly gas explosion in Farmington, I've seen fire and rescue crews brave howling seas to save fishermen off the coast of Cape Elizabeth, I've seen strangers line the streets of Dover-Foxcroft to welcome the remains of a World War II veteran home at last. And I know Maine National Guardsmen have been training in the freezing cold in Gilead alongside soldiers from Montenegro. I've seen business owners line their windows with paper hearts to carry on the legacy of a

Mainer who quietly spread a contagion of kindness in Portland. I've seen fans come together to cheer a new soccer team with great pride and excitement in their Hearts of Pine. And I've seen new Mainers build their lives here in our beloved State, finding a good home among loving and welcoming people. Welcome home.

It is the people of Maine who reaffirm my faith every day, for the bonds we share will not be easily dissolved, that our democracy, defended by Maine people regardless of their politics, their power or their possessions will not be easily discarded. And I'll tell you this as your Governor, I will defend you, I will defend our Constitution; a Constitution written by immigrants; and I will defend our democracy with everything I have.

Fifty years ago, farmers gathered in Mars Hill, eager to be the first of millions to celebrate this country and welcome a new dawn in the history of America. One man wrote to the people of the future. He said, quote, "we of 1976 have faith that you will be there, as our fellow Americans of 1876 and 1776 had faith that we would be here. We now pass that faith on to you," he wrote. Well, I accept. Fifty years hence, I hope that better minds will have eliminated the scourge of cancer, that they will have explored the depths of our oceans for untold nutrients, that they will have found a way to preserve the air we breathe and the planet we were born to, that artificial intelligence will be commonplace but it will never replace the human touch, the human hand or the human heart. And that peace-seeking peoples will rule the nations. More importantly, when people of 2076 look back on us, I hope they see that we were a beacon of hope in dangerous times. That we stood side by side in moments of incredible joy and immense sorrow, sharing both gratitude and grief as one. And that we refuse to give in to a national drumbeat of division, doubt and dread, that we stood tall and defended democracy, that we worked together for the lasting benefit of all. Because from Bunker Hill to Little Round Top to Mars Hill to Capitol Hill and beyond, Maine people have climbed great heights to fight for democracy and to plant that flag of liberty.

Today, whistles are sounding, alarms are ringing, calling once again for conscience, for common sense, for courage. Calling for us to stand up again to defend the Constitution and to preserve the safety and security of our people. All of our people. We have the mountains of Maine at our backs, our ridgeline of courage, a spine of granite. And like our noble champions throughout history, we will lead with our hearts. For we are the people of Maine.

And so, to the Honorable Members of the Maine Legislature, it has been a privilege to serve with you. You are an incredible array of public servants, always risking the friction and controversy that comes with public affairs, and with a dedication to public duty. And to my staff and my cabinet, I thank you for serving the people of Maine with hope, intelligence and compassion. And to my family, I would not be here tonight without you and I love you. And to the people of Maine, it has been my greatest honor to serve as your Governor these past seven years. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

At the conclusion of the address, Governor Janet T. Mills withdrew amid the applause of the Convention, the audience rising.

The purpose for which the Joint Convention was assembled having been accomplished, the Chair declared the same dissolved.

The Senate then retired to its chamber.

(After the Convention)

The House was called to order by the Speaker.

By unanimous consent, all matters having been acted upon were **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

On motion of Representative LAJOIE of Lewiston, the House adjourned at 8:27 p.m., until 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 3, 2026, or until the call of the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, respectively, pursuant to the Joint Order (S.P. 882) and in honor and lasting tribute to Miriam Althea Keller of Palermo, Betty I. Johnson of Lincolnville and the Honorable Kathy Irene Javner of Chester.