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Legislative Record

House of Representatives

One Hundred and Thirty-First Legislature

State of Maine

Daily Edition

First Regular Session

Beginning December 7, 2022

Beginning with Page H-1

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 15

YEA - Abdi, Adams, Albert, Ankeles, Arata, Ardell, Arford, Babin, Bagshaw, Bell, Blier, Boyer, Boyle, Bradstreet, Brennan, Bridgeo, Campbell, Carlow, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collamore, Collings, Copeland, Costain, Crafts, Craven, Cray, Crockett, Cyrway, Davis, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Drinkwater, Eaton, Faulkingham, Fay, Fredericks, Gattine, Gere, Gifford, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Hasenfus, Henderson, Hepler, Hobbs, Jackson, Jauch, Javner, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, Lanigan, LaRochelle, Lavigne, Lee, Lemelin, Lookner, Lyman, Madigan, Malon, Mason, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett H, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, Ness, Newman, Nutting, O'Connell, O'Neil, Osher, Parry, Paulhus, Perkins, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Pringle, Quint, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Rudnicki, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sampson, Sargent, Sayre, Schmersal-Burgess, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Smith, Soboleski, Stover, Strout, Supica, Terry, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, Warren, White B, White J, Williams, Wood S, Woodsome, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Carmichael, Dunphy, Foster, Libby, Morris, Paul, Swallow.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Hymes, Sheehan.

Yes, 137; No, 7; Absent, 6; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

137 having voted in the affirmative and 7 voted in the negative, with 6 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **ACCEPTED**.

The Bill was **READ ONCE**. **Committee Amendment "A" (H-15)** was **READ** by the Clerk and **ADOPTED**.

Under suspension of the rules the Bill was given its **SECOND READING WITHOUT REFERENCE** to the Committee on **Bills in the Second Reading**.

Under further suspension of the rules the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-15)** and sent for concurrence.

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

Majority Report of the Committee on **APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** on Bill "An Act Making Certain Appropriations and Allocations and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 257) (L.D. 424)

Signed:

Senators:

ROTUNDO of Androscoggin
DUSON of Cumberland

Representatives:

SACHS of Freeport
COLLINGS of Portland
FAY of Raymond
GATTINE of Westbrook
MATLACK of St. George
MILLETT of Cape Elizabeth

Minority Report of the same Committee reporting **Ought Not to Pass** on same Bill.

Signed:

Senator:

BENNETT of Oxford

Representatives:

BLIER of Buxton
CARLOW of Buxton
DUCHARME of Madison
MILLETT of Waterford

READ.

Representative SACHS of Freeport moved that the House **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ACCEPT** the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Sachs.

Representative **SACHS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Colleagues of the House, today I rise to urge you to support LD 424. Moving forward this piece of legislation is the most important business we have been sent here to do and I don't say that as an exercise in hyperbole, Madam Speaker. "An Act Making Certain Appropriations and Allocations and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government," known more informally as the budget, has far-reaching consequences. This legislation will affect every department in State government. It affects our public school classrooms; every single one; our hospitals, our transportation, our State employees and our teachers. In the end, the State budget will impact every single person here in Maine and if we pass it today, we eliminate the specter of a State shutdown, we provide predictability for our communities, our businesses, our schools and our municipalities and we govern as voters have asked us to, Madam Speaker; responsibly.

Today, we have the opportunity to pass part one of the Legislature's budget, also known as a continuing services budget. A continuing services budget funds both the baseline of established State operations and the salaries of current State employees and additionally, the set of budget initiatives that are required to fulfill previously enacted statutory obligations. That is what we are here to do. And to be clear, continuing services makes some pretty incredible investment in Maine people and Maine businesses and it also stays well below the statutory appropriations cap. This is a responsible budget, Madam Speaker, that strengthens Maine's economy while working within existing resources.

Beyond efficient governance, part one of our biennial budget continues critical investments in education, behavioral health care, substance use disorder treatment, property tax relief and investments in our child care workforce. It fulfills our promises to Mainers to meet our commitments to our State's municipalities, ensures critical funding for long-term care facilities and nursing facilities and contains much-needed investments in mitigating climate change. And as we pledged,

it is pure and simple continuing services budget. The measures it contains do not add any new initiatives or taxes. Ultimately, it builds upon the good work that has been accomplished and continues our history of responsible fiscal management of the State's resources. It is a bill that each and every one of us can be proud of. It contains ideas from both sides of the aisle and represents some amazing, thoughtful, bipartisan work done by all of our different policy committees, including the wonderful bipartisan members of the Appropriations Committee.

Madam Speaker, a vote for LD 424 means that you support funding our schools at the 55% level, bringing stability to our schools and communities in the midst of their budget process. A vote for LD 424 means you support $262 million of tax relief. A vote for LD 424 means you support critical programs for health care workers, child care providers, farmers, veterans and teachers. A vote for LD 424 means you support programs for homeless youth, free meals for all school children, environmental protections and increased support for foster families. A vote for LD 424 means you support certainty for our communities, good and thoughtful governance and the ability to move forward and discuss new initiatives and programs in the next phase of the budget process. I urge your support for LD 424. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Harrison, Representative Riseman.

Representative **RISEMAN**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to pose a question to the Speaker, if I could?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **RISEMAN**: Could you tell me what the total dollar amount of this proposed LD is, please?

The SPEAKER: The Member has posed a question to anyone who wishes to answer. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Sachs.

Representative **SACHS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In reference to the Member's question, this is approximately $9.885 billion at last count.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Auburn, Representative Libby.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Perhaps the math is off, but I have a number of $9.96 billion net general fund cost.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass as Amended Report. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 16

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine, Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Hobbs, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett H, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, O'Connell, O'Neil, Osher, Paulhus, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Warren, White B, Williams, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Jackson, Javner, Lanigan, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Riseman, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White B, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Hymes, Sheehan.

Yes, 81; No, 63; Absent, 6; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

81 having voted in the affirmative and 63 voted in the negative, with 6 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **ACCEPTED**.

The Bill was **READ ONCE**. **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** was **READ** by the Clerk.

Representative SACHS of Freeport **PRESENTED House Amendment "A" (H-14)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**, which was **READ** by the Clerk.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ADOPT House Amendment "A" (H-14)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: The Chair calls on the Representative from Sanford, Representative Lanigan.

Representative **LANIGAN**: Yes, sorry, I had a question. Thank you, Madam Speaker, Members of the House, I had a question. I'm not seeing the language on this. Is this taking out the $200 million in tax; I just didn't know who would answer that.

The SPEAKER: The Chair would answer in the negative.

Representative **LANIGAN**: Okay, thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair is pleased to recognize the Representative from Waterford, Representative Millett.

Representative **MILLETT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think there is a bit of confusion. I thought the Good Representative from Freeport had asked for a roll call on this vote and I'm not sure it was requested.

The SPEAKER: A roll call is in order. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Winter Harbor, Representative Faulkingham.

Representative **FAULKINGHAM**: May I pose a question through the Chair?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **FAULKINGHAM**: So, yes, there was confusion. A roll call was asked for, so, a roll call is in order?

The SPEAKER: A roll call is in order. The Member may proceed.

Representative **FAULKINGHAM**: So, my question would be that this amendment strips the emergency?

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

Representative **FAULKINGHAM**: Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the pending motion because this amendment jumps to a foregone conclusion that this bill doesn't need an emergency and the constitutional intent here is that we're supposed to come together on a two-thirds budget and pass it in an emergency, so, I rise in opposition to the pending motion.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Acceptance of House Amendment "A" (H-14) to Committee Amendment "A" (H-12). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 17

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine,

Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Hobbs, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, O'Connell, O'Neil, Paulhus, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Warren, White B, Williams, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Jackson, Javner, Lanigan, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Millett H, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Riseman, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White J, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Hymes, Osher, Sheehan.

Yes, 79; No, 64; Absent, 7; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

79 having voted in the affirmative and 64 voted in the negative, with 7 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly **House Amendment "A" (H-14)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** was **ADOPTED**.

Representative MILLETT of Waterford **PRESENTED House Amendment "B" (H-16)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**, which was **READ** by the Clerk.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Waterford, Representative Millett.

Representative **MILLETT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to finish what the Clerk started to do in reading a very brief amendment so that it is very clear to all of you exactly what Amendment "B" proposes to do. It adds six lines by creating a new section called U, which would be on page 411 of this document that we are now debating and it simply contains these words; it is the intent of the Legislature that the budget next enacted after enactment of this Act by the 131st Legislature affecting the 2024/25 biennium, must include structural individual --

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Member may proceed.

Representative **MILLETT**: Let me back up. It must include structural income tax relief that primarily benefits low-income and middle-income individuals and families beginning in tax year 2024 with a 2024/25 general fund biennial cost equal to $200 million. My caucus and I, personally, feel very strongly that the message being sent by this amendment is in honor of and an appreciation for the many people who are struggling to make ends meet returning to the workforce in the months and years after the pandemic, when many people were involuntarily laid off and businesses closed and people had to struggle to put food on the table for themselves and their families. It was wrong then and, luckily, we've seen a resurgence in recent months. However, it's taken almost two and a half years to get back to an employment level comparable to that pre-pandemic. And many people are now finding it difficult even to return to the workforce and we feel that a signal should be sent to them that we value their work, that work is an important part of raising a family, that if you live by and understood the connotation of Maine being the best place in the country to live, work and raise a family, you can understand that connection that I agreed to and felt strongly about for years.

So, work is important and when people join the workforce and they try to do their best to earn enough to support themselves and their families, they are not only trying to meet a financial goal but a moral goal of applying and teaching their children and their spouse that it is important to contribute to the Maine economy by being a valued laborer/worker at any level because of the dignity of work itself. So, we are now in the months following the second of two payments to the people who were displaced, many of them losing their jobs, $850 for an inflation payment last summer and fall, $450 that recently concluded for the winter energy problems that inflation has caused for all of us. We in our caucus; and I will digress in a moment, Madam Speaker, because you played an important role in bringing together a very important group of this Chamber a couple of weeks ago. And I'll get to that in just a second. But I think the value of work should not be simply rewarded by an occasional check that arrives in the mail and it's gone. And it's gone without any real clear message to it. What we'd like to do here with this amendment is to convey a structural intent to those folks who are in the lower- and middle-income brackets that we want you to continue to work and that we are committed to helping you do so by giving you structural tax relief that you can utilize by keeping more money in your pocket and your household budget. I think that's a goal that is shared by many people, not just Republicans. I believe that it is shared by many in this Chamber tonight.

So, back to two weeks ago, Madam Speaker. Following the weekend in which I'm sure that the Chief Executive on the second floor made inquiries of my House Chair from Freeport and many other members of the Appropriations; how are you coming? And I responded by saying; we're working well. We have a lot of work ahead of us. This was on the 12th and 13th of March. She invited me and my co-lead on Appropriations to a meeting on the morning of the 13th and she planted the seed for the first time in my earshot; would it help if we were to work together through that week and the week just closed trying to get to a bipartisan budget that didn't involve the entire $10.3 billion? Simply saying in the old days, and some of you remember that, there are some here that served in the years that we had a part one and a part two budget, where part one was simply the cost of keeping the store open, current services. No growth, no expansion, no new staff, no new programming. And that assignment was then laid out in a joint meeting with our presiding officer, her counterpart on the other end of the hall, all members of leaderships, the Chairs and leads to Appropriations and appropriate staff. And I listened closely to the discussion at that time and the Chief Executive actually opened by invitation, saying there is a risk here. If we only focus on getting to a current services budget, what happens and when do we get back to the table and finish the job? And she asked for input from people around the table. This was in the cabinet room, with a very nice light showing lit hopeful, the one that emanates from the Lewiston artist who embodied that message on the top of some closed mill sites. And she asked what would you like to see if you could frame the next step, part two of this process. And immediately, I heard comments from people saying well, affordable housing is beyond the reach of many people who would like to get into the workforce. It's definitely missing in many areas of the State where jobs are going wanting because there's no place to bring a family, no place to live. A second comment was I think we need to do a better job of making sure that child care is available so that folks who were struggling with kids at home and no child care during the pandemic months could return to the workforce with assurance that their children would be cared for. Others said let's do something about paid

family leave. My leaders brought up the question or the comment let's do something also to show that we value those workers by giving them more money left in their pockets when they finish their work assignment, whether it be weekly or biweekly or at the end of the year when they file their taxes, let's see if we can't reward them with something that's ongoing.

And it seemed to me, and I've said this to you, Madam Speaker, before and I appreciate your willingness to listen, that sent a lightbulb to me saying okay, if we wanted to work together, could we create an environment where not only the people we have here in Maine now but those who might look to coming to Maine by moving, by those who are here legally as immigrants, asylum seekers, allowing them to get back into the work; which I think, and I'm pretty sure I know, many of them want to do. By building a network of services in a priority way that recognizes, appreciates and rewards work.

So, that's the spirit and the intent of what I read to you. Let me tell you what it is not. It is not a design to interfere with the $9.885 billion package before us tonight. It is not an appropriation, it's not an allocation, it's not a Statute. It's a six-line piece of language called legislative intent regarding structural income tax relief. It is an attempt by members of my leadership and caucus to reach across the aisle and say could you join us in meeting something called an intent down the road after we probably get the revenue forecast on April 28th, saying to each other how would we best meet this goal. If you buy the goal, how do we best meet it? And my sense is that there is enough intelligence in this Chamber, I'm sure of it, with people who have served on the Taxation Committee, including my seatmate, the Representative from St. George, Representative Matlack, who is serving on both the Taxation and Appropriations Committees, the Majority Floor Leader from Gorham, Representative Terry, who served on that Committee repeatedly, two members of the leadership here also have experience on Appropriations. In an environment where we, to coin a word, a phrase, if we decided to work together, could we not assign to those two Committees with experienced people and leaders at the table and come up with something that would approximate a commitment down the road, not tonight, but a promise that we would begin that process of looking at a way to reward people who value work. I believe it could happen. I believe it is important that we think about it.

I'm reminded of my first gubernatorial appointer, a gentleman from Lewiston named Jim Longley, who campaigned and won his election by looking everybody in the eye and saying, think about it, thus, I guess I'm making a plea, probably; it's not the eleventh hour, probably closer to midnight; to see if any of you are willing to join us with that opportunity to look at each other and say how do we get there, how do we do this where we can send that message clearly in the months and years ahead.

So, that's my message, and I have to say in explaining my old-fashioned conscience and desire to be consistent, the reason I voted yes on accepting this bill, it was in the form of emergency, which I committed to for two weeks to get to and failed at the last moment, and the reason I voted against the repeal in House Amendment "A" I'd like to keep it as an emergency because it is important. We are sending a message. We're saying that this is important and I would like to keep it on the table in that bill going forward with the knowledge and understanding and hope; I guess, I'll ask that as a hopeful request; that some of you might be willing to join us in that effort.

I'll close, Madam Speaker, once again thanking you for not only being a player but a solid and continuing listener to our point of view, our leaders, myself and remind all of us of the words that were said every time we came together from the day we were sworn in to your inauguration, to the State of the Budget, to the State of the Judiciary, to the State of the Tribes and to every morning's pastors who have admonished us on multiple occasions; please work together. Thank you.

Representative SACHS of Freeport moved that **House Amendment "B" (H-16)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** be **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **INDEFINITELY POSTPONE House Amendment "B" (H-16)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

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

Representative **FAULKINGHAM**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, there's no way that I can articulate the reasons for voting yes for this amendment better than my good colleague from Waterford but I do have to rise and speak in favor of this amendment and in opposition to the pending motion because all the debate before and after this amendment on this budget hinge on the importance of this amendment, in my mind.

This amendment seeks to commit $200 million in tax relief to our most vulnerable families being crushed by record-breaking cost of living. Low- and middle-income wage earners need to be able to keep more of their hard-earned money, especially those making under $50,000 a year. This relief would help earners but especially earners on the lower end of the pay scale. These people who can least afford to pay historic prices of energy, fuel, food, medicine and necessities for day-to-day living.

Our proposal, the one before you, is just 2% of the taxpayer money in this budget. We must support Maine workers. Reducing income taxes for lower- and middle-income people is a modest, reasonable price for generating a bipartisan budget. Maine is the third-highest tax burden State in the country. Madam Speaker, this is my third term in the Legislature and in my first two terms, there has been a lot of bitterness in the Chamber. That is a bitterness that I have not felt this Session. We have come in here and it's a new day in the Legislature. The last three months have honestly been a joy in this place. There are new leaders on both ends and a new Speaker. The day we elected you to Speaker, Madam Speaker, we cast one vote. It was a sign of unity that I have felt every day since then. There's been optimism and joy in this building that I haven't felt in five years.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to see that go out the door. This is a modest proposal of tax relief for low- and middle-income people. We can work together. We can keep this thing on the rails and, Madam Speaker, I thank you for trying. You've been there, you've opened your door to me, you've listened to me over and over, even up until today, a few hours ago. But I told you then I won't stop and I won't stop now. I'm making one final plea to my colleagues; please join me in voting yes on this amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Auburn, Representative Libby.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, having just now read this amendment for the first time, may I pose a question to the Chair?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I would like to know; clarify here; as I read this amendment, it

does not appear to provide immediate structural tax relief to Maine citizens. Can someone please clarify that for me?

The SPEAKER: The Member has posed a question to anyone who can answer. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Fort Kent, Representative Theriault.

Representative **THERIAULT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not anticipate that I was going to rise and speak on this but I felt like I had to as a first-term legislator, somebody who has a lot of respect for this branch and a lot of respect for you, Madam Speaker. We had a bipartisan group of legislators head to northern Maine a few weeks ago and I felt that same spirit that my leader was just talking about. And I think we have an opportunity here to not let this rest of the year go in a way that is going to make it very challenging for all of us to work together. I feel like this is a very open-ended proposal.

I was elected by both Republicans and Democrats and Independents this past election season and I ran people over politics. And that resonates with people back home. What resonates with people, the message that voters continue to talk about and as we explore this amendment was; can't you just work together? And I see glimmers of hope as I have conversations with Members from both sides of the aisle. I see the glimmers of hope but I also see how easy it is to get stuck in the old ways of the past. And so, I have to ask myself, Madam Speaker, which direction are we going to head? Are we going to head towards a future where new legislators feel like they have a place here where they can speak and represent their constituents? Low- and middle-class families is why I'm here. I'm very fortunate to come from a family who started with nothing. My grandfather was working on a farm, left school at third grade, second grade, he can't read or write. These are the sort of people that we have to answer to when we go back home. And so, I just have to ask Members from both sides to put people over politics. Let's come together. And I'm especially talking to first-term legislators who maybe feel like they have to go one direction or another. We have a chance here to come together. Let's take the step we need to take. This is what I'm fearing is the final straw. No matter what happens, I have a commitment to work together with colleagues from both sides of the aisle but it's just important that I speak today because if I stayed silent, it would bother me for the rest of the Session. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Vassalboro, Representative Bradstreet.

Representative **BRADSTREET**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I understand that there's a motion on the floor essentially to end debate and that's what I'd like to speak to just for a moment. I think we've already heard some people who would really need to be heard on this and I think ending debate on this at this juncture would be a big disservice to the Body. So, I urge us all to vote against the pending motion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Gorham, Representative Terry.

Representative **TERRY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker and Members of the House, I rise right now to reiterate my commitment to providing relief to low- and middle-income Mainers, including working families and older Mainers who are on fixed incomes, many of them are still struggling to make ends meet. I know that Members of this Body are firmly committed to doing that important work as well and I thank my Colleague from Waterford for continuing to have the conversations of ongoing relief. However, this amendment is at the time just not the best approach to accomplish that goal. This continuing services budget that we are preparing to vote for is about simply ensuring that we meet our responsibility as a Legislature to fund the basic services needed to keep the lights on in Maine for the next two years.

I am very proud of the tireless work and countless hours that leadership from both caucuses have put in at this point, which continued until around 1:00/1:30 this afternoon. But any new relief initiatives are better to be discussed in the coming weeks and months, when we have the time and space to really dig into what we should do to ensure that we are meeting the needs of Maine families. We will also have an updated revenue forecast available in May which will help us make these decisions with the most up-to-date information. I'm excited and committed to the work that lies ahead and to engage with all Members of this Body to work together to find solutions that provide relief to the Mainers who need it most and I feel rest assured that we'll be able to do this together. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Representative **RUDNICKI**: Madam Speaker, may I pose a question?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **RUDNICKI**: If we have time to move forward, why are we doing this now? That's my question.

The SPEAKER: The Member has posed a question to anyone who wishes to answer. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Portland, Representative Lookner.

Representative **LOOKNER**: Madam Speaker, I wanted to rise in opposition to the amendment and in support of the motion to postpone this. So, I think our State, we need to recognize the tremendous need we are faced with when looking at the services that our State provides and how imperative it is for us to pass this budget now and looking at, you know, the desperation that's out there among our State's youth, the lack of services that are out there for helping kids on the street who can't rely on their families to help them. Those are vital services that our State can provide that would be hindered and it would hurt the lowest-income Mainers to pass tax relief on this level without raising revenue elsewhere.

So, I cannot support this amendment and I don't want to belabor the point, I just think that, you know, if we were really serious about helping low- and middle-income Mainers that we've got to raise the revenue elsewhere and look at the need that's out there because what we're doing now isn't cutting it. So, I look forward to working with everybody in the future to provide for low- and middle-income Mainers. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Indefinite Postponement of House Amendment "B" (H-16) to Committee Amendment "A" (H-12). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 18

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine, Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Hobbs, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, O'Connell, O'Neil, Paulhus, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Warren, White B, Williams, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Jackson, Javner, Lanigan, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Millett H, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White J, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Hymes, Osher, Sheehan.

Yes, 80; No, 63; Absent, 7; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

80 having voted in the affirmative and 63 voted in the negative, with 7 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly **House Amendment "B" (H-16)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** was **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

Representative SACHS of Freeport **PRESENTED House Amendment "D" (H-18)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**, which was **READ** by the Clerk.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **ADOPT House Amendment "D" (H-18)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER**:** The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Sachs.

Representative **SACHS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I'd like to post your attention to a small technical change, which is what this amendment is. It changes the mill expectation pursuant to Maine Revised Statute Title 20-A, Section 15671-A for fiscal year 2023/24. This is regarding our school funding. The mill rate is decreased from 7.29 to 6.97. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Alfred, Representative Sampson.

Representative **SAMPSON**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a question through the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **SAMPSON**: Would we be able to get the total amount of what that amounts to, please?

The SPEAKER: The Member has posed a question to anyone who wishes to answer. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Sachs.

Representative **SACHS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This does not change the appropriations of LD 424 at all.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Alfred, Representative Sampson.

Representative **SAMPSON**: Thank you. I'll be a little more specific, Madam Speaker. This amendment is speaking to the mill rate. I'd like to know the amount that this will reflect, in this change, specifically. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Member has posed a question through the Chair to any Member wishing to answer the question. The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Sachs.

Representative **SACHS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My understanding is this shifts the cost from municipalities back to the State for their share by about $42 million, but I'm sure my good friend, the Representative from Alfred can double check that with the Department of Education. But I would like to stress, Madam Speaker, that this does not impact the appropriations amount in LD 424 at all. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Adoption of House Amendment "D" (H-18) to Committee Amendment "A" (H-12). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 19

YEA - Abdi, Adams, Albert, Ankeles, Arata, Ardell, Arford, Babin, Bagshaw, Bell, Blier, Boyer, Boyle, Bradstreet, Brennan, Bridgeo, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collamore, Collings, Copeland, Costain, Crafts, Craven, Cray, Crockett, Cyrway, Davis, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Eaton, Faulkingham, Fay, Foster, Fredericks, Gattine, Gere, Gifford, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Hasenfus, Henderson, Hepler, Hobbs, Jackson, Jauch, Javner, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lavigne, Lee, Lemelin, Libby, Lookner, Lyman, Madigan, Malon, Mason, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett H, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Morris, Murphy, Ness, Newman, Nutting, O'Neil, Parry, Paul, Paulhus, Perkins, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Pringle, Quint, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Rudnicki, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sampson, Sargent, Sayre, Schmersal-Burgess, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Smith, Soboleski, Stover, Strout, Supica, Swallow, Terry, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, Warren, White B, White J, Williams, Wood S, Woodsome, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY – NONE.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Hymes, Lanigan, O'Connell, Osher, Sheehan.

Yes, 141; No, 0; Absent, 9; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

141 having voted in the affirmative and 0 voted in the negative, with 9 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly **House Amendment "D" (H-18)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** was **ADOPTED**.

Representative HENDERSON of Rumford **PRESENTED House Amendment "E" (H-19)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**, which was **READ** by the Clerk.

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

Representative **HENDERSON**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. It is no surprise that I stand before you today in opposition of LD 424. I, however, offer an amendment that would make this budget more equitable. That is the removal of taxpayer-funded abortions. It is inequitable to force Mainers to fund abortions against their will. Forcing Maine taxpayers to fund abortion marginalizes hundreds of thousands of her citizens and it uses State funds to end unborn lives. This is clearly an injustice against Maine's most helpless citizens as it allocates funds away from services that are nonviolent and that provide life-affirming support for our women and their families. We have heard the amendment that would provide tax relief to low-income taxpaying families. That amendment was not adopted. I stand needing this Body to recognize that in doing so, we are taking taxes from Maine's economically vulnerable families and weaponizing that money to be used against Maine's most vulnerable citizens.

I could, Madam Speaker, in closing, use familiar statements such as I urge my colleagues or I compel them to support. But, instead, here on the largest stage of the State of Maine, having done all to stand, I stand. I stand for the lives of our unborn Mainers, Mainers who will never have a name, Mainers who will never have a heritage, Mainers who will never have a people. I stand for those who will never know a mother's love or a father's pride of accomplishment. And I stand in opposition for those being forced to foot that bill. I stand for truth.

I cannot support a bill that forces its citizens to pay for the taking of one innocent life, let alone thousands. Madam Speaker, I don't urge my colleagues, I can't compel them, so I won't ask. I, however, stand and allow the consciences of my colleagues to determine whether or not I stand alone. Thank you.

Representative SACHS of Freeport moved that **House Amendment "E" (H-19)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** be **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **INDEFINITELY POSTPONE House Amendment "E" (H-19)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

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

Representative **PAUL**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I continue?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **PAUL**: Thank you. I rise in support of this amendment. In 1994, a prominent United States Senator said; those of us who are opposed to abortion should not be compelled to pay for them. That Senator was Joe Biden. Then, he was part of a strong bipartisan coalition defending the pre-born and protecting pro-life Americans from coercion and force to violate deeply-held convictions. Today, we are facing a majority budget which ignores the concerns of a vast number of Maine citizens. I have heard that my colleagues across the aisle believe it is acceptable because the majority wins, right? Well, I wish for the sake of consistency we all would want the majority voice to be heard in regard to taxpayer-funded abortion as well.

In poll after poll, it shows the majority of Mainers and Americans do not agree with taxpayer-funded abortion on demand. One recent poll found that 62% of Maine voters oppose this, along with 34% of self-ascribed pro-choice voters. Mainers are afforded religious protections in both the U.S. and Maine Constitutions. Do we want our State to be the place where the right of conscience and the religious liberty of our people are trampled in sacrifice to political ideology? Mainers who believe life is a gift and that we are created in the image of almighty God, deserve to have choice afforded to them as well. I wonder what has happened to the abortion lobby that demanded that government keep out of women's reproductive rights. People have the right to give freely to causes that they support and those who wish to fund abortion can choose to do that. However, Mainers should not be forced to have their hard-earned tax dollars used to take the life of a precious, irreplaceable, priceless pre-born baby.

Abortion does not end a pregnancy; birth ends a pregnancy. Abortion ends a life. The constitutional right to life should no longer be allowed to be violated by stripping religious liberty of the people of Maine through taxation that requires them to violate their conscience. All human life is constitutionally entitled to protection. The science says life begins at conception, whether personal opinion agrees with that or not. A United States Senate Judiciary subcommittee invited experts to testify on the question of when life begins. Some of the world's most prominent scientists and physicians testified to a U.S. Senate Committee that human life begins at conception. Professor Matthew Roth of Harvard University Medical School said it is incorrect to say that biological data cannot be decisive. It is scientifically correct to say that individual human life begins at conception. Our laws, one function of which is to help preserve the lives of our people, should be based on accurate scientific data. Other scientists from Harvard, Rutgers, Columbia, the Mayo Clinic and many more renowned scientists and experts believe and have testified to life beginning at conception. Even Dr. Bernard Nathanson, internationally known obstetrician and gynecologist who was a cofounder of what is now the National Abortion Rights Action League, otherwise known as NARAL, resigned from his lucrative position. Nathanson wrote in the New England Journal of Medicine that he was deeply troubled by his increasing certainty that he had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths. Let's follow the science, uphold the Constitution and preserve religious liberty by passing this amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair is pleased to recognize the Representative from Hodgdon, Representative Quint.

Representative **QUINT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know we all hear the I did not intend to rise. However, I can only say that the Good Representative from Rumford does not stand alone. I could never vote for any budget that would put in taxpayer-funded abortion and I speak on behalf of many of my constituents who are very concerned about this issue. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Indefinite Postponement of House Amendment "E" (H-19) to Committee Amendment "A" (H-12). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 20

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Hobbs, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, O'Neil, Paulhus, Perry A, Pluecker, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Warren, Williams, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Jackson, Javner, Lanigan, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Millett H, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White B, White J, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Gere, Hymes, O'Connell, Osher, Perry J, Sheehan.

Yes, 76; No, 64; Absent, 10; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

76 having voted in the affirmative and 64 voted in the negative, with 10 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly **House Amendment "E" (H-19)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** was **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

Representative LIBBY of Auburn **PRESENTED House Amendment "F" (H-20)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**, which was **READ** by the Clerk.

The SPEAKER: The Representative may proceed.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Maine is one of the highest tax states in the nation but, unlike many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle, I actually don't support a $200 million tax cut. As we contemplate a $10 billion budget that has a $2 billion increase overall, a $200 million tax cut is a joke. And this budget has spit in the face of Maine people refusing even that. This amendment changes the designation on vehicle registration plates from Vacationland to

Taxationland. And that might sound tongue-in-cheek, Madam Speaker, but I'm not laughing. This amendment speaks to the reality. We are chasing the next generation out of our State. We are taxing our elders out of their homes. We are telling businesses not to come to Maine because our State government with its insatiable appetite for more and more and more demands too much of our citizens. This Majority and the Chief Executive are plundering the Maine people to advance an agenda that continues to harm Mainers, brainwashing our fellow Mainers to continue to vote for a Majority that bullies them, that steals their money to pay for programs that benefit the few so as to continue the stranglehold. This amendment allows for transparency and honesty, for our license plates to reflect the reality that Mainers face; the fact that Maine has long since ceased to be Vacationland for those who permanently reside here and is, in fact, Taxationland. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Representative SACHS of Freeport moved that **House Amendment "F" (H-20)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** be **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **INDEFINITELY POSTPONE House Amendment "F" (H-20)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)**.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Indefinite Postponement of House Amendment "F" (H-20) to Committee Amendment "A" (H-12). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 21

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Hobbs, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, Nutting, O'Neil, Paulhus, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Poirier, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Warren, White B, Williams, Woodsome, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Jackson, Javner, Lanigan, Lavigne, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Millett H, Morris, Ness, Newman, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White J, Wood.

ABSENT - Andrews, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Gere, Hymes, O'Connell, Osher, Sheehan.

Yes, 81; No, 60; Absent, 9; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

81 having voted in the affirmative and 60 voted in the negative, with 9 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly **House Amendment "F" (H-20)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12)** was **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

Committee Amendment "A" (H-12) as Amended by House Amendments "A" (H-14) and **"D" (H-18)** thereto was **ADOPTED.**

Under suspension of the rules, the Bill was given its **SECOND READING WITHOUT REFERENCE** to the Committee on **Bills in the Second Reading**.

Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor **REQUESTED** a roll call on **PASSAGE TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended** by **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12) as Amended by House Amendments "A" (H-14)** and **"D" (H-18)** thereto.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

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

Representative **COLLAMORE**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, today is a sad day for me. I feel sad, hurt, and frustrated for the people of Maine, for the people I represent. As you know, I have my son with me today. Something I've always taught him is the importance of teamwork and collaboration. This carries into all areas of life but is particularly important in the creation of policy. Any of us that have survived the COVID legislation sessions know how difficult it was to create cohesive working environments when we were separated by the Zoom screens. This Session has been so much better, or so I thought. I experienced great conversations with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, understanding that we don't always agree but we all have the same goal to do what we feel best meets the wishes of the people we represent. Passing this bill today takes that great progress and, to me, it feels like it's being flushed down the drain. As if I can't be trusted to have the best interests of my constituents at heart.

When I ran for office, I ran to give a voice to the voiceless because I felt as though I didn't have a voice. I didn't want anyone to feel that way. I make every effort to answer every email I've received so my constituents know that their voice is important to the decision-making process. Madam Speaker, I received a lot of emails with opinions from my constituents, whether I agree with them or not, but I have not received one email that has asked me to support this bill. Not one, Madam Speaker. With all of this in mind, I cannot support the pending motion. I cannot in good conscience vote in favor of a piece of policy that has created, basically, leaving out over 44% of the people we represent from this process. How can I teach my son and the future generation of legislators that it is important to work together to create good policies for the people of Maine if I vote in favor of a bill that didn't include that kind of collaboration I always discuss with my students? Madam Speaker, I ask that you follow my light and please oppose the pending motion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Vassalboro, Representative Bradstreet.

Representative **BRADSTREET**: Thank you, Madam Speaker and Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I rise in opposition to the pending motion. The path we are apparently about to take does not bode well for this Body or the State of Maine. Make no mistake about it, regardless of what sort of terminology one chooses to use, this is a Majority budget. It is just that because some people have lost sight of the fact that each one of us has been elected to do what is right for the State of Maine. Those who choose to ignore the Minority's input on what is supposed to be our biennial budget, are not ignoring just us; they're ignoring the hundreds of thousands of good, hardworking citizens we represent. Up to now, we've heard a lot about bipartisanship, from the Chief Executive, to our legislative leaders, to us rank-and-file members. I guess that message has just disappeared into the mist.

In all of our committees, we've heard a lot about diversity, equity and inclusion. I'd like to remind our colleagues across the aisle that that includes us as well. If these are to be our guiding

principles, they need to be observed not just when it feels good but also when it's difficult. Are these just platitudes or do they have real meaning? Our actions today will go a long way in answering that question. The question I have is, if you don't want to talk with us about a $10 billion budget, then who do you want to talk with? Are they people or groups or special interests or are they people who have been duly elected to represent their constituents here in Augusta? Many of us would like to know.

The bipartisan process and working together to formulate a State budget that best serves the State of Maine has long worked well here in Maine. Even with all the disagreements we may have had, we eventually come together with compromises where necessary to come out with a product almost all of us could support. The action that we are apparently about to take is a taint on that process and the resulting budget will thus also be tainted by ignoring a whole group of lawmakers who even now hope that we can return to the meaningful negotiations even at this late time. I hope we all understand that the contention we've had that this will avert a government shutdown is a complete false premise. In our caucus discussions, we have even stated that we want to avoid a government shutdown at all costs. It is an argument that is baseless.

So, what should we do? I urge all of my colleagues to search your consciences. Is ramming a Majority budget through something you wish for your legacy? It won't be our legacy. Because that's exactly what is happening here today. Passing this Majority budget despite all the rationalizations you may come up with to do it will leave a dark blot on this Legislature and yes, even on the current Administration. I implore each of you to vote against this pending motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Livermore Falls, Representative Lyman.

Representative **LYMAN**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and all Members of the House. I would like to express the sincerest of thanks to a colleague across the aisle that just yesterday evening expressed honest emotions and an honorable wish for the outcome of today's budget decisions. His willingness to go out on a limb and engage in thoughtful conversation along with respectful listening still gives me hope. And, by the way, it was a four-to-one ratio, he was in the minority sitting at a table with us. During our conversation, I expressed my wish for our work in the House. I wish for people on both sides of the aisle to join together more often, to show a willingness to discuss, compromise and make decisions that represent all citizens, not just the Majority party.

This Majority budget is an insult to every Maine citizen that was not heard from through the elected official's voice. When I decided to run for office, I struggled with how I was ever going to be able to effectively be a voice for the diverse membership in my district. Integrity, a value I wanted to keep at the forefront of my work. I came to the conclusion that if elected, I would approach my work in the same manner that I did in advocating for each of my students and their families for which I served every day. I was elected by unenrolled Democrats and Republicans. My job is to serve the people of my district, not a single political party.

Today, we are forced to move forward with a Majority budget. Not a budget established by all the State's elected Representatives, but a budget being forced on us by the present majority party. A huge percentage of the people elected to serve the State on their constituents' behalf have been completely cut out of the process. All of us in this Chamber know the consequences of partisan work. Campaign after campaign claimed the importance of bipartisan work, yet here we are with a partisan budget. Bottom line, I was elected to serve my district and to work collaboratively in order to be effective. The people of Maine have been loud and clear that they are tired and completely fed up with partisan behaviors. Yet, here we are today being shut down and silenced by one party, the Democrat's majority budget. My wish and that of so many others completely destroyed. The voices for local control, less layers of government, and specific tax relief for our State's lower and middle class have been silenced. This is such an unfortunate situation for so many of our State's citizens.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Milford, Representative Drinkwater.

Representative **DRINKWATER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I've seen this play out in the past where inflation rates go up, cost of living goes up. In fact, Madam Speaker, this week, 200 jobs were lost in Old Town. We are sliding into stagnation, which is then followed by recession, when you cannot balance the State budget. Just to remind the majority that you will own that, if and when that happens, I don't wish that on anybody. This morning, Madam Speaker, we recited the Pledge of Allegiance. And in that pledge, it says to the Republic for which it stands. What does a republic do? Well, it protects the rights of the minority. Our Constitution requires two-thirds to pass a budget. Why is it, Madam Speaker, it recognizes that the minority must be included in the process? The slogan in the 131st is diversity, equality, inclusion. Madam Speaker, today, equality is not allowed in this Chamber. What is about to happen is the majority is saying equality be damned. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Arundel, Representative Parry.

Representative **PARRY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. This will be my sixth budget that I've done from the time I got elected and I spent all six terms on the Transportation Committee. What's amazing to me is in this budget, which goes from roughly $8.6 billion two years ago that we passed to, as my good friend from Freeport said, $9.885 billion and counting, which is roughly $1.2 billion more in spending. And we hear the verse continuing services budget. $1.2 billion more in spending. And as I said, as my sixth term on Transportation, and there was a great commitment from the Chief Executive in her budget, out of that $1.2 billion of new spending, no transportation money. There was a commitment of almost $400 million and out of $1.2 billion, none for our roads and bridges. None for transportation.

My first budget that I voted on in 2011, in the 125th Legislature, was just over $6 billion. I think the number was $6.013 billion. This budget is almost $10 billion and by the time we get done, maybe $10.5 or $11 billion once we get the second part. That's a 40-plus percent increase in spending on a population of 1.3 million in 2011 and a population of 1.3 million now. We've increased the spending around $4 billion for 1.3 million people and no money in this budget for our roads and bridges. Sometime in this Chamber, we're going to actually make changes that fund our roads and bridges, but I don't see that happening when we spend $1.2 billion in one year since the last budget and don't put any money for highways and bridges and our transportation in that. Madam Speaker, there's no way I could support this bill with that in mind and I'm hoping most of my colleagues on an ongoing basis realize that we need to spend some money on our roads and bridges. Thank you.

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

Representative **THERIAULT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. As I said in my earlier speech, I was elected to represent all of my constituents. About 70% of them are Independents and Democrats and through this process, I've realized that while the rationale behind this is making sure the government doesn't shut down, I'm realizing that it's about not really getting the voice of the minority. And so, on principle, I'm going to be voting no on this budget, not because of the important services that are in it but because on principle we have, Madam Speaker, the best leadership that we've had in what sounds like years and there's been a rush to pass this budget through. A rush to not listen to the voices of all Members of this House. And I fear it's going to signal to voters that when times are tough and we can't have conversations, that we need to go our separate ways. And that is not what I would want my kids, which I don't have but someday I will, that's not what I want my kids to take away when they look at this speech someday and see what we were doing in 2023.

Passing a budget that is supposed to go through with two-thirds with a consensus, where everybody walks away feeling frustrated, that's what government was set up; government was set up so that when people came together, they left frustrated, feeling like they had to give up something because what's good for southern Maine is not good for northern Maine and vice versa. So, I feel obligated just to point out for the constituents back home that there's important things that are in this budget that I do support and I wish I could support but I cannot support this budget because of the tactics that were used, unfortunately, to railroad the process that should be the way we conduct ourselves and the way I hope someday our kids and our grandkids who sit in these chairs maybe can learn what it's like to feel like you've given up something to make sure that your neighbor sitting across from you feels like they've walked away from the negotiation with something. Right now, I'm unfortunately feeling like a 3% tax cut in a $10 billion budget was somehow too much and so, I have to go back home and tell my constituents that they didn't have a voice today in Augusta.

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

Representative **RUDNICKI**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Men and Women of the House. I rise in opposition to this bill. My first instinct was to bring the budget and read it in its entirety. I didn't do that. I believed we were negotiating in good faith. To blow up the process and ram a Democrat-only budget through because you don't think you can work with us is disingenuous. Mainers need tax relief, not partisan politics. $200 million; that was what was asked for. That was less than 2% of the budget. This was a tax cut for lower and middle class and misleading the public and outright lying to the public that we are asking for a tax cut for the wealthy is inexcusable. The Maine people deserve better from their Representatives at both ends of the building. Vote down this budget and let's get back to negotiating. We have until July 1. We're still in March.

But let's talk about a couple of things in the budget that I'm against. Taxpayer-funded abortion; needs no explanation. What about the hundreds or even thousands of unfilled positions to pad the accounts of departments to spend without oversight? If they haven't been filled for over a year, we don't need them. How about health care for illegals when we have Mainers in need? Just to name a few. When I first came to this Body in '18, I'm in my third term now, the budget was about $7.5 billion. That's more than a $2 billion increase in four years. That's over 20%. This is the second time the budget has been rammed through in my four years. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I urge everyone to vote no.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Buxton, Representative Blier.

Representative **BLIER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When the Good Representative from Waterford gave his speech and completed it, I had tears in my eyes, just like you did, Madam Speaker, because we know how important what he was trying to portray is. It's my first year on Appropriations and I know that you worked really hard to keep negotiations alive and bring a bipartisan budget together. And while I was in there, the Good Representative from Freeport came in and she says I know what you want, Representative Blier, you want tax reductions. And for the whole time, all winter long, she would agree as well that we were working together. And at the last minute, the rug got pulled from underneath us. And I can't understand why. Because we didn't change what we wanted. We still wanted tax reduction. The same amount. What happened? What happened to us working together? Now we're here today and you know what, what we're asking for is not even 2% of the budget that we're going to spend. Not even 2%. That's the scraps on the table. If you have people that are starving and you won't even give them the scraps at the table but yet you say you're for the Maine people? What about all our constituents? Aren't they part of Maine? They don't even get a voice. This is sad. It's really sad what we've come to. It's all about winning. You guys have been winning 39 out of the 40 years and you're going to keep on winning. Good for you. And our constituents will never have a voice. What about them? This is not about winning. This is about serving the people of Maine and the people of Maine we serve as well. All we're asking is for the scraps on the table so our constituents can get a little bit of something because we've been starving for years. Thank you. Please follow my light.

The SPEAKER: The Chair will remind the Members that you cannot question the motives of other Members or impugn their character.

The Chair reminded all Members that it was inappropriate to question the motives of other Members of the House or impugn their character.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Orrington, Representative Campbell.

Representative **CAMPBELL**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Men and Women of the House. When I first ran, I came to this Body soon after huge turmoil. We talk about a State shutdown. Well, the State shut down before I came. It shut down to reform Worker's Comp. It shut down because the State was out of control. Under the leadership of the Good Speaker from Eagle Lake, there were some shenanigans going on. Seen by; little bumper sticker I had; my father's barn; John Martin didn't know. Give me a break. But I'll tell you one thing about that Speaker from Eagle Lake, he respected the process. My first term, the 93/94 budget passed with 101 votes always before. That's 1992. The budget then; we all talk about being here a while and how the budget was this and now it's that, well, then the budget was $1 billion over revenues. $1 billion. But the budget was rolled back to existing and previous expenditures of 3.125. Thirty years, $3.125 billion, and now we're looking at $10 billion.

I'm going to tell you a little story about then, which was two terms later, and me being in the corner. I was in leadership. So, similar to what I'm hearing about negotiations up until Thursday or Friday last week, things were going well. As leadership, we

were in the Speaker's office 30 days straight, working really hard, really hard to come together. During that time, we would go over to a newbie Governor's Mansion for breakfast. It wasn't a great breakfast, it was pretty much granola, but we broke bread together. We were all working really hard. So, after those 30 days, one morning at breakfast, the Chief Executive sitting at the head of the table and the rest of the Legislative Council and all leadership was sitting there and the Chief Executive started shaking his finger. If you Republicans don't start dealing and negotiating with the Democrats, I will. Guess what? One day later, he did. And that was the first simple majority budget.

So, there's been a question; why now? Just like then, we were negotiating very well together. Just like now, Madam Speaker, heard good things about the negotiations that were going on until Thursday. That means the budget is coming along very well and with the new projections coming 30 days from now, we're in a whole lot of way to getting to that 101 well before that late night in June back with the Good Speaker from Eagle Lake where we were scrambling for that number one vote. We've got 100, we've got 100, we need one more vote. And it happened. Well, why now? Just like then, the simple majority wants to do it without the minority. The Good Speaker from Eagle Lake had respect for this institution and it only takes one to break it down. I'm assuming, Madam Speaker, it wasn't you. We appreciate what has gone on until Thursday. Just like that breakfast, if you don't, I will. That's what happened. Why does it happen, especially now where we've made so many advances with the Appropriations, both sides of the Committee, and okay, there's a few more dollars coming, so, why can't we wait for that 101? Two months before it's necessary. Back then, oh, wow, we can do this, let's pull on some little glitch that we can come up with. We are a lot farther down the road than we were in 93/94. And the simple majority has been studying how to do this for a long time. We're that close to be able to do it the way the institution meant; 101. All of us. This is sadder than that time in 93/94 when all of a sudden somebody thought about it. It appears that somebody's been thinking about this for a long time and it's sick, it's sad and it's a blight on this institution. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Buxton, Representative Carlow.

Representative **CARLOW**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, every year since 1943, students from as far south as Kittery and as far north as Fort Kent have traveled to this place for a weekend and they've sat in these chairs and for a few days they debate ideas in a great reenactment of the legislative process. I mention this because on November 14, 2015, I had the privilege of attending this historic educational program. I was a sophomore in high school at the time and I had introduced this bill which was approved by my friends and peers in this Chamber but which had subsequently failed in the other Body. As the sponsor of this bill, I was appointed to a Conference Committee which was formed to find common ground between the two Chambers. This was my last chance to save my bill and I was determined to do it. But my friends from the other Body came to the Committee proposing language that completely altered the bill that I had written. And so, in a fleeting moment of ill temper, I threw my hands in the air and I said, there clearly will be no deal made today. I turned around and I walked back to this Chamber, I sat down in the very chair that I would return to just eight years later during my first term, and I looked around this space and I contemplated the meaning and the purpose and the dignity of this institution. And I felt so sincerely disappointed in myself for what I had just done, or rather what I had just failed to do. Predictably, my bill died in nonconcurrence, but the lesson that experience has taught me is one that I have held on to and one which I would like to impart on this House today.

This lesson, of course, is that it's unwise to walk away from negotiations prematurely. And to do so again in this Chamber will bring the Body down a path from which we likely will not recover. There's always a deal, always a compromise if we can summon the statesmanship to settle our disagreements. That's what the people demand and that's what legislatures in years past have consistently, consistently delivered. That's what this House has delivered twice already this Session. Nevertheless, this Body has arrived yet again at a fork in the road and if the majority of us simply say, there will be no deal made here today, then this institution constituted to protect and serve the people of this State will have effectively disenfranchised hundreds, hundreds of thousands of them.

Why are we here? When the Chief Executive came to this Chamber to provide her State of the Budget address, I counted 26 bipartisan acclimations in support of her proposed budget initiatives. Investing in public education, strengthening our infrastructure, and the mitigation of PFAS, just to name a few. That's a bipartisan applause every two and a half minutes. Not a bad start.

So, why are we here? My Republican colleagues and I on the Appropriations Committee and our leadership were negotiating in good faith, our desire for tax relief for low- and middle-income Mainers had been well-established since the night of the Joint Convention. After all, the State has been collecting billions more than we need to fund government over the last several years. The Republican tax cut plan was eminently reasonable, constituting less than 2% of the entire budget, while having a considerable impact on the people back home who desperately, desperately need relief.

Why are we here? We are here, I believe, because someone, somewhere said there will be no deal made here today. Madam Speaker, it is when bipartisanship is most difficult that it is most essential to the mission of this institution and the partisan peril we may be about to invite inside this Chamber will forever damage it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Vassalboro, Representative Bradstreet.

Representative **BRADSTREET**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I apologize for rising a second time. I thank you for this. In all the conversations we've had today, I'm reminded of just earlier today, we were meeting in our Labor and Housing Committee, and I hope we weren't doing that when we weren't supposed to be. We were there. And I sponsored a bill which I introduced, LD 855, you can look it up if you want to, it's "An Act to Provide that the Minimum Wage Increases by the Rolling Average of the Cost of Living of the Previous 3 Years." And that's a wordy title but what I'd like to point out is that the Department of Labor spoke against that bill and this is one of the arguments that they made, the points that they made. They said the purpose of increasing the wage by the cost of living is to help workers maintain the purchasing power of their paychecks, especially in times when the prices of necessities are rising rapidly. The effect of this bill would be to delay increases in the minimum wage. And I'm thinking back, I was going to speak in favor of the Good Representative from Waterford's amendment but I didn't get a chance to do so, but this speaks to the same thing. That $200 million, about 2% of our budget, could go into the pockets of people who desperately need it. And I don't see how anybody in good conscience could object to that. We hear it over and over; they need the money. Voila, here's the way to

do it. Why should we object to that? I hope that you would follow my light and vote against this Majority budget. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Dexter, Representative Foster.

Representative **FOSTER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise just to comment as the lead on the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee for the minority party that we don't have the same problem that my fine colleague the lead on Transportation has. We're not worried in EUT about money that's not in this budget because we don't have to worry about the taxpayers of Maine funding what we do. Everything we do in our EUT Committee doesn't have to go through this process, it automatically goes to the ratepayers of Maine. So, I can tell you that I am not concerned that there's not money in here for the energy portion in the budget. But I will say this; as you recall, monies that were negotiated for by the minority to give tax dollars back to the people of Maine who had sent them more than what was needed here for us to spend here in Augusta was labeled as relief for your energy needs, to help pay your heating and your electric bills, although that wasn't really what that money was coming from, it was money they had sent here in the first place to cover things like this budget or the budget preceding it. But we sent that money back to them because, guess what, because of what EUT has done over the years and because what Vladimir Putin has done and what the federal government has done, at least constituents in my district needed that relief.

And for just one moment, I will speak to what the fine leadership on this side of the aisle had negotiated with leadership on that side of the aisle to try to gain a very small return of taxpayer money to those who are most in need, the low- and middle-income working people of Maine. If that money doesn't go to them, please keep in mind you're going to need to help them out even more with their heating and electric bills in the days to come. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Representative **THORNE**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in opposition of the pending motion and I just wanted to say and echo what the Representative from Buxton and the Representative from Orrington stated; it's a sad day. Today is a sad day. And not just because the Red Sox lost 10-9 to the Orioles. It's a sad day because I enjoy being a legislator. I enjoy my committees, I enjoy my colleagues. Sorry. It's very disappointing that we have to have this day and these dissertations.

I go back to Carmel and Hermon and I'm afraid they're going to call me Chicken Little because I make it sound like the sky is falling, that I'm ineffectual, that I; 80-63, 81-63, 79-64, 80-63, 81-60. To explain to non-legislators what it's all about that we vote and we lose. When do we lose? Every time we vote. And I don't want it to be that way but I listen to the experts that have the appropriations, the ones that have the tax committees that convey to us where we are. Nobody up in House District 35 said Representative Thorne, see if you can go down there and increase our budget, our State budget, by $1.2 million; $1.3 billion. Nobody said that to me but yet that's what we're happening. And I ask them if I asked you a multiple-choice question, do you want your taxes to go up, do you want your taxes to stay the same or do you want your taxes to go down? Obviously, C is the answer. People want their taxes to go down. But yet here we are, Madam Speaker, talking about spending more. And the thing about budgets are once they go up, they don't come down. I urge you to follow my light and vote down the pending motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair is pleased to recognize the Representative from Auburn, Representative Libby.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are here today voting on a budget that should not be before us on March 30th. This is a perversion of the constitutional process and it's made possible by a loophole that is rarely used and, in fact, only used by one party since the Civil War. But since it is before us today, we should address the realities instead of the altruistic picture that's being painted in the media.

This Maine budget should not be increased and it certainly should not be increased by $2 billion. In 2019, the baseline budget was $7.98 billion. In 2021, the baseline budget was $8.5 billion. Now, in 2023, we're looking at a $10 billion budget. This budget is playing games with Mainers' hard-earned money. It's like that carnival game where you go and they put something under a cup, they hide it and then they shuffle the cups around. If we shuffle the money around, maybe Mainers won't get it. But I tell you what; this process is not fooling me and I don't think that it's fooling our fellow Mainers. For the first time in our State's history, this budget is going to be over $10 billion. Now, before someone stands up to correct me and rebut that, the fact is we all know that this is a partial budget. There are supplemental budgets coming right behind this $9.96 billion budget, as that is the net general fund cost, and that will take it well over the $10 billion mark. In fact, if this budget were to follow the legitimate process, it would be the $10.3 billion budget that the Chief Executive first proposed.

So, let's stop playing games, being disingenuous with Maine people and call a spade a spade. If you go to buy a used car and it's marked $9,900, you know that when you drive it home, you're paying well over $10,000 by the time you pay taxes and fees. The same here with this budget and the supplemental budgets to follow. At the end of the day, this is a $10 billion budget. That's a historic budget. And I don't use the word historic in a good context. This is not the kind of historic that I would advertise having voted for. We must stop growing the State budget while Maine families' budgets are shrinking. Their budgets have not increased, so, why should the State budget be increasing by $2 billion? Are Mainers' lives better off than they were five years ago? Absolutely not. How audacious to increase the State budget by $2 billion when our citizens are cutting back in response to record inflation and a recession. I cannot be the only person hearing from constituents struggling to pay for groceries, for electricity, for heat. We are facing extraordinary inflation that hasn't been seen before in my lifetime but this budget recklessly ignores that fact. Have we all forgotten, this is not our money. We are to be stewards. This is Maine taxpayers' money.

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Chair has given great latitude today and I will once again remind the Members you cannot question the motives of other Members or impugn their character.

The Chair reminded all Members that it was inappropriate to question the motives of other Members of the House.

The SPEAKER: The Member will proceed.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will not reference memories again. I will remind us all that this is Mainers' money and the people in my district are not working overtime to put food on their table so that we can spend their money recklessly. I asked our fellow Mainers to share what changes they have made in their family budget over the last year

or two in order to make ends meet. If we are going to spend their money, we should at least listen to their words.

Misty said as a stay-at-home mom who homeschools my kids, I actually started working outside the home. It's a minimum wage job but it's been enough to cover the increases in our electricity, our propane and our property taxes. We are still looking for ways to handle the increase in groceries, gas and other expenses. Bernice says that lucky for us, we burn wood for heat. I keep a big pot of water on the stove. This is used for washing dishes so that we only have to turn on the water heater to shower. If it's broken, we fix it, we mend the clothes, sew on buttons. The only thing I won't mend is socks. That's my luxury. Annette. Thankfully, we have set ourselves up for such a time as this. We have no debt. But I changed how I buy and grow food, heat our house, and we are unable to build our savings up in hopes to retire within the next 10 years. We have thoughts of moving to another state. Megan. We're growing a bigger garden, we don't use our furnace, we only use wood heat. We run all our errands on the same day, no extra trips. We eat less food and we don't use our lights unless absolutely necessary. It's been a huge struggle. I know that my elderly neighbor had to shut off part of his home and he wears two layers of clothes and a winter jacket inside. Christine says that she freezes all winter. The thermostat is set at 60 degrees. Belinda. We buy only necessities at the grocery store and I have two jobs.

Maine people are economizing so why isn't the Maine government? Record revenue shouldn't mean free-for-all government spending. To be clear, though, these people are not asking for government assistance. They don't want help to pay their bills so there's no need to grow this budget any further. They simply want to be able to keep more of their; not our; hard-earned money instead of the government stealing it. I read through this budget and there are numerous reasons to vote against it. You know, I keep hearing the words continuing services. Madam Speaker, I call baloney. We have all sat in our committee rooms over the last couple of months and we've heard departments come before us asking for new positions. There are a record number of government jobs sitting empty as referenced, yet there are a significant number of new positions in this budget. Just look for the words continues and makes permanent. It's seen over and over and over again throughout this budget. Those are new positions. That is not continuing services. Why? When thousands of positions are currently empty, why are we purposefully inflating the budget now so as to increase government control later? Creating these positions now, even if they don't get filled for years, increases the baseline and it justifies an even larger budget and more government spending next time around. What will the next baseline be? The next continuing services budget? $12 billion? There's nowhere to go but up from here. It is disingenuous to call this anything other than what it is; it's a bloated budget that is wasting peoples' money and growing government. Read it for yourselves if you have not yet. Just on page 58, there are three new permanent positions. I think I've made it clear; yeah, I have a few pages left. Thank you for noting. Sorry.

The SPEAKER: The Member will defer. The Member will defer. The Member will defer. The Member can now proceed. I will remind the Member to direct all of her comments directly to the Chair. Thank you.

The Chair reminded Representative LIBBY of Auburn to address her comments toward the Speaker.

Representative **LIBBY**: I think I've made it clear this Session and the previous that I am pro-life. And as I contemplate this budget and I wonder how I could reconcile voting for a budget that appropriates taxpayer funds for other peoples' abortions, I wonder is it okay if it's only one life? How about two? Or three? Where does that justification lie? How many are a good tradeoff? In this same budget, ironically, that is appropriating funds to taxpayer-funded abortion, Mainers are also on the hook to a tune of $3.8 million a year to help pay for infertility treatments of other people. I hope that I am not the only one who appreciates the irony of these polar opposite priorities. How about hoteling for illegal immigrants? This is a conversation we had months ago. What are the numbers there with a new shelter opening in Portland to keep up with the number of folks arriving each week from the southern border? If you remember, we heard folks pledge during the work session to address this issue. Is it handled? Once again, pushed down the road to be addressed at the never-quite-now later.

I've heard a lot about meeting 55% for education. In fact, we're spending record amounts on education these days. Surely, we must be seeing record results. No. Instead, our fourth and eighth grade test scores fell below the national average, lagging behind despite record spending. Fortunately, we have free community college. Good thing it's free because more students than ever need remedial help when they enter college these days. More record spending, this time on health care. Is health care in Maine improving at the rate of spending? No. We have staff shortages across the State, huge wait times just to get in to see a primary care, if you are so lucky to find a primary care, and travel staff as the seemingly permanent stopgap while our infrastructure crumbles around us. And, as always, the answer is to throw more money at it. We need structural change. We need to drop the health care worker vaccine mandate. We need to allow the free market to operate in order to lower costs and increase availability instead of increasing the government stranglehold.

One reason that certainly doesn't apply to all in this Chamber but applies to me and my side is that a bloated bipartisan budget is a campaign gift that I am simply not willing to give to my colleagues across the aisle. Why on earth would we help rack up wins by scamming Maine voters and saying that our vote is approved bipartisan. Maine people keep voting to keep this majority in power and that's on us. We don't give them a compelling reason not to. I get it. We are in this position because we've been spineless for years. But why would we support this process when we and our constituents are cut out of the process? Madam Speaker, tyranny of the majority is a situation that can result from a system of majority rule wherein the majority group places its own interests above the interests of a minority group without consideration for the welfare or rights of the minority. Ancient Greek political thinkers realized the potential for a tyranny of the majority to occur in government. The Greeks called this type of government an ochlocracy, defined as government by mob rule. In the early years of the United States, John Adams and James Madison both recognized the dangers of a political tyranny of the majority. In the Federalist Papers, Madison discussed how an overbearing majority faction could take control of the government. Today, the majority party is forcing mob rule on Maine people in regards to this budget.

Representative **ROBERTS**: Point of Order.

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

Representative **ROBERTS**: Point of Order; the Member is questioning the motives of other Members.

On **POINT OF ORDER,** Representative ROBERTS of South Berwick objected to the comments of Representative LIBBY of Auburn because she was questioning the motives of other Members of the House.

The SPEAKER: The Chair is going to remind the Members for the third time today that you cannot question the motives of other Members or impugn their character. I will say that once again. The Chair will remind the Members for the third time today to not question the motives of other Members or impugn their character.

The Chair reminded all Members that it was inappropriate to question the motives of other Members of the House or impugn their character.

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **LIBBY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The biennial budget is the most significant, most important and only constitutionally required piece of legislation that the Legislature is to pass. Forcing this ill-conceived biennial budget by majority vote disallows me and my colleagues who represent hundreds of thousands of Mainers to have a voice in the process or the final outcome of the budget. Unlike many of my colleagues, I was confident that we would face this scenario as soon as I woke up on November 9th. The only thing that surprises me is that anyone was surprised. If we could have props, I would be holding up a State of Maine to illustrate how Portland and the coast is now forcing their will on the entire State of Maine, placing their interests above the interests of the rest of the State of Maine, without consideration of the welfare or rights of those 576,000 Mainers whose representation is being voided today.

At times, we have amnesia, but over the last few years under the Chief Executive, it has become clear that the majority are committed to ruling the State as a uni-party. To be here today, voting on a budget on March 30th, this is not about us as a Body on this side of the aisle individually or collectively, but about the 400-plus towns, the 576,000 that have their voices silenced by silencing their representation. Today's vote inflicts the will of the majority on the rest of the State without their consent. If I voted for it, I would be complicit. It was never our founders' intention that the system would be manipulated in that way through a constitutional loophole. I'm here to vote against this budget, against this process, and against this new precedent, the unfortunate new normal. This is tyranny of the majority. Follow my light and vote no on this budget.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Portland, Representative Skold.

Representative **SKOLD**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, fellow Members of the Legislature. I rise to acknowledge my appreciation for the Good Representative from Waterford, the Good Representative from Vassalboro, and many other of my colleagues today who have expressed their commitment and desire for acting in a bipartisan way. I am only a first-term legislator, Madam Speaker, but I have already seen many opportunities that this Body has moved in a bipartisan manner. Including today, when we voted overwhelmingly to support our retired teachers, and I thank my colleagues for that. I also thank my colleagues for bringing forward the need for relief. Relief for Maine's people, especially low- and moderate-income Mainers. There is, indeed, Madam Speaker, need for tremendous relief all around the State. Relief from rising housing costs, relief from out-of-control medical costs, relief for workers when they need to start a family or get sick and, indeed, Madam Speaker, relief for our teachers and all State retirees. There is tremendous need for relief in this State and I understand, Madam Speaker, that this budget responds to that need for relief by continuing the services that many of our citizens rely on. My understanding, Madam Speaker, is that we will have another opportunity to continue discussing the relief that is needed to meet the challenges and tremendous needs all around this State. Madam Speaker, that's why I will be supporting LD 424 and in appreciation to my colleagues, I do look forward to working together as we move forward to discuss and continue working together to find relief that truly meets the needs facing the members of this State. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Turner, Representative Morris.

Representative **MORRIS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you said, I come from the town of Turner, which is a town my family has called home for over 200 years. At one time, we had the DeCoster Egg Farm in the town of Turner that is still there but at one time they were the largest brown egg producer in the world. And now as we go to the grocery store, we see the price of eggs, of a dozen eggs, at over $6 a dozen. And we know what that does to our families' budgets. In the last few years, we have seen prices rise in part because of policies passed by government, not just here in the State of Maine but federally, that have seen prices rise for Maine families. The cost of groceries is up, the cost of electricity is up. The Good Representative from Auburn alluded to the $3.8 million in the budget for fertility care. That's what the State has to pick up for that mandate. But imagine what that's doing to individual insurance premiums as well as to small business premiums, having to pay that mandate as well. In fact, next year, the cost of an individual health insurance premium is up 15%. Gas is $3.40 a gallon.

This budget does nothing to address how we are helping those people who are struggling right now with these higher costs of $6 a dozen eggs, 15% increase in health insurance, groceries up, $3.40 for a gallon of gas. We have the opportunity to put more money back into their pockets. Yes, I have supported in the past continuing to send out rebate checks because that was the best opportunity at the time to get money back to people as we are dealing with this record inflation. But I think people need to have the opportunity to budget and to plan and to know that more money is going to stay in their paychecks and not continue to be sent to Augusta. And I would just ask my colleagues that we have the opportunity to keep working through June to come up with a budget that addresses these concerns and I ask that you follow my light and vote against the pending motion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Lebanon, Representative Adams.

Representative **ADAMS**: Madam Speaker, thank you. I rise and oppose this budget and the reason I do that is it doesn't matter whether you have a D or an R next to your name, we that work have to pay for this and then not only that, it's kind of like the old adage, if you take wood, add it to the fire, and don't replace the wood, you got no more wood. And then we're talking about relief and I think for a lot of us, especially down in my neighborhood, some of the biggest relief we need is tax relief. And that seems to be being ignored here and I don't think that's a true representation of a budget when you ignore tax relief. So, like I said, I do oppose this and I would support it and I would actually rather see more than $200 million. They were nicer than me; I would've asked for at least half a billion, to be honest with you. But thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Windham, Representative Bagshaw.

Representative **BAGSHAW**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I worked very hard to get here. I knocked on doors almost every day for nine months and listened to what concerned the people in my district. I spoke to them, I heard their concerns, I wanted to be a voice, I wanted to serve them, and the first day I came

here, I spoke to a woman and she said; I hope we can do some good and I said I have hope that we can, but hope deferred makes the heart sick. My heart is sick today. I want to be a voice for my constituents and I feel; somebody said are you surprised that the budget is being passed now and I said yes, I was because I had hope that we were going to have a two-thirds majority bipartisan budget. And I would just make a plea for people to consider that; that we have a bipartisan budget, and thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Ellsworth, Representative Worth.

Representative **WORTH**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am speaking in favor of this budget but please don't be too surprised when I begin with a story that might sound a little off topic. This past winter, my wife became very sick and she died. Madam Speaker was very supportive of me and I wish to express my appreciation. The Majority Leader was very supportive. Many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle were very supportive and sympathetic and reached out to me. Staff also reached out to me and they were very helpful to me. Especially, I want to note today that I received a card with a personal note from the Minority Leader and Assistant Minority Leader on behalf of the entire Republican Caucus. And it was a beautiful note and I appreciated it very much. When we were at ease one day, I had an opportunity to go over and thank the Minority Leader and Assistant Minority Leader and Representative Faulkingham said to me we are a family here. And it touched my heart and I really appreciate that.

In a family, there are sometimes disagreements and today I hear a good deal of disappointment and frustration coming from many of my esteemed colleagues on the other side of the aisle. When I vote for this budget today, it will be because I believe that the discussion is not over, the dialogue is not over, that we will continue to listen to one another, to talk with one another. The listening, I think, is the more important part of those two and that we can come through this remembering that we are a family. And so, today I wish to express my thanks to all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle; Democrats, Republicans, Independents, staff, everyone here. I think we are indeed a family and that when we leave today, I hope we will all remember that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair will simply remind all Members to direct their comments directly to the Chair.

The Chair reminded all Members to address their comments toward the Speaker.

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

Representative **GRAHAM**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Good Representative from Ellsworth. You expressed what I feel. I, too, am very sad because we do have true bipartisanship here. It has not gone out the window. I served in the 125th Legislature, when the Chief Executive was from the other party, when the Speaker was from the other party, when the Senate President was from the other party. And I developed great relationships. In particular, the Good Representative from Waterford had at that time been working with the Chief Executive and I grew to know him, listen to him, and I'm so happy he's here. And I listen to him today. I urge us all to continue to move forward together in a bipartisan way. Several of the Members on the other side of the aisle served with me in that previous Legislature and the subsequent one. Let's move forward. We have a chance to do good things. On my committee, I know we've worked so well together, often in a bipartisan way. So, I urge all of you; support the motion before us. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Albion, Representative Cyrway.

Representative **CYRWAY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate. I appreciate the; wow. So, anyway. Habit's hard to break. So, House Members, I just wanted to stand up because in the Senate, you know, I experienced twice this happening, the two-thirds going to the majority and just in the last four years and you know, this is my ninth year. So, I just think it's a shame when we've gone almost 200 years, you know, without having this two-thirds situation and now having it one, two, three. It's like baseball. We're going to be out. It just seems like when does it stop. And if you think about how much revenue that we got this year, it was more than what we expected. And all of a sudden, it's a crisis, we've got to vote for this. I don't get it. I don't get that because we really don't have to vote for this and we can help the people, you know, we can help the people that overpaid. I remember the conformity bill, we sat in our caucus and we talked about it and we went with that, with the conformity tax and I believed without being able to write things off, they're actually paying a lot more taxes. And this is where you're getting all these extra tax dollars but we haven't even helped the people get that money back. We never even looked at it. Instead, what do we do? Spend it. And I just think that we really made a big mistake and we've gotten greedy. When it comes to three times in a row, when all our forefathers have taken and looked at this and they've always respected that two-thirds vote. That's all we're asking. I think; I've listened to this all day and it's about the respect that they wanted of getting two-thirds vote to make a good budget. That's all we're asking. R-E-S-P-E-C-T. And that's it. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Wiscasset; and I apologize for the way I'm going to pronounce your name; Representative Polewarczyk.

Representative **POLEWARCZYK**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I never did expect to get up here today and speak. On December the 5th, I walked into this Chamber for the first time for an orientation. I went to go home and I said I can't do that; I have to come back in here to see what I'm a part of. And this big, tall gentleman walks up the aisle and says can I help you, sir. What did I just do? It was the Sergeant-at-Arms and he made me very welcome. And I told him I came back to reflect on what I was a part of here. He welcomed me and I sat down in silence for 10 minutes. This is an incredible adventure for me. It's hard for me to believe I'm actually here. So, four months go by, I'm meeting some wonderful people, glad to be a part of this. I'm in the Education Committee and we're looking at the budget. And it's not just the baseline budget that I would see as continuing services, it's a baseline budget with initiative, initiative, initiative, probably totaling close to $200 million. I can't come to the conclusion that this is a continuing services budget. It's an expanding budget. And I have to oppose this budget because so many people in my district are hurting. They're dealing with inflation, and we've been hearing it all afternoon, they're dealing with inflation, energy prices, food prices; they're struggling. And for that reason, I cannot support this budget. I believe we owe more to the people of Maine. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Freeport, Representative Sachs.

Representative **SACHS**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, a few hours ago, said that I support this budget because it keeps our promises, the promises we made on a bipartisan basis when we last passed a two-thirds budget just a few months ago. This

budget funds those continuing services to support the very people we've been talking about today. With school meals, with cost of living increases for our health care providers, for veterans, for farmers, for $101 million to keep our promise for 55%. And, yes, that's expensive, but it is what we promised together to do. When I talked with my good friend, the Representative from Waterford about the long history of part one and part two budgets, we also talked about the fact that when one does a part one budget, one funds current services only, doesn't stack it full of a lot, except for I will note that part two does fund transportation as a continuing service. Just throwing that out there for my Good Friend from Arundel. So, these are important services. We are not spending willy-nilly, Madam Speaker. We are sticking to our promises to the most vulnerable Maine people. We promised $242 million of tax relief and we are making good on that promise. We promised free meals, we promised support for homeless youth, we promised to keep the lights on. And we have promised, all of us in this Chamber, to continue that good work that we started and will continue to do in our wonderful policy committees in the coming months and I look forward to that. So, thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Passage to be Engrossed as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-12) as Amended by House Amendments "A" (H-14) and "D" (H-18). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 22

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine, Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Hobbs, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, O'Neil, Paulhus, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Warren, White B, Williams, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Albert, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Jackson, Javner, Lanigan, Lemelin, Libby, Lyman, Mason, Millett H, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White J, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Andrews, Arata, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Hymes, Lavigne, O'Connell, Osher, Sheehan.

Yes, 79; No, 61; Absent, 10; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

79 having voted in the affirmative and 61 voted in the negative, with 10 being absent and 1 vacancy, and accordingly the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended** by **Committee Amendment "A" (H-12) as Amended by House Amendments "A" (H-14)** and **"D" (H-18)** thereto and sent for concurrence.

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

CONSENT CALENDAR

First Day

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

(H.P. 226) (L.D. 375) Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 570: Uniform Reporting System for Prescription Drug Price Data Sets, a Major Substantive Rule of the Maine Health Data Organization (EMERGENCY) Committee on **HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-13)**

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

There being no objection, the House Paper was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended** and sent for concurrence.

ENACTORS

Emergency Measure

Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 305: Natural Resources Protection Act - Permit by Rule, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection

(H.P. 243) (L.D. 392)

Was reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed.

Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor **REQUESTED** a roll call on **FINAL PASSAGE**.

More than one-fifth of the members present expressed a desire for a roll call which was ordered.

The SPEAKER: A roll call has been ordered. The pending question before the House is Final Passage. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

This being an emergency measure, a two-thirds vote of all the members elected to the House being necessary, a total was taken.

ROLL CALL NO. 23

YEA - Abdi, Ankeles, Arford, Bell, Boyle, Brennan, Bridgeo, Cloutier, Cluchey, Collings, Copeland, Crafts, Craven, Crockett, Dhalac, Dill, Dodge, Doudera, Eaton, Fay, Gattine, Gere, Golek, Graham, Gramlich, Hasenfus, Hepler, Jauch, Kessler, Kuhn, Lajoie, Landry, LaRochelle, Lee, Lookner, Madigan, Malon, Mastraccio, Mathieson, Matlack, Meyer, Millett H, Millett R, Milliken, Montell, Moonen, Moriarty, Murphy, O'Neil, Perry A, Perry J, Pluecker, Pringle, Rana, Reckitt, Rielly, Riseman, Roberts, Roeder, Runte, Russell, Sachs, Salisbury, Sargent, Sayre, Shagoury, Shaw, Skold, Stover, Supica, Terry, Theriault, Warren, White B, Worth, Zager, Zeigler, Madam Speaker.

NAY - Adams, Arata, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Drinkwater, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Gifford, Greenwood, Hall, Henderson, Javner, Lanigan, Lemelin, Lyman, Mason, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Paul, Perkins, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White J, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Albert, Andrews, Cyrway, Davis, Ducharme, Galletta, Geiger, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hobbs, Hymes, Jackson, Lavigne, Libby, O'Connell, Osher, Parry, Paulhus, Poirier, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Sheehan, Swallow, Williams.

Yes, 78; No, 46; Absent, 26; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.