MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Legislative Record

House of Representatives

One Hundred and Thirty-First Legislature

State of Maine

Daily Edition

Second Regular Session

Beginning January 3, 2024

Beginning with Page H-1190

The same Representative **REQUESTED** a roll call on **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 Passage. All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 544

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

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

ABSENT - Adams, Crockett, Hasenfus, Jauch, Lavigne, Roberts.

Yes, 78; No, 66; Absent, 6; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

78 having voted in the affirmative and 66 voted in the negative, 1 vacancy with 6 being absent, and accordingly the Joint Order was **PASSED** in concurrence.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE
Divided Report

Majority Report of the Committee on **APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS** reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)** on Bill "An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025" (EMERGENCY)

(H.P. 1420) (L.D. 2214)

Signed:

Senators:

ROTUNDO of Androscoggin
DUSON of Cumberland

Representatives:

SACHS of Freeport
ANKELES of Brunswick
COLLINGS of Portland
FAY of Raymond
GATTINE of Westbrook
MATLACK of St. George

Minority Report of the same Committee reporting **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "B" (H-986)** on same Bill.

Signed:

Senator:

BENNETT of Oxford

Representatives:

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

READ.

On motion of Representative SACHS of Freeport, the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **ACCEPTED**.

On motion of Representative TERRY of Gorham, the House **RECONSIDERED** its action whereby the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **ACCEPTED**.

Subsequently, Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor **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 Madison, Representative Ducharme.

Representative **DUCHARME**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in opposition to the Majority budget. The Appropriations Committee has spent the last three months working on getting to rapture on this supplemental and change package. We started with moving in those items that we could agree on. Those types of things include initiatives to align allocations with available revenues and increasing or decreasing allocations to align with revenue projections. We then moved on to those items that required more discussion, like positions. We first moved in those positions that were funded from federal funds or other special revenue. We then looked at the new positions that the Administration proposed, a total of 165 new positions between fiscal ‘24 and fiscal ‘25. We listened to the business cases for those positions, and where we felt the positions were needed, we agreed unanimously to move them into the supplemental. Of course, there were some that we did not reach agreement on and had divided Reports, divided votes. We then looked at those 'continues and makes permanent' positions that result from either a federal program that is coming to an end, a position created by financial order when we are not in session or in a budget document. We first moved in those positions that had a sunset, a definite time when they would be done. After that process, the Committee discussed the remaining positions and voted either to include or not. The Committee then moved to the language piece of the budget. We debated the various issues in the language pieces of the budget. We found some common ground in some areas and in others, we divided.

I’m reading a book called *Extreme Ownership*, written by two Navy SEALs, about leadership. One of the principles of leadership is extreme ownership. This calls for the leader to accept responsibility for failure to achieve the desired outcome. As the Republican Leader on Appropriations, I take full responsibility for our failure to achieve the great Representative from Waterford’s condition of rapture when we have a unanimous budget. The Majority budget before you is the result of that failure. Extreme ownership requires that when we fail, we analyze the situation at hand, we prioritize the issues and then, attack those most pressing first. The result of that prioritization is the Minority budget. The Minority budget and the

Majority budget are very similar. We found unanimity in a broad range of issues in this supplemental; however, our prioritization requires that we offer a different path forward. A path that we believe prioritizes the greatest needs of all the people of Maine, stays within available funds of the unallocated surplus, without taking money from other programs, and creates a path forward that will meet those needs in a timely manner.

The largest difference in the Minority Budget is that we fund $6 million flood relief package from unappropriated surplus, rather than use the Budget Stabilization Fund. The discussion about the use of the Budget Stabilization Fund for flood relief is clearly outside the statutory authority defined in the Budget Stabilization Statute. The only way to use this is to write one of my least favorite words, notwithstanding, to make this happen. Remember, using notwithstanding language means if there is a law that says we can't do this, do what we want, we're going to ignore it and do what we want anyway because we can. Because we use those funds, it limits some of the things that we can do for all of Maine people.

However, we believe that there are three critical areas that must be addressed. The Minority budget prioritizes these needs, these critical needs. One, flood relief; two, mental health; and three, nursing homes and veterans' homes. In the first case, approving the Minority budget with an emergency preamble and a two-thirds vote tonight allows these funds to be available to use the minute the Chief Executive signs it.

Two, mental health. LD 2237, sponsored by yourself, Madam Speaker, and we thank you, has provided a broad-based framework for improving the mental health services in our State. We thank you for that work and would advise that your bill has moved, in its entirety, into the Minority budget. The Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services provided a number of initiatives, called the Mental Health Resiliency Package, that were largely unanimous votes of the Committee. The Minority Report includes many of those initiatives, such as LD 1236, "An Act to Increase the Provision of Children's Behavioral Health Services in Rural Areas and to Provide Support for Families of Children Receiving Services," or LD 1305, a "Resolve, to Design and Implement a Community-based Model of Care for Adolescent Mental Health," or LD 907, "An Act to Meet the Needs of Individuals with Severe Behavioral Health Diagnoses," or the language that we included instructing the Department of Health and Human Services to issue an RFP to develop one or more psychiatric residential facilities to meet the needs of adolescents who have high levels of behavioral health needs that are not being met in current outpatient facilities, which also included a $2 million appropriation to support that effort.

For the nursing homes and veterans' homes, the Majority Report includes one-time money to help the nursing homes in our State that are trying to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable senior citizens. The funding model is broken for this system, and they need help desperately. Rarely does a month go by without news of this nursing home or that long-term care facility planning to close. This is in part because the reimbursement for services mechanism through Medicare and MaineCare have not kept up with the costs. The Minority Report asks that money to be ongoing until the rate rebasing effort is complete, at which point, there is the hope that the new rates will help solve this structural deficiency. Maine veterans are struggling with similar reimbursement issues; the Minority Report includes ongoing funds to meet those needs until the reimbursement situation is corrected.

Other initiatives that are different in the two Reports include money to meet the request of Maine farmers for 25% of the new tiers plus $7 million, for a total of $15 million, which gets us to just about 50% of what the latest production cost analysis shows that they should be receiving. That number was $34 million. Now, you'll remember, Madam Speaker, that we commissioned that report with a $50,000 appropriation, because the farmers were struggling 12-18 months ago and they came to us and said, we need help; we said, okay, we're going to accelerate the process, we're going to give you money to do it and you give us the number that you need. They gave us the number and we said, oh my, I can't, we can't do that, we're only going to give you just a portion of it. We're trying to get them to 50%, or close to 50%.

The Minority budget also includes all 32 State Troopers that the Chief Executive requested in her supplemental budget request. The plan for that, that these new officers will complement the current force to help bolster the Maine State Police, so, they can assist more in patrolling the rural areas of our State. We have reports of folks calling for police services in some areas and being told it'll be two hours or more before an officer would be available to help them. I cannot imagine that, if you're home in Portland and you call for a police officer, it's going to be two hours. I can't imagine that. But it is where I live. The rural areas are suffering. It is largely rural areas that are affected by these police services. They've been working with the counties to create agreements, but without the officers to do it, it doesn't help. The Minority Budget also includes $8 million to meet the State mandate that our county jails provide medication-assisted treatment to prisoners that suffer from substance abuse disorder. The Majority only meets half of the request from the Maine Sheriff's Association for reimbursements for meeting this mandate.

Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, we have acknowledged our failure. We have analyzed and prioritized the needs of the Maine people. We have developed plans to meet those needs in a bipartisan fashion. The Chief Executive said, find a way to get this done, find a middle ground. Now, all we have to do is execute the plan, Madam Speaker. The Minority Report is the middle ground. To execute this plan, we have to defeat the Majority Budget that doesn't meet the most pressing needs of all Maine people, and enact the Minority budget tonight. Please follow my light and vote down the pending motion. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Buxton, Representative Carlow, and just take one moment to remind Members to speak to the motion before us, the motion is acceptance of the Majority Ought to Pass Report.

The Chair reminded Members to stay as close as possible to the pending question.

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

Representative **CARLOW**: I'm getting ahead of my skis here. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it was said on the floor last year that budget bills are so encompassing and so vital to the interests of the Maine people that they may almost be a sacred document. I'll confess, I don't consider a lot of the work we do here to be quite so sacred, but I found there was some wisdom in what the Member had said. It's true, there is no greater demonstration of how we serve the people of Maine, no greater instrument through which we can improve the lives and livelihoods of our neighbors back home. Madam Speaker, this Body has a long, august history passing bipartisan budgets that pass with broad, bicameral support. I've spoken at length in previous debates about my conviction that we ought to

resolve to using bipartisan budgets, and I concede that such an endeavor requires stamina and leadership and an unbridled, untamed and irrepressible sense of historic purpose. Generations of erstwhile Legislatures have come together in peace and in crisis, in amity and enmity, to craft a State budget that reflects the true strength and spirit of our great and humble State. And I've come to the floor once again to just express how haunted I am by the devastating and disappointing disfigurement to the legacy of this institution, an institution to which we all belong, regardless of our party, our creed, regardless of our geography and other concerns.

Madam Speaker, I have more thoughts to share on the role that this Body has in preserving our State's unique culture, but just in the interest of time, I must now turn my attention to the failures of the present matter. The first of which is the woeful underfunding of Maine's nursing homes, which are closing at alarming rates across this land, leaving seniors with so much uncertainty in their golden years, when things really ought to be made more simple for them and their families. My friends on; and I say friends, and I mean it; my friends on the other side of the aisle praised the agreement that they reached with the Maine Health Care Association. This agreement doesn't go far enough. This budget does nothing, absolutely nothing, to solve the progressing plight of Maine's seniors, and we are plunging our nursing homes into more instability. We have a sacred duty to provide support for our seniors now, not at some future date.

We heard a great deal about mental health on the floor yesterday afternoon, and I am really glad that the subject has caught up to our attention because it's a generational concern for many Maine families, my own included. And I wasn't quite sure how to say this on the floor today, but I want to inform the Body that I bring a perspective to the issue. On the 10th of May, 2000, my father shot himself in the forest behind our home following a long and tragic battle with depression. He was found two days later, dead, by a pair of hikers, leaving my mother to raise her infant son by herself. And my heart is with all of those people who know this sinister disease. And with the winds of change at our backs, we stand before the precipice of profound opportunity to transform lives for the better, and we've hopelessly missed the mark yet again. We have a sacred duty to fund a suite of bipartisan mental health legislation, totally ignored by this supplemental.

Madam Speaker, there are many similarities between the two Reports, and I commend the several areas of bipartisan agreement. However, the contrasts couldn't be more clear. This budget is far from sacred, it doesn't even come close, and for those reasons, I will vote in opposition to the pending motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Representative **BLIER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for my colleagues for speaking in opposition to the motion. I also am in opposition to this motion, Madam Speaker, because it does not go far enough, but yet, goes too far on certain items.

One of the items that I am concerned about, although I do agree we have a housing crisis within our State; I will never say that we do not; but the truth of the matter is that when I was on the Housing Committee and when Maine State Housing came in, they were hoping to get $30 million. Last biennial, we allocated $100 million, and we're going to allocate another $50 million towards housing. A hundred million dollars on projects that most of them haven't even broke ground yet. Now, most of you already, if you own homes, you've hired contractors, you notice the difficulty from finding people to build or remodel the things that you currently own. And so, when you allocate this type of resources into an environment where it's already struggling in the workforce, you drive the cost of the building of that specific unit higher. And so, what are we doing? We're driving the American Dream away from our children. When the average home in our State costs $353,000 and we keep driving more money when buying materials, driving the cost to build a single unit goes up and up and up and the interest rates are high, how is someone ever going to be able to purchase a home? Now, I understand that most of this is for subsidized housing, because we want to create housing. I understand. Let's create carpenters, electricians and plumbers. Let's create people to build the housing that we need. We're not doing that, we're not focusing on that.

We allocated $5 million to help trailer park owners. Last week, we heard that the trailer park owners were not interested in purchasing their co-op and joining in their co-op, but yet, we had the opportunity to remove that $5 million from the budget, the Majority Budget, and we did not do that. Madam Speaker, I think we're going down a road that is going to be irreversible. Every action we take has a reaction. The actions we're taking today is eliminating the opportunity for our younger generation to homeownership. So, that is one item that I am not in favor of.

As well, Madam Speaker, and we served together on the Blue Ribbon Commission, LD 1515 was presented in the Majority budget. We have an EMS situation in our State. We need to keep that conversation moving forward. It was rejected. Very unfortunate, Madam Speaker. We have a new EMS Director, we've allocated $30 million, not all that money has gone out; the conversation needs to continue to happen. Again, we've rejected that motion. Very unfortunate.

And then, the State Troopers, Madam Speaker. Commissioner Sauschuck came and said he needed 32 officers. Now, listen folks, we're living in a new world. We've got computer fraud, we've got elderly fraud, we've got AI. Those take resources from State Troopers for detectives. They're not coming in with a wish list, they're coming in with officers they need to protect us from the new world. And yet, we reject that.

Madam Speaker, there's some commonalities between both Minority and Majority budgets. We have stayed within the State guidelines of what we need to do without robbing from the Budget Stabilization Fund and taking resources from the Highway Fund, the DOT, which they definitely need to take care of our roads and bridges. So, Madam Speaker, I reject the Majority Report on this. I ask that you please follow my light. Thank you so much.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Phillips, Representative Soboleski.

Representative **SOBOLESKI**: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen. In looking through this 239-page budget, I saw a lot of Behemoth-type numbers. Twenty-one million dollars homeless assistance; $20 million homeless families and kids; $11 million milk; $51 million housing money. And way down at the bottom of it is the Office of New Americans, with no number on it. The Office of New Americans fiscal note was $302,060. What is that doing in the middle of this budget? That bill was not reported out of Committee, and yet, here it is. And looking at the language of creating the ONA, Office of New Americans, it gives them rulemaking authority, routine technical rulemaking authority in that office. But that office is in OPIF, and OPIF does not have rulemaking authority, routine technical rulemaking authority.

The committee that ONA calls for is an advisory committee of at least 10 members who are immigrants; nine appointed by the Chief Executive, one appointed by the President of the

Senate, and one appointed by you, Madam Speaker; to make their own rules. No legislative oversight, nobody from this Body, nobody from the Senate. The backstop to that would be the Attorney General, to make sure everything is copacetic in what they're doing. This is an Executive Order signed on March 4, 2019, "An Order Regarding Administrative Rulemaking:" "Whereas, the promulgation of rules and regulations is an essential policy-making function of State government;" and whereas, whereas, whereas; "Now therefore, I, Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, pursuant to my authority conferred to me by the Constitution, do hereby order the following: I. Process. Agencies and boards… shall, prior to issuing notice of rulemaking and submitting a proposed rule to the Secretary of State for publication pursuant to 5 M.R.S… provide the Office of Attorney General with the opportunity to perform a legal pre-view of proposed rules." That's the backstop for the Attorney General. In March of '23, another order was signed by the Chief Executive, "An Order Regarding Administrative Rulemaking," all of the exact same things applied, except for when you get down to process, agencies and boards, it says, "shall use best efforts to provide the Office of Attorney General with the opportunity to provide legal oversight on it."

So, what we have, Madam Speaker, is an office which is going to make its own rulemaking, own routine technical rules, no oversight. None by the office it's in, none by the Attorney General. How long do you think it's going to be, Madam Speaker, very respectfully, before someone puts in a 150-signature petition and tells them exactly what they're going to put in here for rules? And I went down to the Revisor's Office and asked if I could put in an amendment for this bill, which would make it major substantive rules, so, we would have some legislative oversight over what they do, but the bill came out, the language on this budget came out 6:30 this morning and, as you well know, it was shut off as far as amendments at 9:30. Nothing could be done about this.

This is bad news for our State. Not only by putting this in the budget and not allowing it to come before this Body, so that we can speak on behalf of our constituents and we can have our say in even just this portion of this, just the Office of New Americans being in here, this is fast-tracking and going by everything that we stand for, Madam Speaker. Oversight, government, what's fair and what's right and telling us, the people of this State, the hardworking citizens of this State, we don't have a voice in this, you have to take it, that's it. That's what this is saying to me. And I think this is unfair, I think it's unwise for us to do this, and thank you, Ma'am.

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

Representative **PARRY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I rise in opposition to the pending motion. There's a lot of stuff here that people can be for and against, but as somebody that has served six terms on Transportation, as somebody that stood in this Chamber about 10 months ago, where we all agreed that sustainable funding for highways and for our transportation system was necessary. And in a unanimous fashion, because, unlike this current budget process here, that was a two-thirds, that was a two-thirds budget, it was an emergency budget, which every budget has been through the Highway Fund in all the years that I've been on Transportation. I've looked at this, and after standing in this Chamber 10 months ago and us all agreeing; within 10 months, we're already taking money back out of our transportation system. It didn't take long. We said we wanted a sustainable funding, we all said that that was exactly what we needed, we all said that we probably needed more, and within 10 months of that historic agreement for long-term highway funding and transportation; to cover our transportation needs, we're already peeling that back. As I've said on the floor many times before, at some point, we're going to put our transportation needs first, or even second or third or fourth, not always at the end of the line. And it's so disappointing that in this budget, we're pulling money out of roads. I believe that costs for everything that we do today, from food to feed our families to every cost we have are going up, but in this Majority budget, we're saying that isn't true in our Highway Fund and isn't true to cover the costs of our ongoing transportation needs.

It's just very frustrating; like I said, there's a lot of things in the budget; one of my other ones, my big ones is support for the veterans' homes and for us not to support ongoing needs there is disappointing. My father spent the last three years of his life at the veterans' home in Scarborough, and for us not to take care of our senior veterans, people that have lived here, have served here, have served this country and have been most of them Mainers their whole life and we're not funding them on an ongoing basis is very, very frustrating. And anybody that goes over to the veterans' home in Scarborough and see what a great job they do taking care of our veterans, you would see why we're so passionate on making sure that they have funding.

As I said before, I'm very disappointed that, in this Majority budget, that they took more money out of roads at a time when costs are going up. This $11 million that's coming out of the roads could be $11 million, or could be as much, depending on the project, as $50 or $60 million with federal matches. So, that's what has been decided isn't a priority here in Maine to continue to fix our roads and bridges and our transportation system. And as I said, it's just very frustrating, after historic changes we made last year and every person in this Chamber supporting those changes, that this budget is taking those away. So, I'm hoping we can defeat this Majority budget and move to the Minority budget and we can keep funding our roads and not take the money away. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Representative **BLIER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to rise a second time, and I just want to thank the other side. And I just want to make one comment that is deep to my heart. You know, I am a true Mainer, grew up in Northern Maine, live in Southern Maine; and the truth of the matter, this side of the aisle represents the rural part of Maine, for the most part. And gosh, I wish we could come to someplace, Madam Speaker, where we can really negotiate and come up with a two-thirds budget. That is true democracy. We've been running simple majority budgets for years now. That tells our side that we don't matter. We don't have a voice in any of these budgets. We represent the people in our State. When we say we're helping the people of Maine, you're not helping our people. Let's work together, let's negotiate. Yes, you're going to have to lose a little bit and we'll have to win a little bit, but then, the whole State will be covered. Isn't that democracy? Join us. This is what's important, the whole State, not certain pockets, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

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

Representative **THERIAULT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Members of the House. Oftentimes when the pages stand in front of us, I think about what it was like to be a kid visiting the State House and thinking about the responsibility that we all have to represent the people in our respective districts.

Just a couple months ago, we got word up in the County that another nursing home had closed. And my response to the people that reached out was this was supposed to be worked on years ago, and now, in this Majority budget, we're kicking the can down the road again. Where are these families going to put their loved ones? Are they going to have to move them to Bangor? Are they going to have to move them out of the County? We're putting a large responsibility on families that are barely able to get by right now.

When the Commissioner of Public Safety was in front of us, he said we have a major gap right now with rural patrol. And for this budget to just, I don't know, cut it in half from 32 officers on the State Police down to 16, seemed like an arbitrary number. So, when our constituents have to call the police in the middle of the night, and a lot of these towns don't have officers in their; and the town doesn't pay for police officers, it's up to the Sheriffs and the State Police, and some of them are going to have to go hours waiting for a response.

The veterans' home issue was another issue. We've been talking about this for as long as I've been here, and I know it's been going on before I got here. And we're doing another one-time fix for a real problem that has real consequences for people around the State. We can do better than this.

Oftentimes, I think power can get the best of us, but we have to remember the example that we can be for these kids that sit in front of us. We can be better, we've done better in the past, we've gone off the rails and I hope that, in this process, we've learned that when people work together, you can get stuff done. We have an opportunity here to do the right thing. Please follow my light and oppose this motion and see where we can go from here. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Harrington, Representative Strout.

Representative **STROUT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I rise in opposition of the pending motion. So, I'm new, this is my first term. I've enjoyed meeting all of you and having interactions, but I think you've learned, those that haven't met me, is being a mom is my first priority. Here, my second is the constituents of where I represent. And I take my community; I take pride in it, they're hardworking, and they don't get a lot.

So, when the storms hit in January, it devastated a lot of communities and families in my area. They've put blood, sweat and tears in their wharfs, their boats, their towns, their communities and it was washed away not once, but twice. Passing this budget does not assist those families or the families along the coast to rebuild, or western Maine that lost a lot in their storms. If it doesn't show dedication, I was the only one from this aisle, if you remember, in the revamp of the Coastal Caucus, and we all sat together and we talked about the need to help everybody that was devastated by those storms. Now, I'm not much of a politician, I don't know if I ever will be, but I know my job here is to stand and look out for the people. The only way that I can see that that's going to happen is if this budget does not pass and we're able to pass the one that includes the money to fund not just my area and the hardworking people, but all of the people along the coast that bring in their hard work and the tourism and the pride and the continuation of sustainability for heritage.

So, I hope that we can come together and look for what really will benefit most of the people. The other things in this bill also help many other people and families, so, I hope we can come together and make something for this session work that really does benefit the people. Thank you.

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

Representative **CYRWAY**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I was in law enforcement for many years and I volunteered my time, go to 30 nursing homes during Christmastime with a Christmas float. And I escorted the float and we'd go to all these nursing homes and sing Christmas carols to them. And some of them are very heartbreaking. Clearview, Fairfield, kids laying on the floor, can't speak, handicapped, can't walk, it was so sad. People that haven't been visited. One man hadn't been visited for five years by any family member. This is atrocious if we don't help them. I got a call from the lady that is director at Clearview and she's begging me to go see them. And now, what am I going to tell her when we don't fund them?

The farmers. I have a farm out in Albion; devastating, his building is gone for his heifers, the corn was knocked down by the wind, 20 acres; he's got over $100,000 lost and he went and applied three times to FEMA and to EMS, Maine EMS, and got nothing. Nothing. And they said; you know what they told him? They said, well, there was accidentally; we took the farmers' money out of FEMA and guess what, we don't know where that is going to be put, so, we can't help you. That's what they told him. Here he is, 67 years old, he can't take a loan out and think he's going to make it back in the time when he's going to retire. He's got family that wants to take it over, but they're not quite ready yet. It takes money. And so, we should be helping that person. And so, the tier program; it's nowhere near what it should be. That's not going to help them. It's going to help them a little bit, but you're going to end up losing all these farms that we lost a third of just last year. Now we're going to lose the rest. When is responsibility going to kick in? We need people to be responsible about taking care of our people in Maine.

The veterans; I can't believe it, I look at this and it says, Maine Veterans' Home one-time only and it says, unknown amount. That's on the Majority vote. We're looking at on the Minority, $31 million; I mean, $5,100,000. So, that's for veterans' home ongoing. At least there's a plan.

Here it is, Maine Emergency Management, nothing. Maine Emergency Management on the other side, $2,500,000. At least there's a plan. What are we going to do? Keep stripping everything so that they have nothing? What do we do?

I don't even know where to start when I get these phone calls after today. When this vote goes, and if it goes Majority, I am not going to know what I can tell them. I don't want to blame the Democrats, I don't want to blame the Republicans for not being able to get it done, that's not who I am. I care about everybody here. Please, don't vote for this majority, it's not doing it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Sanford, Representative Lanigan.

Representative **LANIGAN**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I've always wanted to say this, I did not intend to rise, especially on a budget. But here I am today. I stand confused about this budget, Madam Speaker.

When we were elected, when you and I were elected, we were elected to represent our district, not our party. Our districts have Independents, our districts have Democrats and our districts have Republicans, and sometimes equal share of which. And a lot of Independents seem to make up a lot of; or unenrolled make up our elections, and those are the people that we are serving and the money who we are allocating today, it's their money. Mine being District 141; it's Shapleigh, Newfield, parts of Sanford and Springvale. And it may not seem like it's a big deal, but not going through with the $60 million or $50 million

for the flood relief does affect my rural towns, Madam Speaker. It affects them because they're the people that work on the coasts. They're the people that go there for their summer jobs or their extra income, or the kids see an opportunity outside of their life, maybe in Newfield.

I, myself, have been in the wedding industry, and I don't know if all of you realize, but we have almost; close to a billion dollars brought in in revenue to the State from weddings. Most of those expensive weddings happen on our coast. A coast that was devastated and a coast that's not being represented in this budget, which is extremely confusing for me, Madam Speaker.

There's a lot of good elements in this budget, but this one is just baffling. A lot of our coastal towns are not represented by this side of the aisle, surprisingly. It seems that we are representing a party and not the people of Maine. I just ask everybody when they look at this budget and they go to vote, take the letters that they are, R's, I's and D's, and let's get rid of the party and vote for the people and vote this budget down. Thank you.

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

Representative **QUINT**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank all of my colleagues who are in the seat to hear me. You have heard the issues my colleagues have brought forward. I share their concerns for the lack of consideration given to rural communities within this budget. This bill was released at 6:30 this morning due to the disrespectful budgetary process that has been handed to us. I have not had the opportunity to read through the complete budget, and will be voting no. May I pose a question to and through you, Madam Speaker?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **QUINT**: Thank you. Have any in this Body who have decided to vote yes on this budget actually read through it, or the alternative that we have offered?

The SPEAKER: The Member has posed question through the Chair to any Member who wishes to respond.

Seeing none, 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. 545

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

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

ABSENT - Adams, Crockett, Hasenfus, Jauch, Lavigne, Roberts.

Yes, 77; No, 67; Absent, 6; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

77 having voted in the affirmative and 67 voted in the negative, 1 vacancy with 6 being absent, and accordingly the Majority **Ought to Pass as Amended** Report was **ACCEPTED**.

The Bill was **READ ONCE**. **Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)** was **READ** by the Clerk.

Representative BOYER of Poland **PRESENTED House Amendment "A" (H-988)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)**, which was READ by the Clerk.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Poland, Representative Boyer.

Representative **BOYER**: Thank you, Madam Speaker, Colleagues of the House. I come hat in hand, asking for $100,000, one time, for those that can't ask for it for themselves. These are our loved ones that are deceased, that are in the State's possession, in the basement, in the cooler and they are unidentified. There's about 20 of them, Madam Speaker.

We had a bill that went through, it got a lot of support and we're looking to fund it this way one time through other special revenue, through funeral licensing. Maybe I didn't draft it in the right way the first time, maybe I'm a Republican, maybe you don't like weed, maybe the process has gone sideways, but please don't take that out on these families. These families like Judy and Wayne Richardson, who lost their daughter in a homicide; Ramona Torres, who lost her angel years and years ago that are still keeping the faith, Madam Speaker. Like Ray Moreau, who lost Kimberly 38 years ago and he still puts up flyers in Jay on the light poles.

So, I'm asking, again, hat in hand, humbly, if we can use this licensing funds to pay for the DNA tests and give some closure to Maine families and even save some money. Maybe State Police is looking for missing people that are simply in the State's possession, unidentified. I really hope we can put politics aside and just do some good government here. Thank you.

Representative TERRY of Gorham moved that **House Amendment "A" (H-988)** to **Committee Amendment "A "(H-985)** be **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

Representative FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor **REQUESTED** a roll call on the motion to **INDEFINITELY POSTPONE House Amendment "A" (H-988)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)**.

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 "A" (H-988) to Committee Amendment "A" (H-985). All those in favor will vote yes, those opposed will vote no.

ROLL CALL NO. 546

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

NAY - Albert, Andrews, Ardell, Babin, Bagshaw, Blier, Boyer, Bradstreet, Campbell, Carlow, Carmichael, Collamore, Costain, Cray, Cyrway, Davis, Ducharme, Dunphy, Faulkingham, Foster, Fredericks, Galletta, Gifford, Greenwood, Griffin, Guerrette, Haggan, Hall, Henderson, Hymes, Jackson,

Javner, Lanigan, Lemelin, Libby, Lookner, Lyman, Mason, Millett H, Montell, Morris, Ness, Newman, Nutting, Parry, Paul, Perkins, Poirier, Polewarczyk, Pomerleau, Quint, Riseman, Rudnicki, Sampson, Schmersal-Burgess, Simmons, Sinclair, Smith, Soboleski, Strout, Swallow, Theriault, Thorne, Underwood, Walker, White J, Wood, Woodsome.

ABSENT - Adams, Crockett, Drinkwater, Hasenfus, Jauch, Lavigne, Roberts.

Yes, 75; No, 68; Absent, 7; Vacant, 1; Excused, 0.

75 having voted in the affirmative and 68 voted in the negative, 1 vacancy with 7 being absent, and accordingly **House Amendment "A" (H-988)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)** was **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**.

Representative TERRY of Gorham **PRESENTED House Amendment "B" (H-989)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)**, which was **READ** by the Clerk.

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

Representative **TERRY**: Madam Speaker and Members of the House, I rise to offer an amendment to LD 2214. This amendment makes only two minor technical changes to language in the bill after two minor errors were identified after the bill was drafted and printed. These changes are included to reflect the intent of the Committee's Majority Report. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Subsequently, **House Amendment "B" (H-989)** to **Committee Amendment "A" (H-985)** was **ADOPTED**.

Committee Amendment "A" (H-985) as Amended by House Amendment "B" (H-989) 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**.

Under further suspension of the rules the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (H-985) as Amended by House Amendment "B" (H-989)** thereto and sent for concurrence. **ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH**.

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

ENACTORS

Emergency Measure

An Act to Correct Inconsistencies, Conflicts and Errors in the Laws of Maine

(H.P. 1478) (L.D. 2290)
(C. "A" H-982)

Was reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed. This being an emergency measure, a two-thirds vote of all the members elected to the House being necessary, a total was taken. 110 voted in favor of the same and 10 against, and accordingly the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENACTED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.

Acts

An Act to Establish the Social Equity Program

(H.P. 972) (L.D. 1517)
(C. "A" H-979)

Was reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed, **PASSED TO BE ENACTED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.

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

Representative **DUCHARME**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask a question of the Chair?

The SPEAKER: The Member may proceed.

Representative **DUCHARME**: Thank you. Madam Speaker, yesterday, LD 225 was before this Body and we stripped out the Emergency Enactor amendment in response to the non-concurrence from the other Body. We sent that bill back to the other Body, where it remains. That was the bill that would have provided the flood relief money from the Budget Stabilization Fund. By stripping out the Emergency Enactor amendment, what that does is once that bill is passed with no Emergency Enactor on it, then it requires that folks are going to wait for that money for 90 days after this Body adjourns, which I assume will be today or sometime today, *sine die*. We offered in our budget proposal a way to get there to provide money immediately, or as soon as the Chief Executive signed it. I would just like to know if there is a plan and could somebody tell us what the plan is for getting flood relief to these people who are going to lose their entire summers while we fiddle around waiting 90 days for money that a month and a half ago, I told the Chief Executive we could get her a two-thirds vote if she took it out of Unallocated Surplus.

The SPEAKER: The Chair would advise the Member that that bill is not before this Chamber at this time. That bill is not in the possession of the House.

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

Emergency Measure

An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, Highway Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

(H.P. 1431) (L.D. 2229)
(H. "A" H-981 to C. "A" H-971)

Reported by the Committee on **Engrossed Bills** as truly and strictly engrossed. This being an emergency measure, a two-thirds vote of all the members elected to the House being necessary, a total was taken. 114 voted in favor of the same and 8 against, and accordingly the Bill was **PASSED TO BE ENACTED**, signed by the Speaker and sent to the Senate.

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