

MAINE POLICY

BLUEPRINT

2026



MAINEPOLICY
INSTITUTE



MAINE POLICY BLUEPRINT

A Guide to Revitalizing Maine

August 2026

Montana Towers, Harris Van Pate

mainepolicy.org

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copyright © 2026 by Maine Policy Institute.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without the prior written permission of Maine Policy Institute, except for brief quotations used in articles, reviews, or other works of commentary.

Date of Issue

August 2026

Media

For media inquiries, please contact Jacob Posik, Director of Legislative Affairs, at 207.321.2550.

About Maine Policy Institute

Maine Policy Institute is a nonpartisan, free-market research and educational organization committed to advancing policies that expand individual liberty, strengthen economic opportunity, restrain the growth of government, and improve the lives of all Maine people.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the staff and interns of Maine Policy Institute whose research, analysis, writing, editing, and thoughtful contributions helped bring this project to completion. Their diligence and commitment strengthened every part of this publication. Special thanks to Garrick Hoffman for the use of his photographs in this publication.

The authors also extend their sincere appreciation to the members of Maine Policy Institute's Board of Directors and Board of Advisors. Their leadership, counsel, and steadfast support make this work possible and help sustain the Institute's mission of advancing freedom and opportunity throughout Maine.

Dedication

This publication is dedicated to the people of Maine, who have too often borne the consequences of shortsighted policies, misplaced priorities, and ineffective government. Maine people deserve more than the continued management of decline. May the ideas contained in these pages help secure for Maine a future worthy of its people: freer, stronger, more prosperous, and filled with renewed hope.

CONTENTS

Introduction	
Organization of Maine Government (Chart)	
Overview of Reform Opportunities	1
The Four Pillars of Maine Policy Reform	3
Cabinet Level Department Policy Review	9
Administrative and Financial Services	11
Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry	14
Corrections	16
Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management	18
Economic and Community Development	20
Education	23
Environmental Protection	26
Health and Human Services	28
Inland Fisheries and Wildlife	30
Labor	32
Marine Resources	34
Professional and Financial Regulation	36

CONTENTS (continued)

Public Safety	38
Transportation	40
Energy Resources	42
Fixing Maine's Budget	44
Department Level Budget Savings	46
Non-department Budget Savings	78
Government Reform Agenda	84
Constitutional Officers	86
House Rule Reform	88
Senate Rule Reform	90
Proposed Joint Committee Restructuring	91
Joint Rule Reforms	92
Legislative Priorities	101
About the Authors	121
About Maine Policy Institute	122
Maine Policy Institute Board of Directors	123

Introduction

Maine stands at a moment of consequence. For years, state leaders were warned that Maine was becoming less affordable, less competitive, and less capable of delivering the basic services its people deserve. Those warnings were ignored. Instead of changing direction, state government accelerated down the same failed path.

Spending has exploded. Taxes have been raised, new taxes and costly mandates have been imposed, and government has grown larger, more intrusive, and less accountable. Programs have multiplied, but Maine's deepest problems have only grown worse.

Our economy is stagnant. Housing is unaffordable for working families and young people. Our tax burden remains among the country's heaviest. Educational achievement has fallen to historic lows. Energy costs are among the highest in the nation and continue to rise. At the same time, widespread fraud, waste, and mismanagement have undermined public confidence in government.

These are not isolated failures. They are the consequence of a governing philosophy that measures success by how much government spends and how many programs it creates—not by whether Maine people are freer, more prosperous, or better able to afford happy lives.

We must change course.

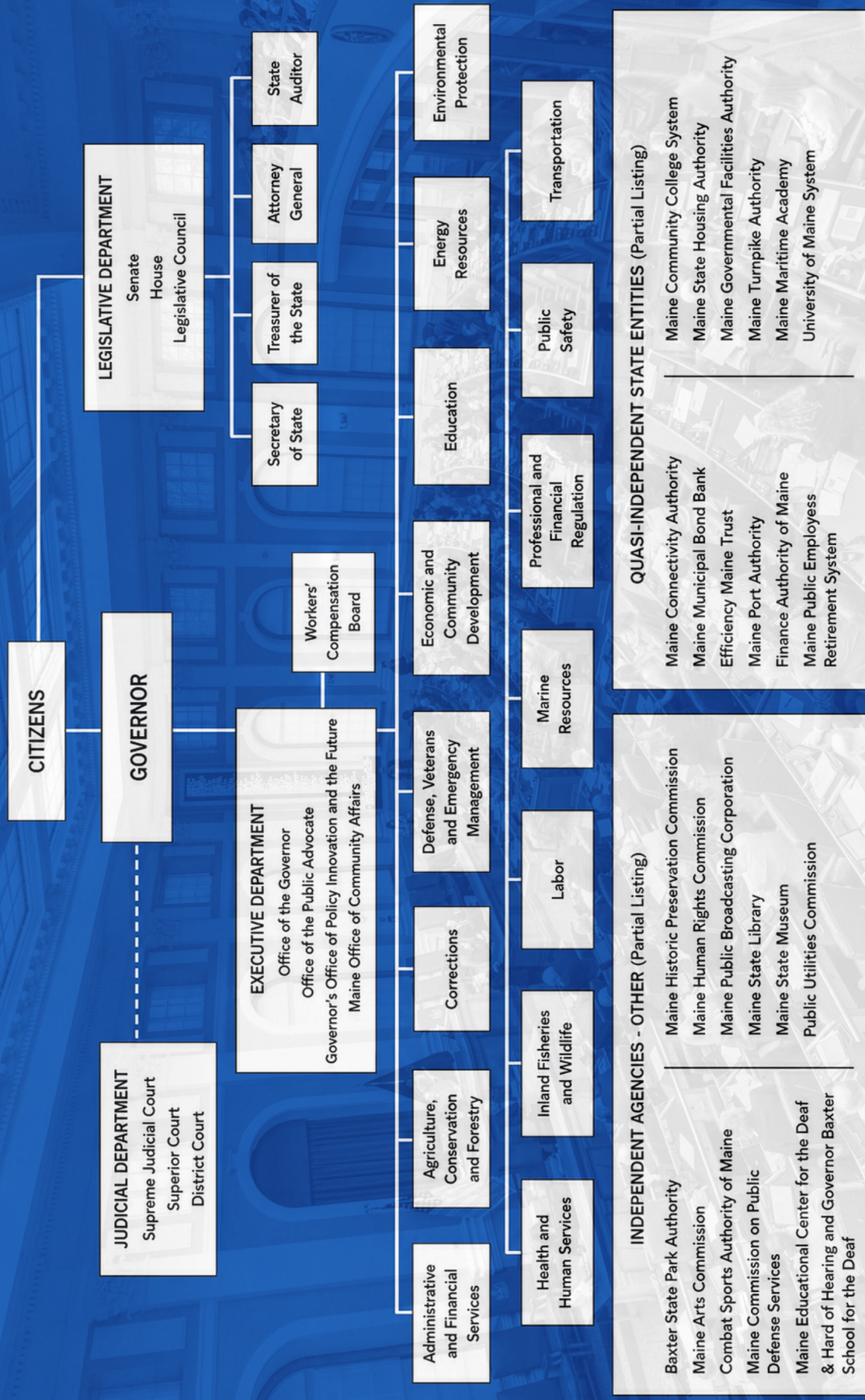
The next governor and Legislature will inherit enormous challenges, but also an extraordinary opportunity. They will have the chance to reject managed decline and begin rebuilding Maine. The *Maine Policy Blueprint* was created to help those leaders act. It is not the final word, but it is where the work begins.

The 133rd Legislature can mark the end of Maine's drift toward stagnation and dependence—and the beginning of a new era of liberty, opportunity, excellence, and accountable government. Maine's problems are serious, but decline is not inevitable. A better future remains within our reach. You will be essential to making it possible.



Matthew Gagnon
Chief Executive Officer

ORGANIZATION OF STATE GOVERNMENT





OVERVIEW OF REFORM OPPORTUNITIES

In 1820, Mainers chose self-government over distant control. In 2027, the state faces a different but equally consequential choice: whether to continue importing high-tax, high-regulation models from Massachusetts, California, and Washington, D.C., or to chart a course grounded in competitiveness, restraint, and individual liberty.

For too long, growth in state government has been treated as an end in itself. Programs expand. Departments multiply. Rules accumulate. Yet affordability declines, population stagnates, and economic opportunity slips away. Maine does not suffer from a lack of public spending or regulatory oversight. It suffers from a lack of discipline, prioritization, and structural reform.

This Blueprint outlines a **comprehensive review of state government** — legislative and executive alike — with the explicit goal of restoring focus, accountability, and economic growth. No institution is exempt from examination: legislative rules, constitutional officers, executive orders, agency rulemaking, permitting systems, and the procedures by which regulations are drafted and enforced.

The State Auditor's office should be empowered and directed to conduct rigorous, performance-based audits of every level of state government — from staffing and departmental structure to rulemaking authority and budgetary

growth. Consolidation of executive departments, offices, and quasi-governmental entities should be evaluated openly and seriously. Transparent auditing will better inform biennial budget decisions and ensure that economic vitality, not bureaucratic preservation, guides appropriations.

Executive agencies must be tasked with identifying and eliminating rules that unnecessarily burden economic activity, restrict entry into professions, delay development, or raise costs without demonstrable health and safety justification. Immediate hiring restraint and the implementation of zero-based budgeting would force departments to justify expenditures from the ground up rather than relying on automatic baseline growth.

Legislators, in turn, must advance structural reform rather than incremental adjustments. Every statute and regulation that restricts individual liberty or inhibits enterprise should face review under a clear standard: does it materially improve health, safety, or core public functions? If not, it should be repealed. The next biennial budget must incorporate durable tax reform that supports long-term growth, strengthens competitiveness, and protects Maine households from inflationary pressure.

Maine's government has expanded well beyond its core functions, often delivering complexity where clarity is needed and cost where efficiency is required. This Blueprint provides a roadmap to restore focus. The central mission of state government should be limited and clear: protect the rights and liberties of Maine citizens, create a stable legal framework, and allow individuals, families, entrepreneurs, and communities to thrive.

Renewal will not come from managing decline. It will come from structural reform, disciplined governance, and a renewed commitment to freedom and competitiveness.



THE FOUR PILLARS OF MAINE POLICY REFORM

Maine's government, economy, and politics are worse than they have ever been before, and it is absolutely essential that legislators act as soon as possible to fix the largest problems facing the state of Maine. Because of this, Maine Policy Institute is including a list of the top four policy issues facing Maine, which legislators should prioritize on day one as areas on which to immediately act.

PILLAR 1: UNLEASH MAINE'S COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

The first policy priority Maine lawmakers must pursue is removing the barriers that prevent Maine's entrepreneurs, professionals, and small businesses from creating the jobs, goods, and services our state urgently needs. Maine's economic challenges are not the result of a lack of talent, ambition, or opportunity. They are the predictable outcome of a tax and regulatory system that penalizes productivity, discourages investment, and steadily pushes entrepreneurs, young families, and skilled professionals across the border to New Hampshire. When income taxes rank among the highest in the country, when commercial property taxes and energy costs strain every balance sheet, and when thousands of pages of licensing mandates and permitting delays function as a hidden tax on growth, competitiveness suffers.

Maine does not need more subsidy programs, selective incentives, or corporate handouts. It needs a competitive, fair, and transparent climate where businesses can operate freely, professionals can practice without unnecessary barriers, and entrepreneurs can launch and scale without first navigating a maze of bureaucracy. On day one, lawmakers should commit to restoring Maine's competitive edge by:

- Reducing and ultimately phasing out the personal income tax, starting with repeal of the recently enacted 2% surcharge on income over \$1 million for single filers.
- Abolishing the state corporate income tax.
- Eliminating protectionist and anti-competitive occupational licensing requirements.
- Ending targeted corporate welfare and special-interest carve-outs.
- Empowering municipalities to adopt pro-growth zoning policies without state obstruction.

This is not about left vs right, or political ideology. It is about population retention, wage growth, and long-term economic vitality. Maine cannot tax and regulate its way to a productive economy. If lawmakers want to reverse outmigration, expand opportunity, and make the state a destination for entrepreneurs and professionals rather than a departure point, they must choose growth over stagnation and competition over complacency. Maine's people are ready to compete. The question is whether its policies will finally let them.

PILLAR 2: DECENTRALIZED HOUSING REFORM: LET MAINERS BUILD

Maine's second major priority must be solving its housing crisis, and doing so honestly. This shortage is not the product of mysterious market failure, or greedy landlords irrationally hoarding vacant apartments. It is the predictable result of layered government restrictions that suppress supply, inflate costs, and push homeownership and rent out of reach for working families, young professionals, and retirees.

For decades, policy has made housing harder to build and more expensive to

deliver. Rent control distorts pricing signals and discourages new construction. Inclusionary zoning mandates shift costs onto market-rate buyers and renters. Short-term rental bans reduce flexibility. Excessive minimum lot sizes, rigid setback requirements, parking mandates, height caps, density limits, and convoluted zoning codes quietly but decisively choke off supply. Add slow, uncertain permitting and opaque review processes, and it becomes clear: Maine has regulated itself into scarcity.

If lawmakers are serious about affordability, they must address the bottlenecks they created. The Legislature should pursue a decentralized, pro-supply approach that restores local flexibility while aligning incentives toward growth. That means:

- Eliminating rent control and inclusionary zoning mandates that deter new construction.
- Reducing or abolishing minimum lot sizes and parking mandates.
- Lifting arbitrary height and density caps where infrastructure allows.
- Allowing mixed-use and multifamily housing by right in appropriate areas.
- Streamlining and expediting permitting processes.
- Enabling third-party code review to prevent bureaucratic delay.
- Creating performance-based incentives instead of statewide mandates for municipalities that modernize and deregulate their zoning codes.

Housing affordability will not improve through more subsidy layering or additional bureaucratic oversight. It will improve when supply rises meaningfully and predictably.

The solution is straightforward: remove the barriers and let Mainers build.

PILLAR 3: MAKE EDUCATION SANE AGAIN

The third major priority for Maine lawmakers must be restoring sanity, excellence, and accountability to the state's education system.

Maine's schools are not struggling because students lack ability or teachers lack

dedication. They are struggling because Augusta has built an increasingly centralized, compliance-driven model that prioritizes bureaucracy and ideology over academic achievement and parental trust. The result is a system that spends more each year while delivering less quality and worse results.

Maine was once a national leader in student performance. Today, it ranks near the middle or bottom in key measures like math and reading proficiency, even as per-pupil spending has climbed and administrative staffing has expanded. Behavioral incidents have risen. Teacher and administrator burnout is widespread. Classrooms are too often pulled away from core instruction and toward political, social, or therapeutic agendas that distract from academic fundamentals. This trajectory is not sustainable.

At the same time, Maine's charter schools, which serve disproportionately higher shares of low-income and special-needs students while receiving roughly 40 percent less total funding per pupil, consistently demonstrate stronger cost-effectiveness and competitive academic outcomes relative to traditional district schools. They show what is possible when autonomy, accountability, and mission clarity are restored. Lawmakers should act immediately to:

- Lift the cap on public charter schools.
- Expand access to meaningful school choice options.
- Restore authority to parents as primary decision-makers.
- Refocus classrooms on core academic subjects and safe, orderly learning environments.
- Reduce administrative and compliance burdens that divert resources from instruction.

Education reform is not about partisanship. It is about ensuring that Maine's students graduate literate, numerate, prepared, and free to think. It is about rebuilding trust between families and schools. And it is about restoring a culture of excellence rather than one of excuse-making and bureaucratic drift.

If Maine wants a competitive economy and thriving communities, it must first ensure that its schools are disciplined, focused, and academically serious.

PILLAR 4: ENERGY AFFORDABILITY, RELIABILITY, AND INDEPENDENCE

Maine's fourth policy priority must be comprehensive energy reform aimed at restoring affordability, reliability, and control over our own economic future.

Energy is not a niche issue. It is a cost embedded in every paycheck, every mortgage, every small business balance sheet, and every manufacturing decision. When energy prices rise, everything rises. When supply is constrained, growth stalls. Maine's current framework, shaped by subsidy layering, aggressive mandates, and regulatory hostility toward dispatchable power, has made electricity and heating more expensive and less predictable.

On day one, lawmakers should move to:

- Repeal the costly and distortionary Net Energy Billing (NEB) program.
- Roll back arbitrary emissions mandates that shift costs onto families and small businesses.
- End state-level hostility toward fossil fuels and nuclear power, which continue to anchor Maine's heating and electricity needs.
- Remove regulatory and permitting barriers that block private investment in generation, transmission, and grid modernization.

Maine needs an all-of-the-above, competition-first energy framework. That means allowing markets, not political preferences, to determine the most efficient mix of generations. It means reopening the door to clean, dispatchable baseload power, including advanced nuclear technologies capable of delivering reliable, carbon-free electricity at scale. It means treating energy infrastructure as an essential economic backbone, not a political bargaining chip.

Lower rates. Stable supply. Industrial competitiveness. Workforce growth. Strategic independence. All of these depend on abundant, reliable energy. If Maine intends to pursue emissions reductions, it must do so in a way that preserves affordability and grid stability. Nuclear energy remains the only scalable, reliable, and cost-effective pathway to reduce emissions without

destabilizing the system or imposing perpetual subsidy dependence.

Energy policy should serve the most important participant in the system: the consumer. Reform is not optional. It is foundational to Maine's economic revival.



CABINET DEPARTMENT

POLICY REVIEW

Maine’s cabinet-level departments are where public policy becomes administration. Statutes passed by the Legislature may establish the broad direction of government, but these departments determine how those laws are interpreted, implemented, enforced, and experienced by the public. Through rulemaking, licensing, permitting, benefit administration, contracting, oversight, and direct service delivery, they exercise enormous influence over the daily lives of Maine people and the operation of the state’s economy.

Over time, that influence has grown considerably. New programs have been layered onto old ones, responsibilities have expanded, and temporary initiatives have often become permanent features of state government. In some cases, departments now carry out functions far removed from their original missions. In others, outdated structures and overlapping authorities have made government more difficult to navigate, less accountable, and more expensive to operate. The result is a system that is often judged by how much it administers rather than by whether it produces measurable results.

The following pages examine each cabinet-level department individually. This review is not intended to provide an exhaustive inventory of every office, program, or line item within state government. The purpose is to provide a clear assessment of what each department actually does, how it affects Maine people, and where reform should begin.

The recommendations that follow are therefore intentionally broad. In some cases, reform may require consolidation or restructuring. In others, it may mean withdrawing government from activities better handled by individuals, communities, nonprofit institutions, or the private sector.

No meaningful reform agenda can ignore the machinery of the executive branch. A government that attempts to do too much will inevitably perform its essential duties less effectively. The objective of this review is not simply to make Maine government smaller for its own sake, but to make it more disciplined, more transparent, more accountable, and more capable of carrying out its legitimate responsibilities well.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL SERVICES

THE FISCAL ARCHITECTURE OF MAINE GOVERNMENT

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) stands at the commanding center of state power, shaping not merely a budget, but the fiscal architecture that governs every agency and program in Maine. It helps with the drafting of the biennial budget that determines the size, scope, and priorities of government; directs and disciplines the financial planning of executive agencies; and administers the tax code that defines the relationship between citizens and the state. DAFS also controls the technological backbone of government operations, stewards the enforcement and interpretation of financial statutes, and manages one of the largest public-sector workforces in Maine—thereby influencing not only policy execution, but the culture, capacity, and long-term trajectory of state governance itself.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- The 2024 State Audit flagged procurement and internal control weaknesses, documentation deficiencies, and federal compliance concerns related to contracting; DAFS leadership publicly disputed or minimized several findings.

- DAFS' response to audit findings characterized by dispute and partial rejection rather than full corrective acknowledgment.
- Ongoing normalization of elevated post-pandemic spending growth within the budget process.
- Expansion of DEI and "equity" criteria in state hiring practices and vendor selection decisions.
- Broad tobacco and nicotine tax hike, including higher taxes on cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, vaping products, and nicotine pouches.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Prepare a budget with structural tax reform/ reductions.
- Implement revenue -triggered tax cuts.
- Exempt all income up to \$50,000/year (single filer) from taxes.
- Consolidate all income brackets, down to 4.5%.
- Reinstitute the Agricultural Worker Minimum Wage.
- Repeal the 2% income tax hike on income above \$1 million for single filers.
- Budget impasse triggers automatic spending cuts to avoid shutdown.
- Repeal Maine's recent tobacco and nicotine tax increase and curb the state's reliance on punitive "sin tax" revenue.
- Full state audit with automatic sunsets for new and existing agency and department rules and regulations.
- Repeal cap on charitable giving, or align limits with federal law.
- Expand Maine Open Checkbook to provide detailed spending and subsidy data from all state government entities.
- Require the government to maintain a full public archive of all no bid contracts.

RECOMMENDED STRUCTURAL CHANGES

- Bring Professional and Financial Regulation under DAFS.

- Oversee and enforce zero-base budgeting for biennial budget submission.
- Streamline all processes for vendors, and commit to a culture of transparency by publicly posting all accepted RFPs on the bureau's website.
- Conduct a full review of year-over-year budgeting and fluctuations in staffing levels.
- List and date each position available in every department by length of time not filled.
- Pursue opportunities to streamline Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) request fulfillment process through OIT instead of through the particular department under scrutiny.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

MANAGING MAINE'S NATURAL RESOURCES

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) exercises sweeping authority over the state's natural resources, land policy, and rural economy. It directs the advancement and regulation of Maine's agricultural sector; asserts stewardship over nearly 18 million acres of forestland that underpin the state's timber and energy industries; and controls more than 700,000 acres of parks and public lands, shaping public access, land use, and development priorities. Through a network of science-driven regulatory and planning programs, DACF influences conservation policy, environmental compliance, and long-term land management decisions—placing it at the center of debates over property rights, resource utilization, climate policy, and the balance between economic growth and environmental regulation in Maine.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Integration of climate resilience planning mandates into forestry management policy.
- Elevation of carbon sequestration as a central objective in state land management policy.

- Use of forest management strategy as a primary mechanism for meeting state emissions-reduction targets.
- Expansion of land acquisition and conservation initiatives through the Land for Maine's Future program under the guise of carbon sequestration, climate resilience, and habitat expansion.
- Policy emphasis on additional land conservation despite Maine already being the most forested state in the country, raising questions about economic tradeoffs in a state with persistent income and growth challenges.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027



- Offset supply chain issues/inflation costs for Maine farmers.
- Improve forestry management to prevent fires.
- Risk-based PFAS standards, targeted cleanup, no blanket bans.
- Land for Maine's Future overhaul (cap percentage of land owned and managed by the state).
- Overhaul land use planning commission rules and laws.
- Reestablish the reduced Agriculture worker minimum wage.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

MANAGING THE STATE OF MAINE'S PENAL SYSTEM

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) exercises centralized authority over the custody, supervision, and administration of both adult and juvenile offenders statewide. Beyond operating correctional facilities, MDOC sets the policies governing classification, housing assignments, community supervision, reentry standards, and institutional discipline.

In recent years, this authority has extended into areas of significant public controversy: community supervision and reentry practices that have, in some cases, preceded serious re-offenses and raised concerns about risk assessment integrity and monitoring rigor; housing policies that permit placement based on stated gender identity, prompting debate over inmate safety, privacy, and institutional order; and sustained growth in corrections spending despite a declining prison population, intensifying scrutiny of staffing models, overtime practices, and structural cost drivers.

As a result, MDOC now sits at the center of broader debates about accountability, public safety, fiscal stewardship, and the proper balance between rehabilitation and incarceration in Maine's criminal justice system.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Community supervision and reentry practices have, in certain cases, resulted in the release or supervision of individuals who subsequently committed serious offenses, raising questions about risk assessment standards and monitoring protocols.
- Policy permitting incarcerated individuals to be housed in correctional facilities consistent with their stated gender identity, generating debate regarding safety, privacy, and administrative consistency within the prison system.
- Sustained corrections spending growth occurring alongside a declining prison population, prompting scrutiny of cost structures, staffing levels, and long-term resource allocation.
- Disputes over cooperation between county jails and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including the holding and transfer of detainees, have sparked ongoing legal, political, and public debates.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Change MDOC rulemaking to major substantive.
- Promote Rehabilitation over incarceration for minor drug possession.
- Ensure female inmates are not housed with their male counterparts.
- Reduce paid out overtime by increasing numbers of floating positions.

DEFENSE, VETERANS & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OVERSEEING MAINE'S MILITARY POPULATION AND EMS

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM) consolidates military readiness, veterans' services, and statewide emergency authority under a single executive structure. It oversees the operational control and preparedness of Maine's Army and Air National Guard, administers veterans' benefits and support services through the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, and directs the Maine Emergency Management Agency's disaster response, preparedness, and recovery functions.

In recent years, its mandate has expanded in both scope and philosophy: eligibility and benefit programs have broadened, increasing long-term fiscal commitments; program design and public engagement strategies have incorporated "equity"-oriented frameworks; and emergency management responsibilities have grown to include climate resilience planning and related preparedness initiatives.

These developments position DVEM not only as a guardian of security and service to veterans, but as a key node in debates over executive emergency authority, mission expansion, fiscal sustainability, and the proper boundaries of state-level intervention.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Expansion of state-level benefit programs, increasing eligibility scope and administrative obligations.
- Adoption of “equity” and targeted outreach frameworks in program design and public communications.
- Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services (MBVS) incorporation of equity-focused outreach language in engagement strategies.
- Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) expansion of mission scope to include climate resilience planning and related preparedness initiatives.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Limit and define governor’s emergency powers, requiring clear triggers, sunset provisions, and legislative oversight.
- Reform Maine’s emergency response grant systems to shift towards mitigation rather than response.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAINE'S ECONOMY

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) operates as the state's central engine for industrial policy, capital allocation, and place-based economic planning. Through tax credits, loan programs, direct investments, community block grants, tourism promotion, and sector-specific incentive packages, DECD influences which industries expand, which regions receive priority support, and how public dollars are leveraged to shape private markets. In recent years, its strategy has increasingly emphasized targeted growth sectors—particularly clean energy, biotechnology, offshore wind development, and workforce pipeline initiatives—while coordinating a wide array of housing subsidies, development incentives, and broadband expansion efforts. The department also administers and promotes “Inclusive Growth” and “equitable economic development” frameworks, integrating social criteria into grantmaking and investment decisions.

As a result, DECD stands at the center of ongoing debates over corporate subsidies, industrial favoritism, housing affordability, broadband overbuild, and the broader question of whether state government should direct markets or remove barriers to organic growth.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Coordination and administration of multiple state tax credit programs across targeted industries.
- Strategic emphasis on clean energy and biotechnology sectors as priority areas for economic growth.
- Use of sector-specific incentives and subsidies, raising concerns about government selection of preferred industries.
- “Clean energy economy” framing, including offshore wind development initiatives and clean energy workforce pipeline programs.
- Central administrative role in offshore wind planning, financing, and coordination.
- Oversight and coordination of housing subsidy and development incentive programs.
- Integration of “equitable economic development” objectives into grantmaking, planning, and investment criteria.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

Housing & Planning

- Review guidance for municipalities on developing comprehensive plans to remove those which present unnecessary barriers to housing supply.
- Incentivize local deregulation rather than impose statewide mandates.
- Reduce regulatory barriers that raise upfront development costs.
- Discourage politics that function as implicit taxes on housing production.
- Tie part of the municipal revenue sharing formula to permit approvals and YIMBY housing reforms.

Maine Connectivity Authority

- Review all open grant applications, rescind all in areas which have already

been funded by federal broadband programs.

- Prioritize projects that supplement rather than supplant private broadband expansion.
- Oppose state broadband dollars from being used to support municipal government-owned networks.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OVERSEEING MAINE'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) functions as the central authority over public education policy, funding, regulation, and credentialing across the state. It administers state education subsidies and federal grant streams that shape district budgets and program priorities; drafts and implements the rules governing education statutes enacted by the Legislature; oversees educator certification and professional development systems; and issues administrative guidance that influences curriculum standards, discipline frameworks, and instructional practices in local schools.

Through these mechanisms, the DOE does not merely support districts—it defines the regulatory environment, accountability structures, and ideological direction of Maine's public education system.

In recent years, that influence has extended into areas of sustained public debate, including gender identity policies, equity-based resource allocation, curricular content standards, school choice restrictions, vaccine mandates, and the balance between academic rigor and social or identity-focused instruction.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Significant decline in K-12 standardized test scores over the course of the last decade.
- Policies governing access to private facilities and athletic participation based on gender identity.
- Expansion of DEI, social emotional learning, restorative justice and equity-based education frameworks within administrative guidance and classroom practices, and academic coursework.
- Adoption of “culturally responsive” teaching standards and related professional development requirements.
- Implementation of equity initiatives influencing resource allocation, discipline policy, and performance measurement.
- Ideological embedding within curriculum standards and instructional materials.
- Ongoing debate over the boundary between academic instruction and social or ideological formation.
- State-level resistance to school choice and constraints affecting charter schools.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Implement statewide early literacy reform modeled on Mississippi’s evidence-based “science of reading” approach-mandating phonics-based instruction in K-3, transparent reporting of third-grade reading proficiency, and accountability systems tied directly to measurable literacy gains.
- Direct every SAU to publish on its website curriculum for every grade level, salary and benefits information for every staff member, and all vendor contracts and RFPs.
- Ensure student transfer requests are approved provided receiving schools have enough space. Publish student transfer data on DOE portal.
- Promote the adoption of open enrollment policies at school board level.

- Promote the growth of a vibrant ecosystem of educational services, including charter schools, homeschooling resources, private schools.
- Look to positive case studies around the nation in ways to increase choices for families by funding students more directly.
- Reinstatement of religious and philosophical exemptions to k-12 and higher education vaccine mandates. Abolish vaccination requirements for online schools.

RECOMMENDED STRUCTURAL CHANGES



- Create the Office of Literacy within the DOE to authorize regional literacy coaches hired and deployed by the DOE.
- Move education credentialing to DPFR.
- DOE rulemaking standard becomes major substantive rather than routine technical.
- Expand pathways and flexibility for charter schools, including a transition process for traditional public schools to become charter schools.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

GUARDING MAINE'S ENVIRONMENT

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) serves as the state's primary regulatory authority over environmental compliance, land use permitting, air and water quality standards, and energy-related infrastructure approvals. Charged with enforcing Maine's environmental statutes, DEP exercises broad rulemaking and permitting powers that affect industrial operations, transportation policy, land development, energy production, and agricultural activity. The Board of Environmental Protection plays a formal advisory role in pollution prevention and water quality policy, while the Commissioner's Office—through its Communications and Education, Assistance, and Policy Development units—coordinates regulatory implementation, interagency alignment, and strategic policy initiatives. In practice, DEP's authority extends well beyond pollution control into climate governance, emissions regulation, infrastructure siting, and the long-term structure of Maine's energy and transportation markets, placing the department at the center of debates over regulatory expansion, economic competitiveness, and administrative power.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Development and expansion of statewide emissions inventory and reporting requirements.
- Adoption of climate-focused rulemaking aligned with statutory emissions-reduction targets.
- Proposed electric vehicle (EV) mandates and vehicle emissions standards.
- Permitting prioritization and regulatory frameworks for clean energy infrastructure projects.
- Regulatory oversight of offshore wind development.
- Approval and review of high-voltage transmission corridor projects.
- Permitting and siting authority over renewable energy developments.
- PFAS regulatory standards which exceed federal baselines and those adopted by other states, raising concerns regarding regulatory scope, compliance costs, and potential economic impact.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Decouple from California Air Resource Board emissions standards.
- Repeal electric vehicle subsidies.
- Withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.
- Eliminate the Renewable Portfolio Standard.
- Continue to promote and expand open pit mining.
- Eliminate net energy billing.

RECOMMENDED STRUCTURAL CHANGES

- Classify all DEP rulemaking as “Major Substantive.”
- De Novo Judicial Review of agency decisions.
- Sunset of all administrative rules.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

REGULATING HEALTHCARE AND ADMINISTERING WELFARE

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is the largest and most expansive agency within state government, administering a wide network of healthcare programs, public assistance systems, behavioral health services, and regulatory oversight functions. It serves roughly one-third of Maine's population through MaineCare, income support programs, child welfare services, aging and disability programs, and mental health and substance use initiatives. DHHS also oversees the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, operates the state's psychiatric hospitals, and licenses and regulates a broad spectrum of healthcare providers and facilities. Given its size and fiscal footprint, DHHS shapes not only the delivery of social services but the long-term structure of Maine's safety net, healthcare market, and public health policy—making it central to debates over dependency, cost growth, public health mandates, and the appropriate limits of state intervention.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Sustained and significant growth in the DHHS budget relative to other areas of state spending.

- Expansion of eligibility and scope of public assistance programs, increasing long-term dependency exposure within the safety net.
- Authorization and coverage of gender-affirming medical interventions for minors.
- Operational and oversight concerns within the child welfare system, including case management and placement failures.
- Broad distribution of naloxone and adoption of harm-reduction frameworks in substance use policy, with debate over whether such approaches sufficiently balance public health objectives and deterrence.
- Repeated audits finding improper payments in MaineCare, including an estimated \$45.6 million in questionable autism service claims, highlighting weaknesses in fraud prevention and oversight.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Rescind CDC rule which added COVID-19 to vaccine schedule for healthcare workers.
- Make General Assistance and TANF mutually exclusive.
- Restore TANF accountability reforms that encourage work, strengthen eligibility standards, and focus assistance on families most in need.
- Tie the minimum smoking age to the minimum voting age.
- Reduce or repeal Medicaid expansion.
- Continue to oppose excessive packaging mandates for cigarettes and other tobacco products that would increase compliance costs for retailers, distributors, and manufacturers without clear evidence of improved public health outcomes.
- Reinstate LePage-era welfare reforms.
- Implement stronger program integrity measures within MaineCare, including independent third-party audits, and stricter provider verification requirements in order to identify and prevent improper payments and fraud.
- Audit Maine DHHS for waste, fraud and abuse.
- Privatize non-investigatory child welfare workers. Increase rate of internal child welfare review and efficiency audits.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

MANAGING MAINE'S FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT RESOURCES

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (DIFW) holds primary authority over the management of the state's fish, wildlife, and habitat resources, balancing conservation mandates with the regulation of hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. It oversees species restoration efforts, sets seasons and bag limits, administers licensing regimes, manages hatcheries, and enforces game laws.

At the same time, DIFW plays a significant economic role by regulating the activities that support Maine's outdoor tourism industry, including guiding, boating, snowmobiling, and wildlife recreation. Because it controls both access to natural resources and the regulatory conditions under which they may be used, DIFW operates at the intersection of conservation policy, property rights, sporting traditions, and rural economic activity.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Repeal the recent increases to Maine's inland fishing license fees.
- Contract out portions of fish stocking to private or nonprofit hatcheries

under competitive, performance-based, contracts, similar to states like California or Texas.

- Protect the “right to fish and hunt,” attached to the right to food, waiving licensing requirements for those fishing or hunting exclusively for personal consumption.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

REGULATING MAINE'S WORKFORCE

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Labor (DOL) exercises regulatory and administrative authority over workforce development, unemployment insurance, labor standards enforcement, occupational licensing, and workplace safety. It manages the state's unemployment insurance system, oversees wage and hour compliance, administers Paid Family and Medical Leave mandates, enforces workplace regulations, and maintains labor market data systems used to guide economic policy. Through these functions, DOL influences hiring costs, labor market entry barriers, employer compliance burdens, and the structure of Maine's workforce participation. As labor policy has expanded in scope—particularly during and after the COVID emergency—the department has increasingly shaped wage standards, benefit mandates, licensing requirements, and demographic workforce initiatives, positioning it at the center of debates over competitiveness, worker freedom, and regulatory accumulation.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Increased minimum wage requirements and expanded labor standards enforcement authority.

- Implementation and administration of Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program mandates.
- Adoption of “equitable access to workforce opportunities” frameworks, including targeted demographic outreach initiatives.
- Immigrant labor participation trends raising debate over labor market effects, wage dynamics, and workforce competition.
- Continuation and enforcement of occupational licensing requirements affecting labor market entry and mobility.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027

- Pass right-to-work so workers can decide whether or not they want to unionize.
- Remove or limit prevailing wage mandates on public works contracts to improve competitive bidding, reducing costs to taxpayers.
- Freeze the minimum wage.
- Deregulate occupational licensing and remove barriers to entry. Review and eliminate unnecessary licenses or certification regimes.
- Repeal state imposed Paid Family Medical Leave.
- End government-mandated project labor agreements.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

CONSERVING AND REGULATING MAINE'S COASTAL WATERS

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) holds primary authority over the regulation, conservation, and economic development of Maine's coastal and estuarine industries. It manages licensing for commercial fisheries and aquaculture, enforces marine resource laws, conducts and sponsors scientific research, and coordinates with state and federal agencies on regulatory matters affecting coastal waters. Through these powers, DMR determines access to one of Maine's most economically and culturally significant sectors—most notably the lobster industry—while balancing conservation mandates against the livelihoods of working waterfront communities. Its regulatory posture directly shapes entry into the industry, compliance costs, and the long-term sustainability of Maine's signature fisheries.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Federal regulatory expansion affecting Maine's lobster industry, including gear restrictions and endangered species compliance measures viewed by stakeholders as disproportionate to demonstrated risk.
- Offshore wind development and associated transmission planning

impacting traditional lobster fishing grounds, raising concerns regarding displacement, navigational safety, and long-term viability of the state's signature fishery.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027



- Repeal DMR's "Moral Character" Clause in licensing. Eliminate any DMR licensing language that allows rejection based on "moral character" or past criminal records unrelated to marine safety or resource theft.
- Allow private lease transfers without DMR re-approval. Once an aquaculture lease is granted, allow the leaseholder to sell or sublease it without going through a new DMR adjudicatory process (provided terms and site conditions do not change).
- Repeal and revoke all offshore wind approvals.
- Withdraw from all interstate offshore renewable energy generation agreements.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

PROFESSIONAL AND FINANCIAL REGULATION

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, INSURANCE AND LICENSING

AT A GLANCE

The Department of Professional and Financial Regulation (DPFR) exercises broad oversight over state-chartered financial institutions, insurance markets, consumer credit providers, securities activity, and a wide array of licensed professions. Through the Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation (OPOR), the department administers licensing regimes, conducts examinations and audits, investigates alleged violations, and enforces compliance with state statutes. It also responds to consumer complaints and conducts public outreach regarding regulatory requirements. In practice, DPFR controls entry into dozens of trades and professions, sets fee structures, defines qualification standards, and delegates authority to licensing boards—placing it at the center of debates over workforce mobility, regulatory discretion, and the balance between consumer protection and economic opportunity.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Extensive occupational licensing framework creating barriers to entry across numerous trades and professions.
- Licensing requirements limit workforce access for younger workers,

career switchers, and low-income entrepreneurs.

- Professional licensing boards functioning as gatekeepers that protect incumbent practitioners rather than prioritize consumer protection.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027



- Review every occupational license and regulation for those which do not directly relate to consumer health and public safety, submit a report on these unnecessary regulations for prompt repeal.
- Grant all occupational licensing applications of those professionals who are in good standing in their previous state of residence.
- Review current fee structures to determine any possible reductions.
- Develop standard operating procedures to reduce opportunities for department discretion in granting or denying licensure.

RECOMMENDED STRUCTURAL CHANGES



- Move department under DAFS.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

MANAGING MAINE'S LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM

AT A GLANCE

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) functions as the coordinating authority over Maine's principal law enforcement, emergency response, and regulatory safety bureaus, including the Maine State Police, Capitol Police, Drug Enforcement Agency, Criminal Justice Academy, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Marshal's Office, Gambling Control, Highway Safety, and Consolidated Emergency Communications. Through its Management Office and legal division, DPS establishes operational standards, training protocols, and enforcement priorities that shape statewide policing, emergency response, and regulatory compliance. The advisory Maine Justice Assistance Council further contributes to strategic planning and policy development. Because DPS controls both frontline enforcement capacity and the regulatory frameworks governing drivers, firearms risk orders, emergency systems, and surveillance tools, it occupies a central role in debates over due process, policing authority, public safety mandates, and the scope of state enforcement power.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Continuation of mandatory vehicle inspection requirements despite

debate over safety efficacy and economic burden.

- Implementation and enforcement of Maine’s “Yellow Flag” law alongside the state’s newly enacted “Red Flag” law, including the interaction between the two laws amidst the broader national debate over extreme risk protection orders and due process.
- Expansion of driver-related data collection and surveillance tools, including automated license plate readers and digital traffic monitoring systems.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027



- End vehicle inspection mandates.
- Abolish aerial enforcement of speeding.
- Limit reduced traffic speeds to active construction zones.
- Treat underspeeders the same as speeders.
- Require all state or local police to cooperate with federal law enforcement, including immigration enforcement.
- Continue to resist automated surveillance and traffic enforcement.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MAINTAINING MAINE'S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) serves as the state's central authority over highways, bridges, ports, rail, aviation, and multimodal transportation infrastructure. As a cabinet-level agency overseeing roughly 1,800 employees and managing hundreds of millions of dollars in federal, state, and local funds annually, MaineDOT determines project prioritization, capital investment strategy, and long-range planning across the transportation network. While its stated mission emphasizes safety, system maintenance, and economic opportunity within stable funding levels, the department's planning authority increasingly influences land use patterns, energy integration, and fiscal allocations tied to transportation-related revenues. Its role in aligning infrastructure spending with broader policy objectives has placed it at the center of debates over funding integrity, fuel-tax sustainability, and the appropriate scope of transportation planning.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Public investment in electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and related grid-support transportation initiatives.

- Integration of climate-aligned objectives into long-range transportation planning, including emissions-reduction metrics influencing project prioritization.
- Legislative attempt to establish a unified budget, incorporating General Fund and Highway Fund spending into a single budget document.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027



- Constitutionally protect highway funding from the Appropriations Committee.
- Stop subsidizing EV sales, which effectively defunds highways through reductions in gasoline tax revenue.
- Protect access to ridesharing services.
- Constitutionally guarantee 100% of vehicle-related sales tax revenue is dedicated to the Highway Fund.

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY RESOURCES

REGULATING MAINE'S ENERGY INDUSTRY

AT A GLANCE

The Maine Department of Energy Resources (DER) is a newly established cabinet-level agency tasked with consolidating and directing statewide energy policy. Having absorbed the functions of the former Governor's Energy Office, DER now serves as the principal authority over energy regulation, planning, and long-term strategy, often operating in parallel with or overlapping the Department of Environmental Protection. Through its control of procurement mandates, electrification programs, emissions compliance strategies, and rate-impacting initiatives, DER directly influences electricity prices, heating costs, grid reliability, and the structure of Maine's energy market. As energy affordability and system stability become increasingly central concerns, DER's regulatory philosophy will largely determine whether Maine prioritizes cost discipline and reliability or continues to embed climate-driven mandates into core energy infrastructure decisions.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Implementation of statewide emissions-reduction strategies across electricity, heating, and transportation sectors.

- Electrification initiatives targeting home heating systems, vehicle fleets, and industrial processes.
- State-directed renewable energy procurement mandates and long-term contracting requirements.
- Net Energy Billing policies forcing \$200+ million in stranded costs on electricity ratepayers.
- Promotion of a “green energy market” narrative contrasted with concerns regarding reliability, intermittency, and adequacy of diversified energy supply.
- Prioritization of costly and ineffective offshore wind projects.

RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2027



- Repeal Net Energy Billing.
- Repeal all emissions reductions goals.
- Repeal the statewide nuclear referendum requirement.
- Encourage the development of a reliable, independent, dispatchable, and cost-first energy system in Maine.

FIXING MAINE'S BUDGET

CORRECTING A DECADE OF MISMANAGEMENT

This overview is intended to identify achievable, department-by-department savings that could be pursued by the next administration as part of a broader effort to restore fiscal discipline in state government. These savings estimates are presented on a biennial basis unless otherwise noted. The proposed savings are organized by department to show where specific reforms would occur, followed by several non-departmental recommendations.

Estimates involving consolidation, managed care, facility closures, administrative reductions, or program restructuring are implementation dependent and should be treated as savings targets rather than guaranteed first-year reductions. Several reforms would require statutory changes, and implementation plans to ensure that savings are not double-counted across overlapping proposals.

This does not represent the full scope of budget reductions Maine Policy Institute would support in the next budget. Rather, it highlights several of the strongest and most viable cuts that should be pursued. Additional savings could certainly be identified with greater transparency into programs that receive large appropriations under broad “All Other” categories and are accompanied by limited or inadequate descriptions.

Note on Professional and Financial Regulation: This overview does not include a dedicated section on the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation because the savings identified here are primarily focused on General Fund and Highway Fund dollars. Professional and Financial Regulation is funded through other revenue sources, largely fees and assessments, rather than direct General Fund appropriations. That does not mean the department should be exempt from scrutiny or reform. In fact it is the goal of MPI to completely rework our occupational licensing system and even to move this entire department under DAFS. However, because this overview is focused on reducing General Fund and Highway Fund pressure, Professional and Financial Regulation falls outside the main scope of this analysis.

Taken together, these recommendations show that Maine can make meaningful progress toward restoring fiscal discipline without relying on broad-based tax increases or cuts to critical services. By focusing on administrative overhead, duplicative programs, non-core functions, and spending commitments that have grown beyond the state's essential responsibilities, policymakers can begin to realign state government with taxpayers' ability to pay while preserving core services. In total, the reforms identified in this overview represent at least \$1.03 billion in estimated biennial savings. While more cuts are likely needed to fully address Maine's long-term budget challenges, these recommendations represent a serious and achievable starting point for putting state spending back on a more sustainable path.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
**ADMINISTRATIVE AND
FINANCIAL SERVICES**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS
\$180.3
million

Eliminate Long-Vacant Nonessential State Positions

► Estimated \$101.5 Million Biennial Savings

In February 2025 DAFS reported that Maine had 13,557 permanent positions in state government, excluding the Legislative and Judicial branches, and 1,975 vacant permanent positions. That equals a statewide vacancy rate of roughly 14.6%.

The current budget already assumes a 6% attrition rate, which produces approximately \$26 million in FY26 in General Fund savings. The assumed attrition rate was 1.6% but was recently raised to 5% and then again to 6%. Raising the rate from 5% to 6% generated approximately \$5.9 million for that single percentage point. Since the actual vacancy rate is about 14.6%, and the budget already assumes 6%, the remaining vacancy rate above the built-in assumption is roughly 8.6 percentage points. Multiplying that excess vacancy rate by the estimated value of each percentage point that was used in raising the rate from 5% to 6% produces about \$50.7 million in additional potential General Fund savings annually.

This is a strong elimination because it targets positions that agencies are already operating without, rather than cutting filled jobs or reducing frontline services. If a position has been vacant for a long period of time, that suggests the agency has either absorbed the workload or the role is not essential enough to justify continued funding.

Repeal Maine's Tree Growth Tax Law

► \$26.4 Million Biennial Savings

The Tree Growth Tax Law (36 MRS §571 to §584-A) allows eligible forestland to be taxed based on its current use for commercial timber production rather than its full market value, reducing the property-tax burden for participating landowners. While the program was originally designed to encourage landowners to keep forestland in timber production, it also creates a major tax preference for one category of land use and shifts part of that cost onto the state through municipal reimbursement payments. In practice, this means taxpayers are subsidizing preferential property-tax treatment for large amounts of private forestland. Maine should not continue using General Fund dollars to backfill special tax treatment for favored land uses. Repealing the Tree Growth Tax Law would restore more neutral property-tax treatment, reduce state reimbursement costs, and save approximately \$26.4 million over the biennium.

Reform State Employee Health and Retirement Contributions

► Estimated \$20 Million Biennial Savings (Minimum)

This reform would modestly shift benefit costs toward state employees by reducing the state's health-insurance premium share from roughly 85 percent to 80 percent and raising retirement contributions for new hires from 7.65 to 9 percent. The health-premium adjustment produces the bulk of near-term savings, while the retirement change builds slowly as new employees enter the system. Evidence from other states and national employer-benefit trends suggests these moves reliably reduce government benefit spending without fundamentally undermining recruitment or retention, especially when current workers are grandfathered. The projected \$10–12 million in annual savings is realistic if the state maintains discipline in labor negotiations and avoids offsetting wage concessions. Overall, the reform nudges Maine's compensation structure closer to private-sector norms and provides a manageable, politically feasible path to long-term cost containment.

Lease and Facility Optimization

► Estimated \$16 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Maine currently leases more than 1.5 million square feet of office space, yet post-COVID occupancy has fallen below 70 percent, leaving agencies paying for space they no longer use. The reform consolidates agency offices, reduces the state's long-term leased footprint by 10–15 percent, and subleases or sells surplus state-owned property rather than maintaining it indefinitely. This does not require layoffs—just matching real estate commitments to actual workplace patterns. Similar consolidations in other states have produced substantial savings, and Maine could reasonably expect \$8–10 million in annual operating savings, with some analyses placing the upside closer to \$12–15 million depending on market conditions and how aggressively leases are restructured.

Reduce the Workforce of Maine's Central Administrative Units

► Estimated \$9 Million Biennial Savings

Maine's central administrative units, including the Bureaus of Budget, Procurement, Human Resources, and Property Management, have grown significantly in recent years, adding more than 100 full-time positions since 2019. A targeted 10% reduction would help realign state staffing with core government responsibilities. This effort should focus on nonessential administrative support, DEI, and duplicative management roles rather than frontline workers or mission-critical positions. Based on a 10% reduction of DAFS's 567 employees this reform could conservatively save \$9 million biennially in salary and benefit costs.

Repeal the Renewable Energy Facilities Property Tax Exemption

► \$7.4 Million Biennial Savings

This program provides a property tax exemption for renewable energy fixtures installed on or after September 1, 2019. This exemption gives preferential tax treatment to renewable energy equipment and shifts costs away from property owners and developers who benefit from the infrastructure. While renewable energy projects may be politically favored, the state should not use the tax code to subsidize one class of energy investment over others. Repealing this exemption would restore more neutral tax treatment, reduce state reimbursement costs, and save roughly \$7.4 million over the biennium. In a tight budget, lawmakers should prioritize core services and broad-based tax relief over targeted property-tax carveouts for renewable energy fixtures.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
**AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND
FORESTRY**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$6.4
million

Lease or Concession-Manage Maine's Most Visited, Highest Cost Parks

► Estimated \$3.2 Million Biennial Savings Minimum:

Leasing or concession-managing Maine's highest-traffic, highest-cost state parks such as Sebago Lake, Camden Hills, Reid State Park, Popham Beach, and Rangeley Lake, is a targeted way to reduce operating expenses while preserving public ownership and environmental oversight.

The model is not speculative—other jurisdictions, both domestically and internationally, routinely contract out operations for their park systems, showing that private operators can handle staffing, maintenance, and visitor services while the state retains control over fees, standards, and ecological protections.

Maine's own budget data indicate that the six largest parks consume roughly half of total General Fund park operating costs, making them the most logical candidates for concession management. Under a well-structured agreement, a private operator would run the park, collect the existing state-set fees, meet maintenance and service requirements, and return either a lease payment or a revenue-share to the state.

Eliminating payroll, seasonal staffing, overtime exposure, and day-to-day maintenance from these sites makes \$3.2–4 million in biennial savings a realistic range. This reform doesn't privatize the parks, it simply aligns operational responsibility with those best equipped to manage high-volume recreation

efficiently while allowing the state to focus on stewardship, safety, and environmental regulation.

Eliminate the Statewide Hunger Relief Program And Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives

► \$3.2 Million Biennial Savings:

While hunger relief is a legitimate charitable goal, these programs are not a core agricultural function. To the extent Maine wants to support food assistance, that role more naturally belongs in DHHS or the private nonprofit sector, not in DACF's agriculture budget. Eliminating these lines would help refocus DACF on its core responsibilities of: supporting Maine farms, forestry, conservation, and land management.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONS
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$20
million

Close or Idle Underused Prison Units

► Estimated \$10 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Closing or idling underused prison units can produce real savings in Maine, but only if the closures are executed fully rather than symbolically. Prison budgets are dominated by fixed costs, buildings, utilities, and staffing, so you only capture meaningful savings when entire units are shut down and their associated positions and maintenance obligations are eliminated. If Maine has facilities operating well below capacity, consolidating populations and closing a unit could plausibly save around \$5 million annually, consistent with national evidence, though some shows savings being even higher. But the reform requires discipline: partial “warm shutdowns,” political pressure to preserve jobs in rural areas, or keeping facilities on minimal maintenance will erode most expected savings. Done correctly, it’s a targeted structural reform; done halfway, it becomes another example of the illusion that decarceration automatically reduces spending.

Overtime Control and Staffing Efficiency

► Estimated \$6 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

MDOC could trim overtime costs by creating dedicated float-pool staff to cover predictable absences such as vacations, medical leave, and trainings—precisely the situations that now force facilities to backfill shifts with expensive overtime. Other states have adopted similar staffing models and seen measurable reductions in OT because float-pool employees cost far less per hour than time-

and-a-half coverage from existing staff. If Maine's overtime spending patterns are anything like typical DOC systems—where chronic understaffing and rigid scheduling drive recurring OT spikes—then \$3 million in annual savings is achievable, though it depends on hiring discipline and the pool being sized correctly. The reform doesn't reduce service levels; it simply replaces a structurally inefficient reliance on overtime with a cheaper, more predictable staffing strategy.

Bid Out Medical Services with Performance Metrics

► Estimated \$4 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Contracting out prison medical services with clear performance metrics can reduce Maine's correctional healthcare costs while improving accountability. Maine's system is small enough that fragmented or in-house care often suffers from uneven coverage, weak utilization controls, and high off-site medical expenses. A competitively bid contract—built around enforceable standards for chronic-care management, emergency-room diversion, pharmacy controls, and timely treatment—lets the state lock in predictable per-inmate costs and shift financial risk to a vendor with deeper medical infrastructure. Other states have achieved mid-single-digit to low-double-digit savings when moving to structured contracts, making a \$2 million annual reduction well within reach. This reform doesn't shortchange care; it replaces an inefficient, opaque system with one that is cost-disciplined and outcome-driven.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
**DEFENSE, VETERANS
& EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$1.3
million

Reduce Funding for Veterans Services by 10%

➤ Estimated \$1.3 Million Biennial Savings

These cuts would focus on administrative overhead, technology add-ons, outreach bureaucracy, and central-office staffing rather than direct assistance to veterans. Veterans Services is one of the department's largest General Fund programs. The program provides support for Maine veterans, including claims assistance, benefit navigation, outreach, and related services. Because helping veterans access earned benefits should remain a priority, lawmakers should preserve core claims assistance and direct support functions. However, the size of the account makes it a reasonable target for a modest administrative reduction.

A 10% cut would save roughly \$651,000 annually while maintaining essential services for veterans. In a tight budget, the state should prioritize direct help for veterans over central-office growth, administrative expansion, technology upgrades, and outreach functions that do not directly connect veterans with benefits and support.

**MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$21.2
million

Defund The Office of Innovation

➤ Estimated \$14 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

This office reportedly promotes and supports research and development, technology, product commercialization, and related activities through the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Maine Technology Institute. While these goals may sound worthwhile, this office largely functions as a vehicle for state-directed economic development and taxpayer-supported investment in selected industries and businesses. Cutting this funding should be prioritized because innovation is best driven by private entrepreneurs, investors, universities, and market demand, not by government programs attempting to pick winners and losers. Eliminating or reducing this office would save more than \$7 million annually and refocus state resources on core government responsibilities.

Eliminate the Housing Opportunity Program

➤ \$4.6 Million Biennial Savings

This program provides state funding for the support and development of additional housing units in Maine, including units targeted toward low and moderate income households and community workforce housing needs. While increasing housing supply is a legitimate concern, this type of state-directed housing program is part of the broader policy approach that distorts the housing market instead of fixing it. Government subsidies and politically directed housing funds can distort the private market and mask the underlying causes of Maine's continued housing shortage which are restrictive zoning, permitting

delays, land-use barriers, high construction costs, and excessive regulation. These problems are what should be addressed if the state wants to combat the crisis.

Eliminate Funding for International Commerce

► \$2.6 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

The Maine International Trade Center is a public-private partnership that promotes exports, foreign investment, international student recruitment, and overseas trade opportunities for Maine businesses. The program supports trade seminars, international trade shows, trade missions, and more. While expanding trade and attracting investment can benefit Maine businesses, this program is a reasonable target for elimination. Many of these activities, including trade promotion, international recruiting, and business networking, can be handled by private companies, industry associations, or membership supported organizations without ongoing state subsidies. In a tight budget, state resources should be focused on core government functions rather than funding international marketing efforts and selective economic-development programs for businesses that already have the strongest incentive to pursue new markets on their own.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS
\$352.5
million

Reduce State Reimbursement for School Administration

► Estimated \$172 Million Biennial Savings

Maine should reform the school funding formula so the state's 55 percent funding commitment is focused on classroom instruction, student services, special education, transportation, and other direct educational costs, not administrative overhead. In FY25, Maine school administrative units reported roughly \$288 million in combined System Administration and School Administration expenditures. Reimbursing those administrative categories at 25 percent instead of 55 percent would reduce state exposure by about \$86.4 million annually while still providing partial state support for necessary administrative functions.

This reform would not eliminate school administration or prevent districts from funding the administrative structures they believe are necessary. Instead, it would change the incentive structure. When the state automatically subsidizes administrative costs at the same rate as classroom instruction, local districts have less reason to examine whether central-office staffing, management structures, and back-office functions are operating efficiently. A lower reimbursement rate would encourage districts to rethink how they deliver administrative services and prioritize dollars that reach students directly. By requiring local districts to bear a greater share of administrative overhead, Maine can encourage efficiency reforms at the local level while preserving state support for the core educational services families expect. The goal is not to weaken schools, but to ensure that

state education dollars are directed first toward teachers, students, and classrooms rather than bureaucracy.

Eliminate Funding for Maine's Universal School Meals Program

► Estimated \$128 Million Biennial Savings

This program provides free meals to all public-school students regardless of family income. While the exact cost of the program is not clearly spelled out as a single line item in the state budget, Governor Mills recently described the scale of the program herself, stating: “That program was initially funded by the legislature with \$27 million ... It now costs \$64 million a year, but it’s important.”

That figure shows how quickly the program has grown from its original funding level into a major ongoing expense. While ensuring low-income students have access to nutritious meals is important, the federal government already operates the National School Lunch Program, which provides free or reduced-price meals to children from low-income families.

Maine’s universal program goes far beyond that safety-net purpose by subsidizing meals for students whose families can afford to pay for them. In a tight budget, state education dollars should be targeted toward students with genuine financial need, classroom instruction, and core educational obligations rather than providing a universal benefit to higher-income households at taxpayer expense.

Remove Caps on Charters and Allow Charters to Fully Compete with Traditional Public Schools

► Estimated \$28 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Allow public schools to, for a period of time, transition over to operating as a charter instead. Maine caps the number of charter schools and limits their enrollment, preventing cost-effective schools from expanding even when demand exists. Removing these caps, and allowing traditional public schools to

convert to charters during a transition window, would shift a larger share of students into schools that operate at substantially lower per-pupil costs without sacrificing academic outcomes. Today, fewer than 2% of Maine students attend charters; raising that to just 5%, roughly 5,100 additional students, would yield significant savings because charters currently operate at more than \$10,000 less per student than district schools.

Even assuming diminished marginal savings as new charters enter lower-density areas, a conservative estimate still places statewide education-cost reductions at well over \$25–30 million, of which the General Fund would retain roughly \$14 million annually under Maine’s 55% state-share formula. This level of charter penetration is not at all radical; it would simply put Maine in line with New Hampshire and still far below the charter enrollment levels in many successful school-choice states.

Eliminate Funding for Adult Education

► Estimated \$17 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

This program provides state administrative and technical support for adult education programs statewide, including adult and community education, adult basic education, adult high school diploma programs, high school equivalency diploma testing, family literacy, job skills training, and college transition programs. While these services may benefit some Mainers, this program is a reasonable target for elimination because many of these functions can be provided through private training providers, employers, nonprofits, or federally funded workforce-development programs without requiring a separate state-funded bureaucracy.

State education dollars should be focused on K-12 classroom instruction and core statutory obligations rather than subsidizing broad adult education and workforce-training programs that overlap with other public, private, and nonprofit services.

Eliminate Funding for School And Student Supports

► \$7.5 Million Biennial Savings

This program funds the Maine Department of Education’s Office of School and Student Supports. This office coordinates resources, guidance, and programs related to school climate, student wellness, safety, inclusion, mental and physical health, and broader student-support initiatives.

While student well-being is important, this program is a reasonable target for elimination because many of these responsibilities should be handled at the local level by parents, teachers, principals, school boards, and community organizations rather than through a centralized state office. The office’s broad mission to promote “equitable,” “physically,” and “environmentally” healthy school communities gives the Department of Education wide authority to shape local school policy beyond core academics.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
**ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$2.4
million

Reduce Funding for Water Quality By 15%

► Estimated \$2.4 Million Biennial Savings:

Water Quality is one of the DEP's largest General Fund programs, at roughly \$16.3 Million in the last biennial, and administers laws related to surface and groundwater quality, licensing, compliance and enforcement, wastewater facility oversight, failed septic remediation grants, boat pumpout programs, education, and outreach. Reductions should be focused on nonessential personnel, discretionary grants, outreach, planning, mapping, and administrative functions rather than core clean-water enforcement.

While protecting clean water is a legitimate and important state function, the program's size makes it a reasonable target for savings, especially since this single account includes 30 personnel. A 15% reduction would save roughly \$2.4 million biennially while still preserving DEP's core responsibility to enforce water quality laws, oversee wastewater facilities, and respond to genuine environmental risks. In a tight budget, lawmakers should prioritize essential regulatory and enforcement functions while trimming nonessential staffing, public outreach, planning initiatives, and discretionary spending that go beyond the department's core mission.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH & HUMAN
SERVICES**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS
\$298.3
million

Eliminate MaineCare Expansion for Able-Bodied Expansion Adults

► Estimated \$110 Million Biennial Savings

It is possible to eliminate MaineCare expansion for able-bodied expansion adults, while preserving traditional Medicaid eligibility for children, seniors, pregnant women, and individuals with disabilities. According to DHHS's SFY26 Period 6 Caseload Report, MaineCare currently covers about 86,199 expansion adults. For the ACA "new adult group," MACPAC reports that as of 2023 the average benefit spending is roughly \$6,412 per full-year-equivalent enrollee, or about \$534 per person per month. Because the expansion population is generally funded through a 90% federal / 10% state match, Maine's direct state cost is roughly \$641 per enrollee per year. Applied to the current expansion population, that equals approximately \$55 million in annual General Fund savings, or about \$110 million over the biennium. MaineCare should be refocused on its original safety-net mission rather than maintaining an expensive optional expansion population that increases long-term dependency and puts continued pressure on state health care spending.

Reduce Developmental Services Waiver – MaineCare by 15%

► Estimated \$60 Million Biennial Savings

This program provides community based services as an alternative to institutional care. This cut can be achieved by focusing on fraud prevention,

provider audits, rate review, administrative overhead, duplicative service billing, and non-core service growth rather than eliminating services for individuals with real intellectual or developmental disabilities. While some level of support should be preserved for individuals with serious needs, this account has grown dramatically and deserves serious scrutiny.

The program increased from roughly \$101 million annually in the last LePage budget to about \$201 million in the last Mills budget; even after adjusting the earlier amount for inflation to roughly \$132 million, the account still reflects tens of millions of dollars in real growth. A 15% reduction would save about \$30 million annually, \$60 Million biennially while still leaving the program far above its inflation-adjusted prior funding level.

Stand Up Managed Care Organizations to Eat Health Cost Overruns Rather Than the State

► Estimated \$28 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Moving Maine's Medicaid program into full-risk managed care, following the model used in New Hampshire, offers a realistic avenue for controlling costs even if the headline savings are modest. National reviews from MACPAC, KFE, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation consistently show that managed care organizations (MCOs) rarely produce dramatic spending cuts, but they do deliver far greater budget predictability, tighter utilization management, and clearer accountability for cost growth.

When states shift acute and behavioral health services into full-risk contracts, the result is typically a 1–3% reduction in costs on the components moved under risk, small in percentage terms but meaningful for a program of Medicaid's overall size statewide. For Maine, that translates to \$14–21 million in annual savings, along with more stable year-to-year budgeting, fewer unplanned overruns, and a management structure that rewards efficiency rather than fee-for-service volume.

Create a DHHS Contract Review Board

► Estimated \$20 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

This would be modeled on a plan seen in Tennessee, which strives to evaluate cost-effectiveness and outcomes every five years. Maine's DHHS oversees hundreds of contracts, grants, and service agreements, many of which roll over automatically with little scrutiny of results or cost-effectiveness. Creating a DHHS Contract Review Board, modeled on Tennessee's successful oversight system, would impose a five-year review cycle on every major agreement, forcing agencies and vendors to demonstrate measurable outcomes before taxpayer dollars are renewed. Tennessee's model has repeatedly identified redundant programs, overlapping grants, and contracts that no longer justify their cost, savings that come from smarter oversight, not service cuts. Applying the same structure in Maine would realistically save a minimum of \$10 million annually, primarily by eliminating underperforming contracts and tightening administrative spending that currently persists simply due to lack of periodic evaluation.

Tighten TANF Work and Eligibility Requirements

► Estimated \$19.4 Million Biennial Savings Potential

Maine should restore a work-first approach to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families by tightening eligibility, limiting long-term extensions, and reinstating stronger consequences for repeated noncompliance with work or family-contract requirements. This reform has clear historical precedent in Maine. After the 2011 welfare reforms, OPEGA found that TANF basic-assistance enrollment fell roughly 44 percent from 2011 to 2013, with statutory changes playing a major role in that decline. Applying that same 44 percent reduction to Maine's current TANF General Fund appropriation of roughly \$22.2 million would produce an estimated \$9.7 million in annual General Fund savings. This would not eliminate TANF, but would refocus the program on its original purpose: temporary assistance tied to work, job search, training, and movement toward self-sufficiency. The state should preserve help for families facing genuine hardship while ensuring that able-bodied adults are expected to comply with

employment-focused requirements and that extensions beyond the 60-month lifetime limit are limited to truly exceptional circumstances.

Eliminate Funding for the Bridging Rental Assistance Program

➤ \$15 Million Biennial Savings

This provides transitional housing vouchers for persons with mental illness for up to 24 months or until they receive a federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or another housing placement. While housing support for vulnerable individuals is a serious issue, BRAP is a state-funded rental subsidy layered on top of existing federal housing assistance programs. Maine should prioritize core mental health treatment and crisis services rather than maintaining a separate state voucher program that duplicates or “bridges” to federal Section 8 assistance. Fully eliminating BRAP would save roughly \$7.5 million annually, or about \$15 million over the biennium, while pushing housing assistance back toward federal programs, local housing authorities, nonprofits, and targeted community-based providers rather than continuing a state-funded rental subsidy.

Eliminate Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment

➤ \$14.1 Million Biennial Savings

This funds employment and training programs for individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. While helping TANF recipients move toward work is a reasonable goal, this program is a strong target for elimination because job training and workforce-support services are already provided through numerous other public, private, and nonprofit channels. Maine funds workforce programs across multiple agencies, while community colleges, employers, staffing agencies, nonprofits, local career centers, and federally supported workforce programs also provide job-search help, training referrals, resume assistance, and employment placement. These types of government

training programs often produce mixed results and can become difficult to measure against actual long-term employment outcomes.

Tighten Rules on High-Cost Rural Delivery with Clearer Access Standards

➤ Estimated \$10 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Maine’s Medicaid program pays a premium for rural service delivery, in part because travel reimbursements and loose network standards allow providers to bill for long-distance trips and inefficient routing that drive up costs without improving care. Tightening these rules, by enforcing clear drive-time limits, capping reimbursable “deadhead” travel, and requiring telehealth when it is clinically appropriate, can trim unnecessary spending while preserving access. States that implement these contract design changes, especially within managed-care arrangements, reliably reduce waste even though the savings are dispersed across many small transactions and therefore hard to isolate in studies. For Maine, those incremental efficiencies add up, producing an estimated \$5–6 million in annual savings simply by aligning rural delivery expectations with modern standards and reducing avoidable travel-driven costs.

Privatize Non-Investigatory Foster Care Case Management and Kinship Placement

➤ Estimated \$10 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

It is possible to privatize non-investigatory foster care case management and kinship placement while keeping abuse and neglect investigations in-house. Maine’s child welfare system should continue to reserve direct state control for the most sensitive and coercive government functions, especially investigations into alleged abuse or neglect, child removal decisions, and court-involved protective actions. However, many follow-up case management functions, including foster care coordination, kinship placement support, family engagement, service referrals, visitation logistics, and placement stabilization, can be handled by qualified nonprofit or private providers under state oversight. This would allow Maine to focus its in-house child welfare workforce on the

highest-risk cases while reducing administrative overhead and improving flexibility in routine service delivery. Other states have used community-based or privatized models for parts of foster care case management, showing that these functions do not always need to be performed directly by state employees. A conservative estimate would place annual savings at roughly \$5 million, with potential savings of \$5–8 million depending on the scope of privatization and reductions in state administrative costs.

Reduce Funding for DHHS Central Operations by 10%

► Estimated \$5.9 Million Biennial Savings

These reductions would focus on central-office management, HR and financial service-center charges, statewide technology costs, policy staff, and administrative overhead rather than direct benefits or frontline services. DHHS Central Operations is very large with 156 positions, making it one of the cleaner reduction targets within the department because it funds administration rather than direct assistance to Mainers. While DHHS needs basic management and support functions to operate, the size of this account suggests there is room to reduce bureaucracy before touching core health, or child-welfare services. A 10% reduction would save roughly \$5.9 million biennially while preserving essential benefit programs. Lawmakers should prioritize services that directly reach vulnerable Mainers over central-office growth, internal management layers, technology add-ons, and administrative overhead.

Eliminate General Fund Support for Head Start

► \$3.7 Million Biennial Savings

This funds the purchase of Head Start services in federally designated Head Start programs across Maine. This proposal would not eliminate Head Start, which is primarily a federal program, but would end Maine's state-funded expansion of the program beyond the federal baseline. While early childhood services may benefit some families, the state should not use scarce General Fund dollars to expand a federally funded program to higher income levels when core

obligations are already straining the budget. Families who qualify under federal Head Start rules would continue to be served through the federal program, while Maine taxpayers would no longer subsidize an expanded state add-on.

Limit State Supplement to Federal Supplemental Security Income

► Estimated \$2.2 Million Biennial Savings

Maine can limit State Supplement to Federal Supplemental Security Income by eliminating the state-only cash benefit for non-citizens who are ineligible for federal SSI. This program provides state payments to beneficiaries of the federal Supplemental Security Income program and is also used to support a legislatively directed cash program for non-citizens who do not qualify for federal SSI. Because part of this account is tied to federal Medicaid maintenance requirements, lawmakers should not eliminate the program outright. However, the state-only non-citizen portion is a reasonable target for elimination because it goes beyond the federal SSI safety net and creates a Maine-funded benefit for individuals who are not eligible under federal law. The budget does not disclose the exact share of the program that goes to non-citizens, but based on historical data it is reasonable to infer that share could be approximately 15% of the \$7.55 million account. This would make the savings about \$1.1 million annually, or roughly \$2.2 million over the biennium. This estimate is not a number shown directly in the budget, but it provides a reasonable placeholder for targeting the non-federally required portion of the account while preserving core SSI-related obligations.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
**INLAND FISHERIES
AND WILDLIFE**
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$13.8
million

Consolidate Overlapping Natural-Resources Enforcement Functions

- Estimated \$7.2 Million Potential Biennial Savings Target

Maine currently maintains separate outdoor law-enforcement structures through the Maine Warden Service at IFW and forest rangers within DACE. While their missions are not identical, both agencies operate in rural and forested areas, respond to outdoor emergencies, and exercise law-enforcement authority. Maine should study consolidating command, dispatch, training, fleet, aviation, and administrative support across these functions, similar to states such as Vermont. Because the biennial General Fund budget includes roughly \$45 million for IFW Enforcement Operations and roughly \$28 million for DACE Forest Protection, even modest administrative and operational consolidation of 5% could reasonably target at least \$3.6 million in annual savings without eliminating core fish-and-game or wildfire-response duties.

Eliminate funding for Waterfowl Habitat Acquisition and Management

- \$3 Million Biennial Savings

This program acquires and manages habitat to support waterfowl management goals, improve habitat conditions, increase species abundance, and create or expand waterfowl-use opportunities. This is not an appropriate priority for state spending in a tight budget. Acquiring additional habitat and expanding management efforts goes beyond the state's most basic fish and wildlife

responsibilities and adds land, maintenance, and long-term obligations that taxpayers must continue funding in future years. Private landowners, sportsmen's groups, and conservation nonprofits, are better suited to pursue voluntary habitat acquisition and improvement projects without requiring another state budget commitment.

Eliminate Funding for the Public Information and Education Division

► \$2.6 Million Biennial Savings

This program is intended to increase the public's knowledge and understanding of inland fisheries and wildlife resources through public education, promotion, and dissemination of information. While public awareness of Maine's fish and wildlife resources can be valuable, this division is a reasonable target for elimination because it is not a core enforcement, conservation, or wildlife-management function. In a tight budget, IFW funding should be focused on game wardens, licensing, and essential field operations rather than public information campaigns, and education programming that can often be handled through schools, nonprofits, sportsmen's groups, conservation organizations, or low-cost online materials.

Reduce Funding for the Office of the Commissioner By 10%

► Estimated \$1 Million Biennial Savings

This could be done by focusing on central-office overhead, statewide technology and service center costs, policy staff, and nonessential administrative functions. While every department needs basic leadership and oversight, this account is a reasonable target for reduction because savings can be found in administrative overhead rather than frontline environmental protection work. A 10% reduction would save roughly \$491,000 annually while preserving the department's core regulatory, permitting, and compliance responsibilities.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$3.8
million

Eliminate Funding for Employment Services Activity

➤ \$1.6 Million Biennial Savings

This funds the Bureau of Employment Services and Maine's statewide Career Center network. This program provides job search assistance, job placement, career guidance, education and training referrals, layoff assistance, worker recruitment services, business consultation, and an internet job bank matching employers with job seekers. While these services may be useful to some workers and employers, they are not a core government function and are already widely provided by the private sector. Employers, staffing agencies, trade associations, online job platforms, chambers of commerce, private recruiters, community colleges, nonprofits, and industry-specific training providers all have strong incentives to connect workers with available jobs.

Eliminate Funding for Workforce Research

➤ \$1.1 Million Biennial Savings

This supports the Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Research and Information. This program collects, analyzes, and distributes labor market information for jobseekers, employers, policymakers, economic developers, educators, training planners, and career guidance professionals. It also provides economic, management, and strategic analysis for unemployment insurance systems and employment and training programs. While labor market data can be useful, this is not a central government function that requires a separate state-

funded research operation. Employers, universities, chambers of commerce, trade associations, private analysts, staffing firms, and national data sources already collect and interpret workforce and economic information.

Reduce Funding for Rehabilitation Services by 10%

► Estimated \$1.1 Million Biennial Savings

Significant savings can be achieved by focusing on administrative overhead, contracts, and non-core service expansions rather than eliminating the program outright. Rehabilitation Services is one of the largest General Fund programs in the Department of Labor. The program supports vocational rehabilitation and related services, including services for individuals with disabilities, so lawmakers should be careful to preserve legally required services and avoid jeopardizing federal matching funds. However, the size of the account makes it a reasonable target for a modest reduction. A 10% cut would save roughly \$561,000 annually while allowing the state to maintain essential disability-related employment services.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
MARINE RESOURCES
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$2.3
million

Reduce Funding for the Bureau of Marine Science

► Estimated \$1.3 Million Biennial Savings

Reductions should be focused on research, surveys, monitoring, administrative support, and scientific work that can be phased out, scaled back, or funded outside the General Fund. The Bureau of Marine Science supports marine resource science, surveys, monitoring, research, and related scientific activities. While some baseline scientific work may support resource management, many of these functions should be reduced or shifted to industry fees, federal grants, universities, nonprofits, or private-sector partners that directly benefit from the research. A 20% General Fund reduction would save roughly \$1.3 Million biennially while still allowing the department to preserve the most essential science tied to core regulatory and resource-management responsibilities.

Downsize the Bureau of Policy and Management

► Estimated \$1 Million Biennial Savings

These cuts would focus on central-office overhead, legal-service growth, policy staff, program coordination, and aquaculture bureaucracy rather than direct Marine Patrol or field operations. This account is one of the cleaner targets for cutting because it funds policy, management, legal, administrative, and coordination functions within the Department of Marine Resources rather than core enforcement work. While the department needs basic administrative support, a 10% reduction would save roughly \$514,000 annually while preserving essential marine resource enforcement, licensing, and field services.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC SAFETY
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$3.2
million

Reduce Funding for Consolidated Emergency Communications by 10%

► Estimated \$2.2 Million Biennial Savings

This reduction should focus on administrative overhead, technology costs, service-center charges, staffing efficiencies, and dispatch consolidation rather than weakening emergency response. The Consolidated Emergency Communication Bureau operates three Regional Communications Centers that provide Public Safety Answering Point and emergency dispatch services for police, fire, and emergency medical services. It also provides dispatching services for agencies including Marine Resources, Environmental Protection, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, the Fire Marshal's Office, and the Maine Turnpike Authority. This program has grown substantially, increasing from roughly \$6.4 million in the last LePage budget to about \$11.2 million in the last Mills budget.

A 10% reduction would save roughly \$1.1 million annually while still leaving the program funded well above its prior baseline. This reduction should be framed as a consolidation and efficiency measure, not a cut to emergency response. Maine should preserve core 911 and dispatch functions while reviewing whether regional communications centers, agency-specific dispatch services, overtime, technology contracts, and administrative costs can be streamlined. In a tight budget, lawmakers should prioritize fast and reliable emergency response while reducing duplicative dispatch functions, back-office costs, and spending growth that has pushed the account far beyond historical levels.

Reduce Funding for Capitol Police by 15%

► Estimated \$1 Million Biennial Savings

This will be done by focusing on administrative overhead, equipment costs, technology spending, scheduling efficiencies, and overlapping security functions rather than reducing core State House safety. Capitol Police funds law enforcement officers, screeners, watch persons, and support staff responsible for security and law enforcement in most state-owned or leased buildings in the Augusta area, including the State House and Riverview Psychiatric Center. It also funds the equipment, supplies, and technology resources needed to support the unit. This program has grown significantly, increasing from roughly \$1.2 million in the last LePage budget to about \$3.4 million in the last Mills budget. A 15% reduction would save roughly \$510,000 annually while still leaving the program funded at a level far above its prior baseline. This reduction can be justified by requiring better coordination with State Police, building security staff, Riverview security operations, and agency level facility management to eliminate duplicative coverage and nonessential overhead.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$3.2
million

Reduce Funding for Administration within the Department of Transportation by 5%

► Estimated \$3.2 Million Biennial Highway Fund Savings

This can be achieved by focusing on non-mission-critical administrative roles, internal overhead, and back-office functions rather than road, bridge, maintenance, or field operations. The Administration program provides financial planning and analysis, accounting and budgetary processes, and legal and administrative support services for the department. With roughly \$32.3 million in funding and 95 positions, this account is a reasonable target for modest savings because it is focused on internal administration rather than direct transportation infrastructure work. A 5% reduction would save approximately \$1.6 million annually while preserving the department's core mission of maintaining roads, bridges, ferries, and other transportation assets.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY RESOURCES
Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$1.7
million

Reduce Total General Fund Support for the Department of Energy Resources by 20%

► Estimated \$1.7 Million Biennial Savings

This could be done by focusing the department only on basic energy-market reporting, statutory duties, and essential technical functions. The Department of Energy Resources is funded at roughly \$4.2 million General Fund in FY27 for energy policy, planning, technical assistance, market monitoring, grant coordination, and related administrative work. A 20% reduction of the department's entire General Fund budget would save approximately \$840,000 annually. This reduction would require the department to focus narrowly on basic energy-market reporting, statutory obligations, and essential coordination rather than expanding into climate planning, grant administration, and broad policy development. A 20% reduction would begin right-sizing the department while preserving the limited functions that are actually necessary.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$88.4
million

Eliminate Funding for the Maine Economic Improvement Fund

► \$43.6 Million Biennial Savings

This program provides state support for university-based research. Created in 1997, MEIF focuses on targeted research areas including aquaculture and marine sciences, biotechnology, composites and advanced materials, environmental technologies, information technologies, forestry and agriculture technologies, and precision manufacturing. While the program is often praised as an economic-development success, taxpayers should judge it by measurable statewide returns, not aspirational claims about innovation and growth. After decades of funding, MEIF has not produced results substantial enough to justify continued General Fund support, especially when Maine continues to face affordability, workforce, and budget pressures. University research can still be supported through federal grants, private partnerships, industry funding, philanthropy, and the university system's existing budget.

Consolidate Low-Enrollment Programs

► Estimated \$14 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Consolidating low-enrollment academic programs, merging duplicative departments, and expanding shared services across the UMaine system are all standard tools universities use when facing long-term enrollment contraction. Maine's demographic decline is structural, not cyclical, so aligning the system's physical and academic footprint with smaller student cohorts is unavoidable.

Each component of the reform—program consolidation, shared administrative functions, tighter physical-plant management, and performance-based funding—can yield savings, but the combined estimate of \$7–10 million annually assumes strong internal discipline and follow-through. Academic program cuts typically save less than advertised in the short run because tenured faculty remain on payroll until retirement or reassignment; real savings come from reducing adjunct spending, freezing hiring lines, and eliminating low-value overhead. Shared services and physical-plant consolidation tend to produce steadier gains, and one-time property sales are realistic given the system’s excess square footage.

Systemwide Shared Services

► Estimated \$10 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Implementing systemwide shared services across the UMaine network offers a straightforward way to reduce administrative costs without touching academic quality or student services. By consolidating duplicative back-office functions such as procurement, HR, IT, finance, and facilities into unified system units, the system can eliminate redundant staffing, leverage bulk purchasing, standardize processes, and modernize outdated administrative structures that no longer match today’s smaller enrollment base. Other state university systems have achieved similar efficiencies, and UMaine’s footprint makes it especially ripe for this shift. With disciplined execution, the reform can realistically generate \$5–8 million in annual savings, freeing resources for academics. In short: it trims bureaucracy, not classrooms, and aligns the system with Maine’s long-term demographic realities.

Physical-Plant Right Sizing

► Estimated \$10 Million Biennial Savings Minimum

Physical-plant right-sizing is one of the most credible reforms available to the UMaine system because the cost drivers are straightforward: too many buildings for too few students. UMaine maintains a physical footprint built for a very different enrollment era, and underused facilities carry heavy recurring costs in

heating, maintenance, custodial labor, utilities, and deferred-maintenance liabilities. Consolidating space, closing inefficient buildings, and selling nonessential properties directly cuts these fixed costs in a way academic trims or hiring freezes cannot. A \$5–7 million annual savings estimate is reasonable if the system aggressively retires high-cost, low-utilization buildings instead of merely mothballing them. This reform attacks UMaine’s structural inefficiency at the root by aligning its physical footprint with long-term demographic trends rather than relying on piecemeal budget patches.

Eliminate Special Labor-Cost Subsidies

► \$8 Million Biennial Savings

Eliminate the budget initiative providing additional General Fund support for Paid Family and Medical Leave premiums for eligible University of Maine System employees within Educational & General Activities. This initiative adds roughly \$4 million per year to cover PFML premium costs for UMS employees. While UMS must comply with the same PFML requirements as other covered employers, the state should not provide a special labor-cost subsidy to the university system for a cost that other employers are expected to absorb within their existing budgets. UMS already receives substantial state support and should manage new payroll-related costs internally through administrative efficiencies, compensation planning, vacancy management, or other budget adjustments. Lawmakers should prioritize core public needs rather than adding a new General Fund backfill for university employee benefit costs that should be treated as part of normal employer operations.

Eliminate Funding for New Ventures Maine

► \$2.8 Million Biennial Savings

This program supports a statewide economic-development organization housed within the University of Maine System that provides career planning, entrepreneurship support, financial management education, and services for Mainers in life and career transitions. While these services may benefit some participants, they are not a core higher-education function and do not belong in

the University of Maine System budget. Career coaching, entrepreneurship training, financial literacy classes, and workforce-transition services are already provided by employers, nonprofits, online platforms, and other workforce organizations. State higher-education dollars should be focused on instruction, student support, and keeping tuition affordable rather than funding a broad economic-development and life-skills program that duplicates services available elsewhere. Eliminating this account would help refocus UMS on its core academic mission while reducing taxpayer support for nonessential programming.

MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Recommended Budget Reforms

BIENNIAL SAVINGS

\$27.4
million

Eliminate Funding for Maine's Free Community College Program

► \$20 Million Biennial Savings

This program uses state funds to cover community college tuition for eligible students, making it a broad higher-education subsidy rather than a core state obligation. While lowering education costs is a worthy goal, Maine already has existing financial aid programs, federal Pell Grants, scholarships, employer-sponsored training, and targeted workforce programs that can help students with genuine need. A universal or broad free-tuition program also subsidizes students and families who may be able to contribute toward tuition, shifting more higher-education costs onto taxpayers. State dollars should be focused on need-based aid, and core government services rather than maintaining a free-college program that expands entitlement-style spending and reduces pressure on institutions to control costs. Eliminating the program would save roughly \$10 million annually, or \$20 million over the biennium.

Merge the Maine Community College System Into the UMS Administrative Structure

► \$7.4 Million Biennial Savings

Maine currently operates two separate public higher-education bureaucracies despite a relatively small and shrinking student population. Using MCCS's roughly \$115 million expenditure base, and assuming administrative costs represent about 17% of total spending, MCCS spends approximately \$19.6

million on administration. Connecticut's 2018–2021 consolidation produced roughly a 19 percent reduction in administrative costs, driven by unified HR, IT, procurement, budgeting, accreditation support, and executive management. If Maine achieved a Connecticut-style 19% reduction in administrative costs through unified HR, IT, procurement, budgeting, accreditation support, and executive management, the state could save roughly \$3.7 million annually. This reform would target overhead and duplication rather than classroom instruction, while giving Maine's public higher-education system greater purchasing power and a more streamlined administrative structure.

GOVERNMENT REFORM AGENDA

FIXING MAINE'S BROKEN SYSTEM

Good government depends on more than good policy. It also depends on institutions that are transparent, accountable, disciplined, and designed to serve the public rather than the political class that operates them. In Maine, too many of those institutions are outdated, unnecessarily opaque, or structured in ways that encourage dysfunction.

Some of Maine's most important public officials—the Attorney General, Secretary of State, and State Treasurer—are still selected by the Legislature, making Maine the only state in the nation to use this arrangement. In practice, that allows whichever party controls the Legislature to choose powerful constitutional officers with little meaningful input from either the governor or the voters. These officials exercise enormous authority over elections, law enforcement, state finances, and the operation of government. The process by which they are selected should reflect the importance of those responsibilities.

The Legislature itself also operates under rules and customs that too often favor insiders over citizens. Major decisions can be made late at night. Bills can arrive in concept form without actual legislative language. Committees can confront substantial amendments without giving the public another opportunity to be heard. Legislative sessions can become overwhelmed by enormous volumes of

bills, while procedural rules allow important decisions to be compressed into the chaotic final days of a session.

None of this is inevitable. Rules are choices, and institutions can be redesigned.

The reforms in this section seek to impose greater order, transparency, and accountability on Maine government. They would modernize the selection of constitutional officers; strengthen the rules governing the House and Senate; restructure legislative committees to place greater emphasis on economic growth, federalism, and administrative oversight; and substantially reform the Joint Rules governing how legislation is introduced, drafted, heard, amended, and advanced.

Among other changes, these proposals would establish meaningful cloture deadlines and bill limits, restrict abuse of concept drafts, guarantee public hearings when legislation is substantially rewritten, require timely fiscal analysis, strengthen committee procedures, make legislative votes more visible, and discourage the increasingly common practice of conducting consequential public business deep into the night.

Government should not be difficult to understand by design. Nor should procedural disorder be accepted simply because it has become customary. Maine can have a Legislature that conducts its business deliberately, openly, and professionally, and constitutional institutions that create clearer lines of authority and accountability.

Reforming public policy is important. Reforming the machinery that produces it is every bit as necessary.



CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

REFORMING THE PROCESS

Maine is the only state in the nation in which constitutional officers—Secretary of State, State Treasurer, and Attorney General—are selected by the Legislature. Most states have adopted a process of either gubernatorial appointment with Senate confirmation or popular election. Maine’s antiquated system is prone to politicization and partisanship since the party that holds the majority in the Legislature decides who to appoint to these important positions, regardless of the governor’s preferences. This means Maine’s governor and constitutional officers may constantly be at odds with one another, leading to brinkmanship and government dysfunction.

Legislators should pursue a resolution to amend the Maine Constitution to transfer the power to appoint constitutional officers to the governor, with approval by the Senate, or by popular election.

Constitutional officers are important bureaucrats with great influence on public policy, and they play a central role in ensuring that public affairs are carried out in a coherent and nonpartisan way. Constitutional officers have substantial responsibilities.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Attorney General represents the State in civil actions, prosecutes homicides and other serious crimes, and spearheads efforts to recover money for the State.

In state lawsuits against the federal government, the Attorney General provides legal advice and counsel.

The duties of the Attorney General are established by Title 5, Chapter 9. These statutes direct the Attorney General to discharge various responsibilities, including: representing the State and its agencies in civil actions; prosecuting claims to recover money for the State; investigating and prosecuting homicides and other crimes; consulting with and advising the district attorneys; enforcing proper application of funds given to public charities in the State; and giving written opinions upon questions of law submitted by the Governor, Legislature, or state agencies.

SECRETARY OF STATE

The Secretary of State is responsible for protecting the integrity of our elections, managing the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, overseeing boards and commissions, and maintaining the State Archives. The Secretary of State oversees one cohesive Department made up of three distinct bureaus: the Maine State Archives, the Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions (CEC), and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV).

TREASURER

The Office of the State Treasurer provides state agencies with efficient banking and financial services, which include revenue collection, payment issuance, reconciliation, and trust management. They also manage state investments with safety, liquidity and yield in mind. The office also manages debt payments and issuance, ensuring that bonds authorized by voters are efficiently sold in the marketplace to provide funding for capital projects statewide.

STATE AUDITOR

The Office of the State Auditor provides independent assurance that Maine's government is accountable to the people. They examine whether funds are spent legally and properly, and that data and systems are secure. OSA auditors perform their work in accordance with Government Auditing Standards.



HOUSE RULE REFORMS

To strengthen decorum, transparency, and procedural discipline within the House, the House Rules should be amended in several targeted ways. These changes focus on public accountability during joint conventions, meaningful enforcement of member conduct standards, and limits on late-night lawmaking.

Under the proposed revisions, all votes taken during joint conventions would be required to be published on the Legislature's official website, ensuring that members' positions are clearly visible to the public. This includes elections of constitutional officers. In cases of rule violations, members found in breach would no longer lose the ability to vote or speak until satisfaction is made, but would instead be required to stand in the well of the House while a censure resolution is read aloud, reinforcing public accountability for misconduct while also preserving constitutional rights to representative government and speech.

Finally, House business would generally be prohibited after 9:00 p.m., preventing routine late-night proceedings and encouraging deliberation within predictable and transparent working hours. This rule may be invoked any time after nine.

RULE 108. CONDUCT DURING JOINT CONVENTIONS

During joint conventions, and at any time so determined by the presiding officer, personal electronic communication devices in the chamber or the gallery must be turned off and inconspicuously placed. The votes of each legislator on all

official matters during a joint convention of both houses of the legislature must be made public on the official website of the legislature.

RULE 401. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS

11. Breach of rules. When any member is guilty of a breach of any of the rules and orders of the House and the House has determined that the member has violated a rule or order, that member ~~may not be allowed to vote or speak, unless by way of excuse for the breach, until the member has made satisfaction.~~ must stand in the well of the House while the Speaker or presiding officer reads aloud the censure resolution and its preamble as a form of public rebuke.

RULE 501. ORDER OF BUSINESS

A paper may not be taken up out of its regular order. Business may not be transacted in the House after the hour of 9:00 p.m. This rule may be invoked at any time after 9:00 p.m. unless having already been invoked during that legislative day.



SENATE RULE REFORMS

To reinforce procedural discipline and protect institutional stability within the Senate, the Senate Rules should be amended to limit late-night lawmaking and clarify the threshold for rule changes early in session. These reforms are designed to encourage predictability, prevent hasty procedural shifts, and ensure that significant rule alterations carry meaningful support.

Under the revised Rule 514, Senate business may not be transacted after 9:00 p.m. In addition, Rule 519 would be stricken, so Senate rules may not be adopted after the first regular session has occurred.

RULE 514. TRANSACT BUSINESS

~~Business may not be transacted after the hour of 9:00 p.m. without the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting. This rule may be invoked at any time after 9:00 p.m. unless having already been invoked during that legislative day.~~

RULE 519. AMENDMENT, ADOPTION OR REPEAL OF RULE

~~Notwithstanding Rule 518, after the convening of a first regular session and before the 3rd Friday in January, any amendment to the Senate Rules proposed by a Senate order may be adopted by a majority vote of the members present, except that if the amendment has already failed to be adopted during that session, it may be adopted only if, upon reconsideration, it receives the approval of 2/3 of the members present.~~



JOINT COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING

To reorganize the legislature of Maine in a more efficient and responsible manner, legislative leadership should establish three new committees, making division of powers with the federal government, economic growth, and administrative oversight new high priorities for the state of Maine.

The Federalism and Regional Independence Committee (FRI) will be a committee primarily responsible for bills addressing the relationship between Maine and either the federal government or regional agreements. This will include legislation deciding whether to enroll Maine in federal programs, bills deciding whether to cooperate with federal law enforcement, and review legislation proposed by the Legislative Oversight Bureau on States Traditionally Exclusive Rights (LOBSTER), an agency established to monitor federal overreach, evaluate constitutional authority, and recommend legislative actions regarding these areas.

In addition to the creation of FRI, Housing and Economic Development should be split into two committees once again. Maine's economy has been lagging behind, as has its housing market, and ensuring we have legislative committees structure to solely focus on supporting a free, fair, and healthy economy, as well as a growing housing market, is crucial for Maine's future.

A new committee, the Joint Administrative Review Committee (JAR), should be created to comprehensively review executive department rulemaking, past and present, with statutory authority to independently veto routine technical rules that it opposes.



JOINT RULE REFORMS

To restore structural discipline and transparency to Maine’s legislative process, the Joint Rules should be amended to impose clearer deadlines, stricter drafting requirements, and more predictable committee procedures. These reforms are intended to reduce last-minute bill floods, prevent procedural ambiguity, and ensure that legislation is introduced and advanced in a deliberate and accountable manner. By tightening cloture rules and limiting bill submissions, the Legislature can shift from reactive, high-volume sessions to a more focused and prioritized framework.

Under these changes, state departments and agencies would face earlier and more clearly defined cloture deadlines, and each legislator would be subject to a firm bill submission ceiling per session. Bill drafting standards would be strengthened by requiring complete information at the time of filing, with automatic denial for failure to cure deficiencies within a fixed period. Concept drafts would be more narrowly constrained—particularly for executive and agency proposals—ensuring that fully developed language, rather than placeholders, drives the legislative process. The Revisor’s authority over bill titles and summaries would be clarified to promote accuracy and transparency in public-facing descriptions of legislation.

Committee and floor procedures would also be reinforced. Initiated bills would be guaranteed public hearings, substantial amendments that replace the body of a bill would trigger new hearings, and all measures with fiscal impact would require formal fiscal notes prior to advancement. Committee reports would be locked to language actually voted upon, preventing substantive alterations after

a recorded work session. Collectively, these Joint Rule reforms are designed to make Maine's lawmaking process more orderly, accountable, and resistant to procedural manipulation.

RULE 204. CLOTURE FOR STATE DEPARTMENT, AGENCY OR COMMISSION BILLS AND RESOLVES AT THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION

1. Deadlines for Requests. All requests for bills and resolves submitted by a state department, agency or commission for a first regular session must be submitted to the Revisor of Statutes by 4:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday in December third Wednesday in January.

RULE 206.4. BILL SUBMISSION CEILING

Each legislator may only submit a maximum of five bills per regular session or one per special session.

RULE 208. REQUIREMENTS FOR DRAFTING

A request for a bill or resolve filed with the Revisor of Statutes is considered complete when the request is properly titled and accompanied by sufficient instructions, information and data required for its preparation. When a request is not accompanied by sufficient instructions, information or data, the Revisor of Statutes is directed to give written notice of inadequate information to the legislator. Upon receipt of said written notice, the legislator has 5 business days, unless an alternative period is set jointly by the presiding officers, to file adequate information with the Revisor of Statutes, or the request for the bill or resolve will be denied. Drafts prepared by an outside source must be filed in final form by the appropriate cloture date. Presiding Officers may direct the Revisor of Statutes to prioritize certain bills for drafting.

~~When directed by the sponsor, the Revisor of Statutes shall prepare a bill or resolve in concept form. The bill or resolve shall contain only an enacting clause and a summary of the proposed legislation and shall not be fully drafted by the Revisor of Statutes. The bill or resolve prepared in this form shall be printed and referred to a committee in the same manner as other legislation and may be~~

~~reported in fully drafted form by that committee in the same manner as other legislation. Except as otherwise provided in this Joint Rule, this method of drafting legislation is not allowed for legislation submitted by the Governor, by agencies or departments of state government, by study commissions, by joint standing or joint select committees or pursuant to law or statute. Any request for a bill or resolve submitted after cloture must state if it is a request for a concept draft. Any committee amendment must be germane to the detailed summary of the concept draft.~~

The Revisor of Statutes shall prepare in concept form a bill submitted pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 1666 that proposes to make unified appropriations and allocations for the expenditures of state government for the biennium, and shall include an Internet address at which may be found the text of the draft unified budget bill submitted to the Revisor of Statutes by the Governor.

RULE 209. BILL TITLES AND SUMMARIES

The Revisor of Statutes has authority to change the title of a bill or resolve proposed by the primary sponsor only to ensure that a bill's title is germane to the bill's purpose or intent, and not profane or derogatory. ~~to ensure that the title accurately and concisely reflects the content and scope of the bill or resolve.~~ If the primary sponsor objects to the change, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall jointly decide what the title should be and shall so notify the Revisor of Statutes.

The Revisor of Statutes shall prepare and include a summary of each bill, resolve and amendment. The Revisor of Statutes has authority to ensure that the summary is concise and accurately reflects the intent of the bill or resolve.

RULE 217. MEASURES REJECTED AT A PRIOR SESSION

A bill, resolve, constitutional resolution, resolution, memorial or order that has been introduced and finally rejected in a regular or special session may not be introduced in a subsequent regular or special session of the same Legislature except by vote of 2/3 of both chambers.

PART 3 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES. SUBPART A. JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES.

RULE 301. JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND JURISDICTION

There are established ~~19~~ 22 joint standing committees, which must be appointed at the commencement of the first regular session and which exercise jurisdiction in the following areas:

- Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF)
- Appropriations and Financial Affairs (AFA)
- Criminal Justice and Public Safety (CJPS)
- Education and Cultural Affairs (EDU)
- Energy, Utilities and Technology (EUT)
- Environment and Natural Resources (ENR)
- Federalism and Regional Independence Committee (FRI)
- Government Oversight Committee (GOC)
- Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Housing and Economic Development (HOU)
- Economic Development (DEV)
- Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services (HCIFS)
- Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW)
- Joint Administrative Review Committee (JAR)
- Joint Select Committee on Joint Rules (JTR)
- Judiciary (JUD)
- Labor (LAB)

- Marine Resources (MR)
- State and Local Government (SLG)
- Taxation (TAX)
- Transportation (TRA)
- Veterans and Legal Affairs (VLA)

RULE 302. MEMBERSHIP

Each of the joint standing committees consists of 13 members, 3 from the Senate and 10 from the House of Representatives. The first Senate member named is the Senate chair. The first House member named is the House chair. The Senate chair shall preside and in the Senate chair's absence, the House chair shall preside and, thereafter, as the need may arise, the chair shall alternate between the members from each chamber in the sequence of their appointment to the committee. The Senate chair shall decide the final public hearing schedule in consultation with the committee analyst and any other staff they may deem necessary for planning. The sequence of appointments for the biennium is as announced by the presiding officers in each chamber. Every member of the Senate and the House of Representatives is entitled to at least one initial committee assignment.

RULE 303. COMMITTEE CLERKS

Each committee's Senate chair retains full control of the hiring of that committee's clerks. The hiring of all committee clerks must be mutually agreeable to both the Senate and House chairs. If not agreeable to both, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall decide. Committee clerks serve at the pleasure of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. The salary of each committee clerk is established by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, and the employment of the committee clerks terminates no later than the end of the session. The Office of Fiscal and Program Review shall provide clerical support to the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

RULE 303.1. CAUCUS ANALYSTS

Each party caucus of each chamber may direct the Office of Policy and Legal

Analysis to hire up to an additional eight analysts to assist committee members with bill drafting and analysis.

RULE 305.7. MANDATORY HEARINGS FOR INITIATED BILLS

As required by Maine State Law, all initiated bills submitted to the Legislature must be afforded a public hearing conducted by the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over the subject matter of the petition or by a special legislative committee established for that purpose by the Legislative Council. The public hearing must be conducted in the same manner as other public hearings. A public hearing must also be held if amendments remove, replace, substantially change, or add the entire body of a bill. Members of committees, typically committee chairs or interim committee chairs, presiding over violations of this rule may be subject to disciplinary action by their legislative house.

RULE 307. TESTIMONY

Testimony before a joint standing committee is not presented under oath, except that a committee is authorized to administer oaths in the case of legislative confirmation hearings under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 3, section 157 and may be so authorized by the Legislature when the committee is acting as a special investigating committee under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 3, section 165, subsection 7.

All written materials presented to the committee must bear the name, address and affiliation, if applicable, of the presenter and the date presented. All public testimony is allowed up to three minutes each. All bill cosponsors have a maximum of three minutes each to testify, and may not testify before members of the public.

RULE 308. REFERENCE OF BILLS TO COMMITTEE

2. Legislature Not in Session. When the Legislature is not in session or is in recess for more than 4 days, the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House may refer the bills to the appropriate joint standing committee for public hearing and order printing, subject to the approval of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

RULE 310. REPORTS OF BILLS FROM COMMITTEE

~~**4. Ought to Pass in New Draft Report.** When the changes voted by the committee are major, the committee may elect to report the bill out “Ought to Pass in New Draft,” with authorization of the presiding officers. When a plurality of the committee recommends this report, the chairs shall submit a request for authority to report the bill out in this fashion. New drafts printed pursuant to these rules must include the legislative document number that the new bill replaces and the names of the original sponsor and cosponsors. The Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House shall determine the number of copies that must be printed of each new draft.~~

RULE 312. FISCAL NOTES

Every bill or resolve that affects state revenues, appropriations or allocations or that requires a local unit of government to expand or modify that unit’s activities so as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues and that has a committee recommendation other than “Leave to Withdraw,” “Ought Not to Pass” or “Referral to Another Committee” must include a fiscal note prepared by the Office of Fiscal and Program Review. For a bill or resolve not yet reported out and upon request of a majority of the committee, the Office of Fiscal and Program Review shall, after notice by the committee to the sponsor of the bill or resolve, meet with the committee at a work session to present its analysis and provide copies of the written public materials relied upon by the office to prepare that fiscal note. The fiscal note must accompany the committee report before it is reported out of committee. Any amendment introduced that would affect the fiscal impact of the original bill must also include a fiscal note. The Office of Fiscal and Program Review has the sole responsibility for preparing all fiscal

notes.

RULE 317. REVIEW OF PROVISIONS AFFECTING THE FUND FOR A HEALTHY MAINE

~~Whenever a legislative proposal in a resolve or bill, including a budget bill, affects the Fund for a Healthy Maine under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 1511, or involves funding from the Fund for a Healthy Maine, the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over the proposal shall hold a public hearing and determine the level of support for the proposal among members of the committee. If there is support for the proposal among a majority of the members of the committee, the committee shall request the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters to review and evaluate the proposal as it pertains to the Fund for a Healthy Maine. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters shall conduct the review and report back to the committee of jurisdiction and to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over appropriations and financial affairs.~~

PART 4 FLOOR ACTION ON LEGISLATION

RULE 401. PRINTING OF BILLS

Every bill or resolve submitted by a Legislator must be printed unless withdrawn by the sponsor before printing. After it is printed, a bill or resolve is considered to be in the possession of the Legislature and may not be withdrawn by the sponsor. Every bill presented for reference to committee or to be engrossed without reference to committee must be printed before appearing on the Advance Journal and Calendar of either chamber. Senate committee chairs may submit a list of no more than 5 bills to the Revisor of Statutes to be prioritized for printing for each committee. The Revisor of Statutes must print those priority bills before any other to that committee.

Every amendment must be printed and distributed before being taken up in either chamber. Every committee amendment must indicate the committee

making the report.

The Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House are responsible for the printing and initial distribution of legislative documents and amendments.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

MAKING BETTER LAW IN MAINE

Too much of Maine law is devoted to allowing unelected bureaucrats to write the rules by which Mainers must actually live. Legislators have, for too long, knowingly ceded much of their power to the executive branch. Questions that used to be decided as matters of state policy via the legislative process have instead become the mechanisms by which the priorities of the current political administration are fulfilled through rulemaking. A fundamental goal of this Legislature should be to restore accountability and integrity to the regulatory process by codifying as much rulemaking as possible to be considered “major substantive” in order to ensure that power is retained by the people’s branch.

The following bills are arranged by committee of reference, notably with two committees added: the Federalism and Regional Independence Committee (FRI) and the Joint Administrative Review Committee (JAR). The first shall have jurisdiction over any bills relating to Maine’s involvement in federal programs or spending, involving Maine’s legal or jurisdictional independence from the federal government, or involving Maine in any interstate compacts. The second shall have jurisdiction over reviewing administrative rules by agencies and shall have jurisdiction over bills concerning administrative actions or rulemaking. Additionally, due to the dire state of Maine’s economy and housing market, the Housing and Economic Development Committee has been split into the Housing Committee and the Economic Development Committee.

SUBSECTION 1: APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS (AFA) BILLS

An Act to Reform Revenue Sharing and Promote Local Property Tax Relief

Bill Description: Revenue sharing to reward localities for reducing their property tax burden below their 5-year average.

Full Text: Page 22

An Act to Reform the Administrative State

Bill Description: Require courts to interpret statute as is instead of deferring to agency interpretation. Require sunset review of all proposed rules and regulations. No rule may be adopted without approval of the governor. Restrict automatic provisional rule adoption.

Full Text: Page 32

SUBSECTION 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY (CJPS) BILLS

An Act to Restore Legislative Oversight of Criminal Code

Bill Description: Change rule-making to become “major substantive”.

Full Text: Page 36

An Act to Promote Rehabilitation over Incarceration for Minor Drug Possession

Bill Description: Makes possession of prohibited drugs a civil infraction, up to \$100 fine. “If a person in violation of this section is unable to pay the fine, as an alternative sentence in place of the fine the court may refer the person to a...drug treatment facility.”

Full Text: Page 37

An Act to Ensure the Safety of Women in Maine’s Prisons

Bill Description: Disallow the inclusion of biological males in women's housing facilities, or biological females in men's.

Full Text: Page 39

An Act to Repeal Certain Firearm Seizure Laws

Bill Description: Repeals Maine's Yellow and Red Flag Laws

Full Text: Page 40

SUBSECTION 3: EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (EDU)

An Act to Adopt Mississippi's Literacy Policies

Bill Description: Enacts a full statewide literacy reform package modeled after Mississippi's approach. This includes administering literacy screener and increasing resources and requirements for literacy, requiring all third graders meet reading proficiency standards to proceed, and establishes intensive intervention procedures for third graders found to not be meeting reading proficiency standards.

Full Text: Page 41

An Act to Allow Open Enrollment

Bill Description: A student may attend any public school or program in the state. They cannot be denied barring lack of space or expulsion record.

Full Text: Page 47

An Act to Clarify Standards in Women's Sports

Bill Description: Amends Maine's anti-discrimination law to explicitly prohibit biologically male students from accessing female-designated bathrooms or joining girls' or women's sports teams in public schools, regardless of gender identity. The bill declares that such restrictions do not constitute discrimination under the Maine Human Rights Act and applies these provisions to all public school facilities and athletics, even if governed by private sports organizations. It frames the inclusion of biologically male students in female spaces as a form of unlawful discrimination against women and codifies a biological sex-based standard for participation and facility access.

Full Text: Page 50

Resolve to Enact the Maine Education Blueprint

Bill Description: Grants to employers for each person employed undergoing a workforce training program. Prohibit use of and reliance upon educational curricula and/or training programs which teach critical social justice (CSJ) ideology. Prohibit any requirement for licensed teachers to espouse CSJ ideology. Local curriculum transparency. Education Savings Account program for eligible students to direct their share of state and local funds to the education provider(s) of their choosing.

Full Text: Page 52

An Act to Establish a Private Right of Action to Enforce Parental Rights

Bill Description: Lets parents go to court if a public school breaks parental rights that are already guaranteed by state law, instead of forcing families to rely on internal school complaints. If the school doesn't fix the violation after notice and the parent wins, the court can stop the unlawful practice and require the school to pay the parent's legal costs.

Full Text: Page 62

An Act to Modernize the Conversion Process of Traditional Public Schools into Charter Schools

Bill Description: This bill overhauls Maine's existing legal process for converting noncharter public schools into charter schools, establishing avenues for citizens, teachers, schools, and more to separately request a conversion, and streamlines this process if a public school has poor performance or budgetary problems. It also modifies the charter school cap to accommodate each conversion charter school's addition. Lastly, it clarifies the role of charter sponsors and establishes a process for the charter commission to connect charter school conversion proposals with potential third party sponsors.

Full Text: Page 64

An Act to Move Education Credentialing out of the DOE

Bill Description: This bill removes the credentialing for education professionals out

of the Department of Education, and instead moves it to the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation.

Full Text: Page 69

An Act to Promote Educational Opportunity

Bill Description: Businesses and individuals may write off donations to tax-exempt scholarship-making organizations to fund the educational expenses of a student living in households making under twice the free and reduced lunch income limit attending a qualified public school, private school, or using home-based educational services and materials. Eliminates limits on virtual charter school enrollment and expansion, as well as the overall statewide charter school limit. Allows nonprofits and institutions of higher education to authorize charter schools.

Full Text: Page 73

An Act to Protect Speech and Press on Campus

Bill Description: Requires all public colleges in Maine to adopt strong free speech policies affirming open inquiry, prohibiting “free speech zones,” and ensuring public outdoor spaces remain traditional public forums for protected expressive activities. It bars institutions from restricting speech based on content or anticipated reactions, bans disruptive interference with others’ speech, and mandates transparency and neutrality in event security fees. The bill also protects student journalists’ editorial independence in school-sponsored media and bars prior restraint or retaliation against student media advisors. It provides clear avenues for enforcement, including civil action by students or the Attorney General, and requires institutions to train staff and educate students on these rights.

Full Text: Page 82

An Act to Protect Religious Freedom in Schools via the Maine Human Rights Act

Bill Description: Exempts all religious organizations from the sexual orientation/gender identity regulations of the Maine Human Rights Act, expanding the current exemption to include religious organizations receiving public funds.

Full Text: Page 89

An Act to Reform the Charter Authorization Process

Bill Description: Authorizes Colleges/Universities, nonprofits, and parent organizations to become authorizers for Charter Schools, reforms the manner of appointing Charter Commission members, giving the power of Appointment to the Senate for four members. Included millage rate in charter school funding.

Full Text: Page 90

An Act to Repeal the High School Graduates Tuition Waiver for the Maine Community College System

Bill Description: Repeals Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, Section 12723, which established a tuition waiver for recent high school graduates attending Maine's community colleges. In effect, this legislation would eliminate the existing state-funded tuition-free community college program for eligible high school graduates.

Full Text: Page 97

An Act to Repeal the 55% Education State Education Funding Mandate

Bill Description: Eliminate the state's obligation to fund 55% of public schools spending.

Full Text: Page 98

An Act to Restore the Rights of Maine School Children

Bill Description: Codify the right of parents under *Mahmoud v. Taylor* to opt their children out of mandatory LGBTQIA2S+ readings/films that would undermine the religious beliefs or practices of the family.

Full Text: Page 99

SUBSECTION 4: ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY (EUT)

An Act to Ensure a Sustainable Grid

Bill Description: Repeal the 100 megawatt cap on all renewable energy generation. Repeal the Expedited Wind Law. End residential solar net metered billing. End large scale solar subsidies. Repeal RPS. Leave the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

(RGGI), or cap overall RGGI spending and disburse extra funds to ratepayers after the cap is reached.

Full Text: Page 101

An Act to Promote Innovation and Internet Access

Bill Description: Eliminate the Maine Connectivity Authority.

Full Text: Page 105

An Act to Repeal Net Energy Billing

Bill Description: Fully repeals all statutory provisions governing Maine's net energy billing (NEB) programs by eliminating sections 3209-A through 3209-E of Title 35-A of the Maine Revised Statutes. These sections include the legal framework for both the kilowatt-hour credit and tariff rate NEB programs, as well as related rulemaking authority and transitional provisions. If enacted, the bill would dismantle the state's NEB system, ending financial incentives and billing mechanisms that currently support distributed solar and other renewable energy projects by allowing customers to offset electricity costs with energy they generate.

Full Text: Page 106

An Act to Repeal Net Neutrality

Bill Description: Repeals the statutes that establish and expand Net Neutrality.

Full Text: Page 108

An Act to Repeal the Statewide Nuclear Referendum

Bill Description: Repeals the statewide referendum requirements for the construction of nuclear facilities, operation of nuclear facilities or waste disposal, or the entrance into interstate nuclear waste disposal contracts. All of which are only applied to nuclear energy and no other energy source.

Full Text: Page 109

SUBSECTION 5: ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (ENR)

An Act to Repeal All Electric Vehicle Subsidies

Bill Description: Repeals the electric vehicle fund, electric vehicle charging infrastructure fund, Maine clean energy and sustainability accelerator, and amends the purpose of Efficiency Trust Maine.

Full Text: Page 111

An Act to Repeal Maine's Emissions Goals

Bill Description: Repeals all sections of Chapter 3-A: CLIMATE CHANGE, including the parts establishing the lead-by-example initiative (inventory GHG emissions and develop corporate agreements), establishing a GHG emission reduction plan, and establishing the Climate Action Plan and Maine Climate Council. It preserves the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, an old 2007 project that involved multiple New England States cooperating in utility planning and markets.

Full Text: Page 113

SUBSECTION 6: FEDERALISM AND REGIONAL INDEPENDENCE COMMITTEE (FRI)

An Act to Safeguard Honest Electoral Nominations and Neutral Adjudication (The SHENNA Act)

Bill Description: Limits the power of the Secretary of State of Maine to remove candidates from ballots under the insurrection clause of the 14th Amendment to only when said candidate has been convicted of insurrection in a court of competent jurisdiction.

Full Text: Page 114

An Act to Withdraw from the National Popular Vote Compact

Bill Description: Withdraws Maine from the National Popular Vote Compact

Full Text: Page 115

SUBSECTION 7: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

An Act To Promote Self-Sufficiency

Bill Description: Receiving general assistance disqualifies a person from also receiving TANF. Limit receipt of general assistance for those capable of working and without dependents to 275 days every 5 years. Gradually reduce benefits commensurate with an individual's salary to limit "welfare cliff". Establish an 180- day residency requirement to receive benefits. Prohibit the use of EBT cards for cash withdrawals or for purchases outside Maine.

Full Text: Page 118

An Act To Reduce the Regulation of Child Care Facilities

Bill Description: Allow recipients of child care subsidies to pay the difference of amount charged by a provider. Licensed child care providers in continuous operation for 5 years are eligible for a 5-year license upon renewal. Remove added state scrutiny of "quality care" emphasis. Allow family care providers to watch up to 4 children before licensure. Increase required child -to -staff ratios to national norm.

Full Text: Page 126

An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions for Immunization Requirements

Bill Description: Restore religious and philosophical exemptions from the required vaccination schedule for schoolchildren and healthcare workers. Exempt private & virtual charter students from state immunization requirements.

Full Text: Page 140

An Act to Tie the Minimum Smoking Age to the Minimum Voting Age

Bill Description: This bill amends Maine's tobacco control laws to tie the legal minimum age for purchasing, possessing, or selling tobacco products to the state's minimum voting age. Currently set at 21, the legal tobacco age would automatically adjust if the voting age changes in the future. The bill updates all relevant statutes to replace fixed age references (21) with "the minimum age required to vote in general elections in the state," while preserving a grandfather clause for individuals who were at least 18 as of July 1, 2018. It also updates signage requirements, penalties, and vending machine rules to reflect the new language.

SUBSECTION 8: HOUSING (HOU)

An Act to Establish Shot Clock Permitting for Housing Development

Bill Description: This bill requires permitting authorities within the state to respond to housing development permit requests within a reasonable amount of time, and requires automatic approval of requests the permitting authority fails to make a timely response to.

Full Text: Page 148

An Act to Establish Statewide Limitations on Exactions and Impact Fees

Bill Description: This bill requires exactions and impact fees to meeting essential nexus and rough proportionality requirements, and establishes clear judicial review of potential violations, with attorneys fees covered for prevailing plaintiffs.

Full Text: Page 151

An Act to Incentivize Loans to Support Housing Development

Bill Description: This bill establishes income tax credits to expand access to private financing for housing development and address Maine's ongoing housing crisis, broadening eligibility for existing housing tax credits, creating additional credits for housing development institutions, and establishing tax credits for institutions transferring certified housing development loans between each other.

Full Text: Page 154

An Act to Leverage Revenue Sharing to Incentivize Housing Reform in Maine Towns

Bill Description: Establishes the Housing Reform Incentive Fund as a new component of Maine's municipal revenue sharing program, reallocating 20% of monthly revenue sharing funds to reward the ten municipalities over 2,000 that implement the most effective housing policy reforms. A Maine Housing Reform Evaluation Commission will develop a public scoring rubric and evaluate reforms such as zoning liberalization, increased density, streamlined permitting, and

infrastructure investment. Funds will be distributed among the top ten municipalities biennially, in proportion to their prior city budgets, as an incentive for cities and towns to adopt pro-housing development policies and address the state's housing affordability crisis.

Full Text: Page 166

An Act to Prohibit all Local Rent Control and Inclusionary Zoning Ordinances

Bill Description: Mandates that no locality in Maine may adopt or maintain rent controls without gubernatorial approval during emergencies. Also bans localities from enacting inclusionary zoning or any similar policy that requires direct or indirect allocation of units to be sold below market rates or policies that condition any zoning change or building permit upon the allocation above described.

Full Text: Page 170

An Act to Provide a Private Right of Action for Ultra Vires Rules Affecting Development and Housing

Bill Description: This bill lets people go straight to court when a state agency or town enforces a rule it was never legally authorized to make, instead of forcing them to fight through years of bureaucracy first. If the rule really is beyond the government's legal power, the court can strike it down and make the government pay the legal costs. This mechanism has been used to great effect in other states, such as in *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission*, to challenge unfair or unnecessary land use restrictions.

Full Text: Page 172

SUBSECTION 9: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (DEV)

An Act to Establish a Moratorium on Municipal Regulation of AI

Bill Description: Establishes a Moratorium on Municipalities banning or regulating Artificial Intelligence technology.

Full Text: Page 175

An Act to Prohibit Local Option Sales Taxes

Bill Description: Prohibit municipalities from imposing a local- option sales tax.

Full Text: Page 177

An Act To Protect Access to Rideshare Services in Maine

Bill Description: Preempts localities from enacting or enforcing any local policies that prohibit rideshare apps or establish additional regulatory burdens to operate within the city.

Full Text: Page 178

SUBSECTION 10: HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES (HCIFS)

An Act to Expand Health Care Choice

Bill Description: Mandate higher incentives under Right- To -Shop plans. Repeal Certificate of Need (CON).

Full Text: Page 180

SUBSECTION 11: JOINT ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE (JAR)

An Act to Eliminate Inactive Boards and Commissions

Bill Description: Tightens financial reporting standards, repeals inactive boards, and removes references to repealed advisory bodies

Full Text: Page 183

An Act to Establish a Legislative Economic Analysis Review Unit

Bill Description: Establishes a Legislative Economic Analysis Review Unit to provide economic analysis for the Legislature's administrative oversight and legislative duties.

Full Text: Page 186

An Act to Protect Democracy

Bill Description: This bill amends the rulemaking petition procedure to require signatures equaling at least 1% of the voters in the last gubernatorial election, with at least 0.5% from each congressional district. It also requires attorney general review proposed rules and ballot petitions for constitutional compliance and establishes a single subject rule. Lastly, it extends the Secretary of State's review period for ballot initiatives to 60 days and requires the Attorney General's review of the constitutionality to approve initiatives.

Full Text: Page 190

An Act to Require Legislative Oversight of DAFS Rulemaking

Bill Description: Change rule-making to become “major substantive”

Full Text: Page 193

An Act to Require Regulatory Cost Accounting By Agencies

Bill Description: Requires state agencies to clearly spell out the real economic and housing costs of major new regulations before they can take effect. If an agency skips or botches that analysis, the rule is legally invalid and can't be enforced.

Full Text: Page 194

An Act to Restore Legislative Oversight of DEP Rules

Bill Description: Change rule-making to become “major substantive”

Full Text: Page 198

An Act to Restore Legislative Oversight of DOE Rules

Bill Description: Change rule-making to become “major substantive”

Full Text: Page 200

SUBSECTION 12: JUDICIARY (JUD)

An Act to Provide Free Enterprise and Educational Choice to Maine Native American Tribes

Bill Description: Lowers the cannabis use age on tribal lands to 18, exempts those

lands from state gambling restrictions and tribally owned businesses from state corporate income tax, and establishes “Tribal Charter Schools.” These schools operate like public charters but are tribe-run or approved, limited to one per tribe, excluded from the statewide cap of 10 public charters, and allowed to prioritize tribal children enrollment when at enrollment capacity. They receive standard charter funding but may emphasize Indian culture and alternative curricula.

Full Text: Page 201

An Act to Define Extraordinary Occasions

Bill Description: Defines the constitutional term “extraordinary occasion” to avoid future misuse by governors declaring special sessions unnecessarily. Establishes a public justification statement requirement for the governor, and establishes individual standing to sue for the majority and minority leaders of either house of the state legislature in the case an extraordinary occasion is improperly declared.

Full Text: Page 204

An Act To Prohibit Government Manipulation of Media Coverage

Bill Description: Prohibits government entities in Maine from using public funds to purchase or secure favorable media coverage. Establishes transparency requirements for all state contracts with media, creates criminal penalties for public officials who authorize such contracts, and imposes treble damages on media outlets that knowingly accept such agreements, with a whistleblower exemption if the outlet self-reports. The bill also prohibits state and local officials from discriminating among media outlets based on viewpoint or political position when granting access to press conferences, government communications, facilities, or interviews. Knowingly violating this prohibition constitutes a Class C crime. Exceptions are allowed for neutral criteria such as security, space limitations, or disruptive conduct, provided the exclusion is publicly noticed within 7 days and is subject to de novo judicial review.

Full Text: Page 206

Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Reestablish Maine's Executive Council

Bill Description: Reestablishes Maine’s seven-person executive council, which, like

the ones in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, oversees and checks the actions of the governor. Maine will be divided into seven districts, each electing at large their own member biennially.

Full Text: Page 210

Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Require Constitutional Officers/the State Auditor to be Elected by Popular Election

Bill Description: Proposes a constitutional amendment that provides for direct popular election beginning in 2028 of the Secretary of State, the Treasurer of State, the Attorney General, and the State Auditor biennially in the manner currently provided for Senators and Representatives.

Full Text: Page 214

SUBSECTION 13: LABOR (LAB)

An Act to Reform Maine’s Outdated Occupational Licensing Regime

Bill Description: Universal Recognition of all licenses in good standing for at least a year from any US state. Remove the use of “good character” clauses in licensure or certification. Direct a full agency review and report based on necessity for health and safety.

Full Text: Page 217

An Act to Reform Outdated Wage Laws

Bill Description: Repeal the prevailing wage law, reduce fringe benefits for prevailing wage workers. Freeze the state minimum wage at \$14.65, eliminate indexing to CPI. Establish a youth minimum wage, eliminate requirement for 16- year -olds’ work permits to be signed by their school superintendent

Full Text: Page 224

An Act to Repeal State Imposed Paid Family Medical Leave

Bill Description: Repeal Maine’s statewide paid Family and Medical Leave program.

Full Text: Page 226

An Act to Restore Workplace Freedom

Bill Description: Eliminate the requirement for public employees to pay a fee to a labor union as a condition of employment. Require unions obtain biennial recertification via majority support of their members. Prohibit any worker from being obligated to join or pay a fee to a labor union as a condition of employment (Right-To-Work). De facto ends exclusive representation provisions in collective bargaining agreements.

Full Text: Page 230

SUBSECTION 14: STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SLG)

An Act to Establish a Joint Administrative Review Committee

Bill Description: Establishes a Joint Committee to review proposed routine technical rules and potentially stop them from passage.

Full Text: Page 235

An Act to Protect the Right to Public Hearings on Citizen-Initiated Legislation

Bill Description: This bill further Amends 1 MRSA 907, the section of law mandating public hearings for citizens initiatives, the bill also establishes a private right of action for interest parties when citizens initiatives aren't given hearings, also citing the constitutional rights at play.

Full Text: Page 237

An Act to Establish the Maine Office of State Efficiency

Bill Description: Establishes a six-year temporary executive agency to review government waste, develop restructuring plans, and propose reforms and recommendations for government size reduction.

Full Text: Page 240

An Act to Require Truth in Taxation

Bill Description: Requires municipalities setting property tax levies to not exceed an inflation based growth cap without the explicit referendum approval of the public of

the Municipality.

Full Text: Page 243

An Act to Restore Balanced Emergency Powers

Bill Description: Limits emergency orders, requiring them to be limited in duration and scope, requires legislative oversight for major executive actions, establishes new time limits and approval requirements.

Full Text: Page 245

Resolve, Directing the State Auditor to Audit All State Agencies

Bill Description: Directs the State Auditor to audit every state department for waste, fraud, and abuse of tax dollars.

Full Text: Page 250

SUBSECTION 15: TAXATION (TAX)

An Act to Repeal the 2% Income Tax Hike on High-Income Taxpayers

Bill Description: This bill repeals Maine's 2% income tax surcharge on high-income earners and removes all related references from state law.

Full Text: Page 252

An Act to Base the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax on Sale Price

Bill Description: Allow municipalities to assess the excise tax based on the purchase price of the vehicle rather than the MSRP price.

Full Text: Page 253

An Act To Promote Philanthropy

Bill Description: Repeal cap on charitable giving, or align limits with federal law.

Full Text: Page 256

An Act to Reduce the Income Tax to 4.5% and Remove Low-Income Families from Taxation

Bill Description: Tax Relief Fund established to collect state revenues which exceed

the previous years budget over the growth of average personal income in the state, and directed toward reducing tax rates such that all individual income made up to \$50,000/year is exempt from taxes and all other remaining income is taxed at 4.5%.

Full Text: Page 257

An Act to Reestablish the Property Tax Relief Fund for Maine Residents

Bill Description: Reverts the changes by the 2021 budget section that repealed the Property Tax Relief Fund. Just as it was in 2019-2021, the fund collects 40% of General Fund Revenue Exceeding the appropriation limit and 20% of general fund revenue that is unappropriated (effectively, unspent) by the end of the fiscal year. It also collects any money that would've gone to the stabilization fund if it were at its cap. The fund then distributes these reserves to homesteads throughout the state to offset property taxes.

Full Text: Page 259

An Act to Repeal the Estate Tax

Bill Description: Repeals the chapters of law establishing the Maine estate tax and amending its application after 2012. The Maine estate tax raises less than \$ 20 million annually, compared to \$2.5 billion from income taxes. Yet, it is a highly punitive measure discouraging wealthy, high-net-worth individuals from moving to the state. Additionally, the state income tax is already applied to the recipients of estates and trusts under 36 MRSA c. 809, which this law would not change.

Full Text: Page 263

An Act to Restore Fiscal Order

Bill Description: Any revenue exceeding last fiscal year plus average growth of personal income must be transferred to the Income Tax Relief Fund. If the Legislature fails to enact a budget, all state agencies must cut 10%.

Full Text: Page 264

SUBSECTION 16: TRANSPORTATION (TRA)

An Act To Prohibit Aerial Enforcement of Speeding Violations

Bill Description: Removes the ability of police officers to issue tickets solely on aerial collected data.

Full Text: Page 266

An Act to Eliminate Certain Motor Vehicle Inspections

Bill Description: End non-commercial vehicle inspection mandates.

Full Text: Page 267

An Act to Prohibit Speeding Tickets for Drivers Driving within Five Miles of the Speed Limit

Bill Description: Prohibits police from issuing a speeding ticket to a driver driving five miles or less over the speed limit on the Maine Turnpike or Interstate Highway System.

Full Text: Page 271

An Act to Treat Speeders and Underspeeders Equally

Bill Description: Penalizes driving a dangerous amount under the speed limit the same as driving the same amount under the speed limit.

Full Text: Page 272

An Act to Remove Construction Related Traffic Signs from Inactive Construction Work Zones

Bill Description: Requires the Commissioner of Transportation to either remove reduced speed limit signs in inactive construction areas or justify their continued existence. This bill triggers if a construction zone has been inactive or projected to be inactive for a week or more.

Full Text: Page 273

Resolution for a Constitutional Amendment to Fund the Roads

Bill Description: Shift 50% of sales tax revenues from auto parts & mechanical related sales to the Highway Fund to close the perennial transportation funding shortfall. Use some of those revenues to ratchet down the fuel tax.

Full Text: Page 274

SUBSECTION 17: VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS (VLA)

An Act to Dismantle Maine's Social Equity Program

Bill Description: Repeals Maine's social equity program, established in 2023, meant to support workforce development programs to support members of "impacted communities," which means a racial, ethnic or tribal population that has experienced incarceration at rates disproportionate to the racial, ethnic or tribal population's rate of criminality.

Full Text: Page 276

An Act to Maintain the Neutrality of Election Officials in Referendum Proceedings

Bill Description: This bill makes it so that if the Secretary of State or her subordinates use their public office to advocate for or against a ballot measure in their official capacity then they will be referred to the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices for investigation and possible ethical sanction + referral to legislature for further disciplinary actions.

Full Text: Page 277

An Act to Repeal Ranked Choice Voting

Bill Description: This bill repeals the laws governing ranked-choice voting in: Primary elections for the offices of President of the United States, United States Senator, United States Representative to Congress, Governor, State Senator, and State Representative; General and special elections for the offices of United States Senator and United States Representative to Congress; and General elections for presidential electors.

Full Text: Page 280

An Act to Require Voter ID

Bill Description: This bill requires the presentation of proof of identity in the form of a photograph identification document when voting in person, such as a valid driver's license or nondriver identification card issued in this State, a United States

passport, a military identification or a permit to carry a concealed handgun issued in this State if that permit includes a photograph. It also allows a person without a photograph identification to request a free voter photograph identification card from the Secretary of State.

Full Text: Page 285

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Montana Towers

Montana Towers is a Policy Analyst at the Maine Policy Institute and a lifelong Maine resident. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Maine at Farmington and went on to receive his Juris Doctor from the University of Maine School of Law. During law school, he worked with the Maine Medical Association on legislative research and advocacy, including drafting testimony and analyzing pending legislation. He is licensed to practice law in the state of Maine.



Harris Van Pate

Harris served as a Policy Analyst at The Maine Policy Institute from March of 2024 through March of 2026. He has a Law degree from Florida State University's College of Law and a Bachelor's degree in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy from the James Madison College at Michigan State University. He is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Georgia's School of Public and International Affairs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Maine Policy Institute would like to recognize the many staff members, interns, volunteers, and members of the organization's Board of Advisors and Board of Directors who contributed to the production of this report. A project of this scope would not have been possible without their time, expertise, careful review, and dedicated assistance.

All original research and analysis contained in this report was conducted by human authors, who retain full responsibility for its arguments, conclusions, and recommendations.

Artificial intelligence tools were used on a limited basis to assist with editorial and production tasks, including selected grammatical review and final formatting checks. AI tools were not used to conduct original research, develop policy analysis, or independently generate the report's findings or recommendations.



ABOUT MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE

Maine Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to expand individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Maine Policy is the strongest voice in Augusta for taxpayers and believes in an open, transparent, and accountable state government. We work to ensure hardworking Mainers keep the fruits of their labor and defend their rights and liberties from government overreach.

Governed by an independent Board of Directors, Maine Policy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax exempt organization that relies on the generous support of individuals, corporations, and foundations, and does not accept government funds or perform contract work. With six full-time staff members and hundreds of individual supporters, we conduct detailed and timely research and develop public policy solutions that improve the lives of Maine citizens. We educate the public, engage legislators, and employ the media to shift public opinion and establish enduring change in our state.

Over the past 20 years, Maine Policy has testified hundreds of times before the Maine Legislature. Some of our most notable victories include the largest tax cut in Maine history, historic welfare reforms that led to higher rates of employment, public-sector pension reform that saved taxpayers more than \$1 billion, financial transparency, including “sunshine” on the pay and perks of government employees, and pro-market healthcare reforms that drove down premiums and increased competition. These positive changes are the direct result of Maine Policy’s work and the generosity of our supporters.

If you would like to contribute to Maine Policy Institute, contributions are tax exempt to the extent allowed by law.

Make a secure gift online at mainepolicy.org

Mail to: Post Office Box 7829, Portland, Maine 04112

Or call at 207-321-2550



MPI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Scott Wellman — Chairman
Principal, CFO Advisory
Cambridge Insurance Advisors

Mr. Fred Masciangelo
Executive Vice Pres. of New Business
Netsurit

Mr. William Boeschenstein, Jr.

Mr. Jason Oney
President

Timothy J. Bryant, Esq.
Partner
PretiFlaherty

Strategic Maintenance Solutions

Mrs. Susan Dench
President
The Muddy Dog

Mr. Christopher A. Pierce
Chairman and Owner
The Dingley Press

The Honorable Debra Plowman

Mr. Scott Forrey
Senior Director Analytics Operations
Akamai Technologies

Laurence Rubinstein, D.D.

Mr. Jeffrey Kane
Retired President
National Distributors, Inc.

Directors Emeritus
The Honorable Neal B. Freeman
Chairman
The Blackwell Corporation



MAINE POLICY
I N S T I T U T E



A PRODUCT OF THE MAINE POLICY INSTITUTE
POST OFFICE BOX 7829 | PORTLAND, ME 04112
207.321.2550 | WWW.MAINEPOLICY.ORG