



Senator Shenna BELLOWS

DISTRICT 14

Proudly representing the people of Chelsea, Farmingdale, Gardiner, Hallowell, Manchester, Monmouth, Pittston, Randolph, Readfield, West Gardiner and Winthrop.

Dear Friend,

It is an honor and a privilege to represent you and our central Maine communities in the State House. You sent me to Augusta to make real changes that help everyday Mainers, and we did just that by working together to get things done. For the first time in a long time, Democrats, Republicans and Independents even sat beside each other instead of being divided by partisan aisles.

“ I promise to keep fighting for your health, family, job and wallet in Augusta next year. ”

Together, we accomplished a lot to support working families, invest in small businesses, feed Maine's children and help our seniors:

- **We passed a bipartisan budget that provides \$130 million in property tax relief without raising income taxes.** We expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit, increased the Homestead Exemption to \$25,000 and increased revenue sharing.
- **We fought to make health care more affordable and accessible and to combat rising prescription drug prices** by passing laws to prevent insurance

companies from discriminating against Mainers with preexisting conditions, and increasing price transparency for prescription drugs. We also voted to strengthen accountability for big drug companies.

- **We passed a fair earned paid time off policy**, to ensure 85 percent of Maine workers can earn up to 40 hours of paid time off per year, while protecting seasonal and small businesses.
- **We honored veterans and made it easier for them to return to civilian life** by passing multiple bills that included, for example, ensuring they can attend their scheduled medical appointments at the VA without fear of losing their jobs. We also established the Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Partnership Fund to provide transitional housing to homeless Maine veterans.

These are just a few of the highlights. Looking back, I believe we made Maine a better place to live, work, raise a family and retire. But I know there is still a lot left to do. I promise to keep fighting for your health, family, job and wallet in Augusta next year.

Please feel free to reach out to me about the issues that matter to you. I look forward to hearing from you, and I hope to see you around soon.

Take care,

Shenna Bellows

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Joseph Calmes of Pittston and Katherine Hart of Winthrop were two of the local students who served as Honorary Pages this year.

Combating child hunger so kids can learn and grow

Hungry kids can't learn. In order to help our students reach their full potential, we need to make sure they all have access to quality, healthy food.

This session, we passed a bill I sponsored that creates a universal, statewide online application for free school meals to make enrollment easier and more efficient. I helped secure funding for "Breakfast After the Bell" programs and school-based health centers. Additionally, we prohibited schools from shaming students who can't pay for meals. We also passed a law to increase the amount of local food in Maine schools, which will benefit both Maine students and the farmers and food producers in our communities.

Expanding internet access and protecting your privacy

These days more and more things are done online, from banking to health care and other very personal business. For many students and local business owners, being able to connect to high-speed internet is vital to their success. That's why our bipartisan budget allocates \$4 million to fund broadband and related rural development projects. Additionally, **I sponsored the nation's strongest online privacy law, which prevents the sale or sharing of a customer's personal information by internet service providers without express consent. Your internet service provider shouldn't be able to secretly profit off your personal data, and now they won't be able to.**

We passed a "net neutrality" law for a free and open internet, ensuring that Maine's small businesses can compete on a level playing field with big companies online. We also passed a law to keep spammers and scammers from making robocalls to residential numbers.

We also passed a law I introduced to require that municipalities and school districts quickly notify their employees of an actual or suspected breach of confidentiality and thefts of their personal information due to cyber activity.

Supporting first responders and public safety members

Our law enforcement and public safety members sacrifice more than we know to keep us safe. That's why I was proud to support a number of bills this year to honor and help members of law enforcement and public safety.

Last winter, two Maine State Troopers who were pulled over on the side of the road were struck by passing vehicles. I supported a bill to increase the penalty for breaking Maine's "move over" law. This will help keep police officers, public safety workers and road crews safe while they do their jobs protecting us.

As Senate Chair of the Labor and Housing Committee, I helped get an important bill for fire investigators passed into law. This new law, which allows fire investigators to retire at the same time as law enforcement and other key employees whose jobs entail great personal risk to health and well-being, will save lives.



Standing with the bill sponsor, State Rep. Matt Harrington, R-Sanford, fire investigators (including Ike Peppard of Farmingdale), and their families as Gov. Janet Mills signs the fire investigators' bill into law.

Looking out for the health and well-being of children

The health and well-being of our children is critical to our future. This year, we passed vital laws to make sure our kids are safe and healthy both at home and in school – by addressing lead exposure and testing, banning vaping in schools, and removing a senseless rule so kids can apply sunscreen while they're at school without needing a note from home.

With reports of our broken child protective system mounting, I knew we needed to make changes. **I sponsored a bill that adds staffing and funding to the office reviewing reports of child abuse, and our bipartisan budget added 62 child protective worker positions tasked with keeping kids safe.**

“Senator Shenna Bellows has been a strong voice for veterans and our concerns at the State House. We’re lucky to have her serving in Augusta on our behalf.”

- Dick West, Randolph, Vietnam veteran



At the Randolph town meeting with Dick West. It was a pleasure to see so many friends and neighbors at town meetings across the district this spring and summer and to witness local democracy in action.

Delivering on health care and prescription drug reform

Access to quality, affordable health care is about giving you the freedom to have control over your health, your life and your future.

From the start of this session, making health care more affordable and accessible for all Mainers has been our top priority.

We’ve passed legislation to protect Mainers with preexisting conditions and preserve the patient protections in the Affordable Care Act, such as coverage for hospitalization, ambulance services and maternity care. We strictly regulated short-term health plans, also known as “junk” plans, so people aren’t duped into buying faulty coverage.

We also passed a comprehensive prescription drug reform package into law with strong bipartisan support. These laws approach this issue from all angles to make medicine more affordable and accessible for all Mainers, increase price transparency and hold corporate middlemen accountable.

But our work didn’t end there.

We also took action to eliminate red tape from insurance companies to ensure that decisions about coverage and care are made by medical professionals with relevant expertise instead of corporate bureaucrats.

Keeping our promise on property tax relief

Mainers need property tax relief. It’s why lowering property taxes has been my number one priority since my first election. In 2017, we increased the Homestead Exemption. In 2018, we increased the Property Tax Fairness Credit. This year, we built on that success.

Together we crafted and passed a strong, bipartisan budget that provides \$130 million in property tax relief for hardworking Mainers, seniors, families and small businesses, and sends more money back to our schools, cities and towns.

We expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit to provide relief to an additional 13,000 Mainers. Seniors can save up to \$1,200 in property taxes and eligible working Mainers and families can save up to \$750 on property taxes or rent. Find out more at www.maine.gov/revenue/taxrelief/ptfcssummary.htm.

We increased the Homestead Exemption to \$25,000 — a \$5,000 increase. This means every Maine homeowner can take \$25,000 off the value of their home when calculating their property tax bill. Do you get the Homestead Exemption? Check with your town office to make sure.

I sponsored a bill to restore revenue sharing to send more money back to our cities and towns. Our budget increased revenue sharing.

In addition, we added \$111 million in education funding, which will reduce the amount of school funding needed from property taxes.

I will continue to fight for property tax relief at the State House to help seniors and working families.



I joined retired state workers and other state lawmakers in calling on the President and Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, which slashes the Social Security benefits that teachers and public employees deserve, penalizing them for their service to our state.

2019 Legislative Update
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With Gary Crocker at the 2019 National Vietnam War Veterans Day event at the State House. Photo by Mark and Deanna Walker.

SURVEY: Your voice and your ideas matter!

1. What should be our biggest priority next year?

- Making health care more affordable
 - Improving our economy
 - Supporting education, especially career tech
 - Protecting Maine's natural resources
 - Investing in good-paying, green energy jobs
 - Other (please specify)
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2. What do you think Maine needs to do to strengthen our economy?

- Invest in career and technical education
 - Support companies to create good-paying jobs
 - Support new emerging industries
 - Retain and grow manufacturing jobs
 - Other (please specify)
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3. What is the biggest challenge you and your family face when it comes to health care?

- Cost of prescription drugs
- Cost of health care coverage
- Lack of transparency and accountability
- Lack of medical professionals in our area

Other (please specify)

4. What do you think presents the largest challenge for education in Maine?

- Student debt
 - Inadequate funding for public schools
 - Inadequate funding for career tech
 - Lack of support for teachers
 - Other (please specify)
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5. Which of the bills we passed this year was most important to you or your family? If none, do you have any bill ideas for next year?

Thanks for your feedback. Please reach out if you ever need assistance.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

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