



# Senator BILL DIAMOND

DISTRICT 26

Proudly representing Baldwin, Casco, Frye Island, Raymond, Standish and Windham

Dear Friend,

After hearing from people all across our community, I came back to Augusta eager to get to work for you. Bringing back respect and civility to Augusta was long overdue. This session, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate sat beside each other instead of being divided by a partisan aisle. It was also time to refocus Augusta on investing in small businesses, laying the groundwork for the success of our children and helping Maine seniors.

**“ We must do everything we can to protect Maine children from abuse.”**

Now that the first year of our work has come to a close, I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish for you.

- **We passed a budget that provides \$130 million in property tax relief without raising taxes.** We expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit, increased the Homestead Exemption and made significant steps toward fully restoring revenue sharing. This means more Mainers can afford to stay in their homes and make ends meet.
- **We passed a landmark road safety law.** Distracted driving has become an epidemic in

Maine, and our roads are less safe because of it. This year, I sponsored a new law that requires any electronics used while driving to be hands-free, helping drivers keep their attention off their devices and on the road.

- **We took action to protect Maine children.** We added positions to deal with short staffing in the Office of Child and Family Services as well as the Computer Crimes Unit, which investigates cases of child pornography. While there is still work left to do, these new positions will undoubtedly help to protect children and keep predators off the street.

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

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me about the issues that matter to you.

Thank you all for your input. It's an honor to serve you in Augusta.

## CONTACT BILL:

### MAIL

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

### PHONE

Office: (207) 287-1515  
Cell: (207) 650-4713

### ONLINE

diamondhollyd@aol.com  
www.mainesenate.org



Speaking at a AAA press conference alongside law enforcement and road safety advocates

## Supporting law enforcement and public safety workers

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

- **“Move over” law strengthened:** Last winter, two Maine State Troopers who were pulled over on the side of the road were struck by passing vehicles. I sponsored a bill to increase the penalty for breaking Maine’s “move over” law, helping keep police officers, public safety workers and road crews safe on the job.
- **Allowing law enforcement officers to wear veterans’ insignia:** Maine will now join several other states in allowing police officers who have served in the military to wear veterans’ insignia on their uniforms. This change, which I supported, will recognize veterans when they come home and help them better connect with other veterans in their community.
- **Bridge named for Detective Campbell:** This spring, I was saddened to learn that Maine State Police Detective Benjamin Campbell had died in the line of duty, while helping a stranded driver. Detective Campbell earned the respect of many, and I was proud to back a bill to rename a bridge near his hometown of Millinocket in his honor.
- **Protecting retired law enforcement and firefighter benefits:** The Retired County and Municipal Law Enforcement Officers and Municipal Firefighters Health Insurance Program was created so people who put themselves on the line to protect our communities have the benefits they deserve. Two bills I supported this session protect and strengthen this vital program.
- **Giving computer crimes investigators the retirement they deserve:** Workers in the state’s Computer Crimes Unit investigate some of the most horrific cases of child abuse imaginable. Unfortunately, these investigators have not been eligible for the state’s retirement program for law enforcement officers. This year I introduced a bill to fix that, and I’ll pick that up again next year.

## Protecting children in state care from abuse

With reports of our broken child protective system mounting, I knew we needed to make changes. I voted for a bill that adds staffing and funding to the office reviewing reports of child abuse. The bipartisan budget that we passed also adds 62 child protective workers to the Office of Child and Family Services.

**I know we need a real, significant overhaul. Since Logan Marr died in 2001 — through four gubernatorial administrations — we’ve had seven commissioners of DHHS, and kids are still dying. We need action on all fronts to address this problem, not just from DHHS, but from the courts, the Legislature and law enforcement. That’s why I sponsored a bill to reform our child protective services.**

This bill was carried over to next year, and I’m eager to take up this fight again in January.

## A landmark road safety law for Maine

Maine first banned texting and driving in 2011. That year, Maine State Police wrote 48 tickets for texting and driving. **Five years later, in 2016 they wrote 866 such tickets, and 365 crashes in Maine were attributed to cellphone use. This problem has reached epidemic proportions.**

The current problem is that it’s difficult for police to identify when someone is texting while driving or doing something else, such as making a call or entering an address into a GPS. A new law that I sponsored removes that ambiguity by prohibiting the use of handheld electronic devices while driving. This change will help police enforce the law and keep the roads safer for everyone. Nineteen other states and the District of Columbia have similar laws.



Maine’s new ban on handheld devices while driving will make our roads safer for bikers



Honorary Senate pages Heidi Muse, Noah Henry, Tobias Perkins, Finn Smith and their chaperones in the Senate Chamber

## Honorary page program

This year, over the course of the session, I welcomed 19 students from across the community to serve as Honorary Pages.

The Honorary Page program gives students a chance to participate in and observe Maine's legislative process. As Honorary Pages, students deliver messages, distribute documents within the Senate Chamber, interact with senators and take part in a real-world, legislative learning experience. Students from third grade through high school are invited to participate when the Senate is in session.

Contact my office at (207) 287-1515 to learn more.

## Standing up for Maine veterans

Our veterans have made countless sacrifices for our country. While we can never fully repay them, we can ease their transition back home.

**This year, we passed a law to allow moose lottery winners to donate their permit to a disabled veteran and to provide complementary hunting, fishing and trapping licenses to our Gold Star Families.**

Many servicemen and women return in need of physical or mental health treatment for service-related injuries. It's why we passed a bill this session to create veteran-friendly workplaces in Maine. This law ensures veterans can take time off for their medical appointments.

Finally, we took action to reduce veteran homelessness by passing a bill to support local organizations working in their communities to give veterans the tools they need to get back on their feet.

We still have work to do next year: from expanding the veteran property tax exemption program to supporting female veterans and providing Gold Star Families free entry to our state parks, camping areas and beaches.

**If you know a veteran who needs our help, please contact my office at (207) 287-1515.**

## Keeping our promise on property tax relief

Mainers need property tax relief. It's why lowering property taxes has remained at the top of our agenda for years. In 2017, we increased the Homestead Exemption. In 2018, we increased the Property Tax Fairness Credit. This year, we built on that success.

Lawmakers crafted and passed a strong, bipartisan budget that provides \$130 million in property tax relief for hardworking Mainers, seniors, families, and small businesses.

**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.**

**We increased the Homestead Exemption to \$25,000 — a \$5,000 increase from the previous year. This means Maine homeowners can take \$25,000 off the value of their home when calculating their property tax bill.**

**We began restoring revenue sharing, which means municipalities will have more funds to help stabilize property tax rates by partially funding essential services.**

In addition, we added \$111 million in education funding, which will reduce the amount of school funding raised through property taxes. Outside of the budget, we also passed a law that provides a direct refund of \$100 to those who qualify for the Homestead Exemption.

Reducing property taxes is the number one concern for many people I talk to, and I'm pleased we were able to make sure more of your money stays in your wallet.



Reviewing legislation in the Senate Chamber

2019 Legislative Update  
**Senator Bill Diamond**  
3 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333  
www.mainesenate.org  
(207) 287-1515



## IMPORTANT REMINDER FOR DRIVERS: New road safety law in effect!

A new law that I introduced prohibits the use of hand-held electronic devices while driving. With distracted driving causing thousands of accident deaths across the country, the time for a change is now. [Here's what you need to know about the new law:](#)

- The law applies to all handheld electronic devices, not just phones. It does make an exception for two-way radios and medical devices.
- You may still use your devices in “hands-free mode” or if they are attached to the dash of your car.
- You may still use your devices if you are safely pulled over to the side of the road.
- The fine for breaking the law is \$50 for the first offense, and \$250 for each subsequent offense.

Distracted driving is an issue that has reached epidemic proportions on Maine roads, and I'm proud to have taken bold action to address this crisis. [This new law makes our roads and highways safer for all of us by ensuring drivers' focus is on the road and not on their electronic devices.](#)



**“Working with Sen. Diamond to pass Maine’s new hands-free law, I was reminded of why we’re so lucky to have him as our state senator. I saw firsthand his dedication and his ability to work across the aisle to get the job done.”**

*- Pat Moody, AAA Northern New England*

Please visit [mainesenate.org](http://mainesenate.org) to sign up for my email updates.