2019 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Senator JIM DILL

DISTRICT 5:
Proudly representing most of Penobscot County in the Maine Senate

Dear Friend,

After hearing from people all across my district, I came to Augusta to get work done and make real change to help everyday Mainers. 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 supporting working people, investing in small businesses, laying the groundwork for the success of our children and helping Maine seniors.

> **“We worked to make health care more affordable and more accessible.”**

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

- **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 worked to make health care more affordable and more accessible.** The budget provides sustainable funding for MaineCare expansion to provide health coverage to an additional 70,000 low-income, working Mainers. We also passed laws to prevent insurance companies from discriminating against Mainers with preexisting conditions.
- **We stood up to “Big Pharma” by passing our sweeping prescription drug reform package that received unanimous bipartisan support in the Senate.** This suite of laws will make prescription drugs more affordable and more accessible while increasing price transparency and holding drug companies accountable.

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 fighting 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.

James F. Dill

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Supporting law enforcement and public safety members

Our law enforcement and public safety members sacrifice more than we know to keep our communities safe.

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 sponsor legislation to rename a bridge near his hometown of Millinocket in his honor.**

Last winter, two Maine State Troopers who were pulled over on the side of the road were struck by passing vehicles. This session, 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.

Gov. Mills signs a bill I cosponsored to rename a bridge in Orono after fallen soldier Brandon Silk

Fighting for affordable health care

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 put strict rules on short-term health plans, also known as "junk" plans, which trick folks into buying faulty coverage.

Your zip code shouldn't determine your level of access to health care, which is why we also passed legislation to require insurance companies to cover telehealth services similar to traditional health care services. This technology allows folks in rural parts of the state to more easily access health care services.

Finally, we took action this year to eliminate the 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.

Taking on Big Pharma

Too many Mainers are struggling to afford the prescription drugs they need to survive. At the same time, drug companies and middlemen are making outrageous profits on the backs of hardworking people. It doesn't have to be this way. This year, I joined my colleagues to introduce a suite of prescription drug reform bills, which earned unanimous, bipartisan support in the Senate. **These new laws will make medicine more affordable and more accessible, increase price transparency and hold corporate middlemen accountable.**

The first allows Maine to wholesale import prescription drugs from Canada, which are both safe and more affordable. The second creates a Prescription Drug Affordability Board that will give consumers a voice in drug pricing, curb public spending and help drive down costs. The third holds accountable corporations, acting as middlemen, that have pocketed savings designed for consumers. The final piece of this puzzle is a law that requires drug companies to share information on costs related to drug production, marketing, advertising and consumer price.

Mainers have watched the cost of prescription drugs skyrocket because lawmakers were too afraid to take on "Big Pharma." This year, we took them on, and we won.

Protecting our resource-based economy

From working waterfronts to forest and agricultural products, Maine's natural resources contribute billions to our economy each year. This session, I worked hard to keep it that way.

I took action to protect the water quality of our rivers and the Gulf of Maine. I led efforts to continue restoring the Penobscot River and protect sustenance fishing rights of Maine tribes. And I voted to ban offshore drilling. These measures will help ensure the long-term health of our inland fishing and marine resources.

With Rep. Tipping and members and coach of the championship University of Maine women's basketball team

> **"Sen. Dill is a tireless advocate for our community. His leadership helped Old Town secure funding needed to close our municipal landfill in a safe and timely manner."**
>
> *- David Mahan, Old Town City Councilor*

With retiring University of Maine System Chancellor Jim Page

Investing in the next generation of Mainers

This session, lawmakers made serious investments in young Mainers' education so they can become successful leaders and workers.

Hungry kids can't learn. This session, we made the online application for free school meals universal and statewide, expanded "breakfast after the bell" programs, prohibited shaming students who can't pay for meals, and made sure more kids in need get free lunches.

We added $2.5 million in Career and Technical Education funding and passed a measure to study the possibility of creating a four-year career training program in high schools. CTE programs lead students to good-paying jobs and bright futures.

The state budget provides $18 million for the School Revolving Loan Fund to repair crumbling school buildings. It also builds a bridge to a $40,000 minimum teacher salary by 2022. If we want our kids to be taught by the best teachers around, we need to pay them what they deserve.

We also increased funding for the Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy, to help keep tuition down. We made investments in adult education, early college, degree completion and continuing workforce training to help fill critical gaps in Maine's workforce.

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.

Under Democratic leadership, 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 and fund 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 folks, and I'm pleased we were able to make sure more of your money stays in your wallet.

Speaking with advocates at the State House

2019 Legislative Update
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I was honored to recognize veterans who served on D-Day this session on June 6, which is D-Day Remembrance Day

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)

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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)

   _____

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?

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

Name:_____

Address:_____

Email:_____

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