

Senator Geoff

GRATWICK

DISTRICT 9

Proudly representing Bangor and Hermon in the Maine Senate

Dear Friend,

I went to Augusta to work for real change — change that would improve the lives of everyday Mainers. I've had some successes but even greater pride in what the Legislature has been able to accomplish this past session.

“ Making health care more affordable and accessible for all Mainers has been my top priority.”

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 progress toward fully restoring revenue sharing. This means more Mainers can afford to stay in their homes.

We made health care more affordable and accessible. The budget provides a sustainable funding source for MaineCare expansion providing coverage for an additional 70,000 low-income, working Mainers. We now have laws to prevent insurance companies from discriminating against Mainers with preexisting conditions.

We stood up to “Big Pharma” and passed a sweeping prescription drug reform package. It makes many prescription drugs more affordable, increases price transparency, and holds drug companies accountable for excessive price increases. This suite of bills received unanimous, bipartisan support in the Senate.

This session, leadership randomly assigned seating in the House and Senate instead of dividing us up, right and left, by the center aisle. This simple gesture bore results: We worked together better than at any time since I have been in Augusta. This return of respect and civility in Augusta has been long overdue.

These are just the highlights. Looking back, we focused on supporting working people, investing in small businesses, laying the groundwork for the success of our children, and helping older folks. I believe we made Maine a better place to live, work, raise a family, and then retire. But there is still more to do. Next year, I will be fighting for your health, family, job and wallet in Augusta.

It has been an honor to serve. Thank you! Please don't hesitate to reach out to me about issues that matter to you.

CONTACT GEOFF:

MAIL

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

PHONE

Office: (207) 287-1515
Cell: (207) 356-5952

ONLINE

Geoff.Gratwick@legislature.maine.gov
www.mainesenate.org



With members of the Blue Knights Motorcycle Club, retired law enforcement officers. A new law I introduced will allow them to conduct online voting for their leadership elections.

Fighting for affordable health care

Affordable, accessible, quality health care for all Mainers has been and still is my top priority. We are nowhere near where we should be but we have made progress.

We preserved many of the patient protections in the Affordable Care Act, including coverage for preexisting conditions, hospitalization, ambulance services, and maternity care. We limited short-term health plans (“junk” plans), which trick folks into buying flawed coverage.

I sponsored new laws that curtail the ability of insurance companies to confuse patients with red tape and delay needed care. Decisions about coverage and care should be made by medical professionals, not corporate bureaucrats.

We passed a bill I sponsored that requires insurance companies to cover telehealth services in the same way they cover traditional services. This technology allows folks in rural areas to access health care services more easily.

The Legislature funded and implemented Medicaid expansion, first approved in 2017.

Taking on “Big Pharma”

Drug companies and middlemen are making outrageous profits on the backs of hardworking people throughout the U.S., but particularly here in Maine. Too many Mainers struggle to afford the prescription drugs that they need. It should not be this way. We passed a suite of prescription drug reform bills, which the Governor signed. These fixes bring real change and accountability to a dysfunctional system.

These new laws will make medicine more affordable and more accessible, increase price transparency, and hold corporate middlemen accountable.

Putting Maine workers and jobs first

In Maine, working families and small businesses are the core of our communities and economies. This session, we prioritized legislation that makes it easier for Mainers not just to make ends meet, but to see a bright future.

The Legislature passed a first-in-the-nation statewide earned paid time off policy. Under this new law, most Mainers will no longer have to choose between their paycheck and dealing with an unexpected emergency, for example caring for a sick kid, bringing an aging parent to a doctor’s appointment, or dealing with a flat tire. The law provides earned paid time off for 85% of all Maine workers. This initial bill exempts 40,000 small businesses.

We also passed legislation that allows Maine loggers and wood-haulers to form cooperatives. They can now collectively bargain and advocate for safe work environments, fair pay, and reasonable hours. Other workers such as lobstermen and farmers already have these rights.



It was great to have Pastor Jonathan Fischer at the State House to give the opening prayer.

Protecting Maine’s natural resources

From working waterfronts to forest and agricultural products, Maine’s natural resources contribute billions to our economy. This session, I concentrated on keeping it that way.

I worked to protect the water quality of our rivers and the Gulf of Maine. I supported the continuing efforts to restore the Penobscot River and protect the sustenance fishing rights of Maine tribes. And I voted to ban offshore drilling. These measures will contribute to the long-term health of both our inland fishing and marine resources.

I proudly supported the bipartisan Governor’s Climate Council. It will reduce greenhouse gases, put Maine on track to 100% renewable energy, and create good-paying green energy jobs.

“Sen. Gratwick’s efforts to increase property tax relief means more money in the pockets of working Mainers, veterans and seniors — and more revenue for cities and towns like Bangor and Hermon”

- Ben Sprague, Bangor City Council



Enjoying the Bangor Farmer’s Market

Looking out for our kids

We all agree we need healthy, well-adjusted kids. I’m proud to report the legislature made serious investments in education this year:

We need to pay our teachers well if we want our kids to be taught by the best. We are now on track to guarantee a \$40,000 minimum teacher salary by 2022.

Crumbling school buildings are discouraging for both staff and students. **There is now another \$18 million for repairs in the School Revolving Loan Fund.**

New laws we passed address lead exposure and ban vaping in schools.

Another new program will help families and teachers support kids with behavioral challenges so they can better manage their own actions. Mental health is now part of the school curriculum, and we took steps to improve our anti-bullying laws.

Given the increasing number of reports about our broken child protective system, I supported a bill that adds resources and oversight to the Office of Child and Family Services in DHHS. I also supported a new law to help homeless youth get the health care they need.

We added \$2.5 million in Career and Technical Education funding and passed a bill to study creating a four-year career training program in high schools.

Keeping our promise on property tax relief

Mainers need property tax relief. That’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. 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 so that municipalities will have more funds to help stabilize property tax rates and fund essential services.

In addition, we added \$111 million to education funding,

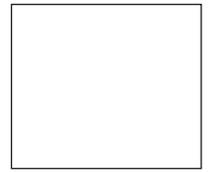
which will reduce the amount of school funding raised through property taxes.

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



Proud to join Sen. Jim Dill, D-Old Town, to welcome the Maine Black Bears football team to the State House!

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



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: _____

Please visit mainesenate.org to sign up for my email updates.