

Senator Ned CLAXTON

DISTRICT 20

Proudly representing Auburn, Mechanic Falls, Minot,
New Gloucester and Poland

Dear friends,

To say that 2020 has been a whirlwind would be an understatement. When the Legislature reconvened in January, I returned to Augusta ready to get back to work and deliver for Maine families, workers, small businesses and local communities. Like most people, my colleagues and I never expected to be dealing with a deadly pandemic and its devastating consequences, both personal and economic.

“ I believe in the hardy spirit of Maine people. Together, we can build a state that works for all Mainers. ”

However, we don't get to choose the challenges we face. Today's challenges may be unprecedented but the way we respond to them isn't. As Mainers, we solve our greatest problems by getting people around the table and working together. It's why I often rely on you, and folks around our communities, to ask questions, share stories and offer feedback. The challenges we are facing now have only strengthened my commitment to make Maine a better place to live, work, raise a family and eventually retire.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, my colleagues and I didn't let up. This year, we worked to:

- **Fix our broken health care system** — I helped introduce a package of laws that put patients before profits. The new laws put an end to both surprise and abusive billing practices and capped the out-of-pocket cost of insulin.
- **Grow the Rainy Day Fund to a historic high** — We added even more money to the state's Rainy Day Fund, growing it to \$258 million, the highest amount since the fund was created in 1985.
- **Stand up for Maine workers and businesses** — This year, we passed measures to invest in quality internet access so small businesses in Maine can compete in the modern economy. Reliable access to high-speed broadband should not be a luxury in this day and age.

We made a lot of progress, but our work is not over. It's why I voted twice to reconvene the Legislature so we could finish delivering for you. I want you to know that I'm still here fighting for you and your family. I believe in the hardy spirit of Maine people. Together, we can build a state that works for all Mainers. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me by calling (207) 287-1515 or emailing Ned.Claxton@legislature.maine.gov.

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Standing up for Maine's business community

Throughout this pandemic, Maine businesses have gone above and beyond to help keep us healthy and safe, whether it's shifting to curbside pick-up or manufacturing personal protective equipment. Now, workers and businesses deserve our support.

When businesses in smaller, rural towns in our counties were prevented from opening because of outbreaks in Lewiston and Portland, I joined with my Republican colleague, Rep. Amy Arata of New Gloucester, to stand up for local businesses. **As a doctor, I understand the importance of public health, but closing safely operating businesses in rural towns just didn't make sense.**

And I won't stop fighting to support our local businesses. When the Legislature reconvenes, we need to do more. We must pass pending measures to promote Maine-based companies and goods whenever taxpayer dollars are spent, create good-paying jobs, support emerging industries and help Maine companies get back on their feet.



I met with the folks at Planson International Corporation in New Gloucester. Planson has an impressive operation providing IT hardware, software and services across the globe!

Taking care of our elderly neighbors and loved ones

As Mainers, we stand on the shoulders of the generations that came before us. **We owe it to our seniors to be there when they need us most.** We started the session in January by increasing funding for Maine's nursing homes and residential care facilities. We gave further support to nursing homes in the supplemental budget when we learned of the COVID-19 crisis.

To support the dedicated people who care for our seniors, we pushed to increase reimbursement rates for direct care workers. The Long-Term Care Commission released recommendations to strengthen this critical part of Maine's workforce. If you don't have a retirement plan through your job, we are advancing a bill to give Mainers a convenient option to save for their financial future. I look forward to getting back to work on these bills.



As part of our Fighting for Maine tour, I met with constituents at the New Gloucester General Store. Talking with community members is where I get a lot of ideas for legislation.

Taking action during the COVID-19 pandemic

When Maine reported its first case of COVID-19, the Legislature unanimously passed laws to support Maine families, seniors, small businesses and public health. **We approved a responsible spending package that prioritized public health nursing, Maine's CDC and senior care while growing the Rainy Day Fund to \$258 million, a historic high.** We expanded unemployment benefits, made sure students wouldn't go hungry, prohibited utility companies from terminating service, and put \$11 million into a COVID-19 fund.

Since we adjourned, I've worked with dozens of Mainers to get unemployment benefits, access critical resources, and address other issues. The stories are often heartbreaking, but it's what we are elected to do — fight for the people we represent. I've pressed state and federal agencies to improve small business programs, increase access to health care, provide rental and housing relief, and support our traditional industries from farming to fishing. Key legislative committees have continued to meet, getting everyday Mainers and the administration around the table to come up with solutions.

We stood up for first responders by increasing benefits for firefighters, law enforcement officers, and EMS personnel. And as chair of the State and Local Government Committee, I helped the effort to designate Sept. 11 as First Responders Day.

Investing in the future by supporting our youth

It's critical that we invest in our state now, in order to thrive tomorrow. To do so, we need to support Maine's children and young adults. It's why in the state's biennial budget, we made it a top priority to invest in education of all types. This year, we allocated an additional \$37.2 million for public schools, \$2.5 million for community college workforce training, \$1.6 million for career and technical education plus \$2 million more for CTE equipment upgrades, and \$1.2 million for adult education programs. While I'm extremely proud of what we accomplished, there's more work to do.

“Not only is Sen. Claxton capable of understanding the problems we face, but he’s genuinely compassionate about the people in the community he has lived and worked in for decades. We are fortunate to have him representing us in the Legislature.”

– Kathie Leonard,
CEO of Auburn Manufacturing



It was great to visit Bell Farms in Auburn this fall. Family-owned businesses are the backbone of our economy.

Making sure working families don’t get left behind

Working families are central to our communities and economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit them hard. As we look to reopen and rebuild, **I’ll be here to make sure you, your family and your small business don’t get left behind.**

Last year, we fought to ensure Mainers are paid what they’re worth, from promoting equal pay for equal work and preventing wage theft to increasing the minimum teacher salary and defending retirement benefits for first responders. We took action against predatory student loan companies and questionable for-profit colleges that take advantage of Mainers trying to advance their careers through higher education. We also passed a first-in-the-nation earned, paid time-off law, which protects public health and allows workers to care for sick loved ones or deal with other emergencies.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Maine, lawmakers quickly expanded eligibility for unemployment benefits. Unfortunately, shortcomings in the system, inadequate staffing and other problems left many struggling to access their benefits. I know because I’ve helped too many people struggling to successfully apply to finally get issues with their benefits sorted out. **Mainers deserve better. We must fix our broken unemployment system so it’s there for hardworking Mainers during a public health or economic crisis.**

Putting patients before profits

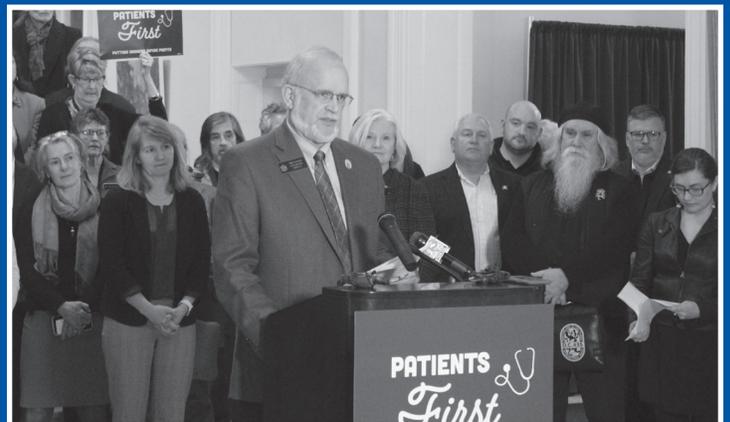
I became your state senator after spending my career fighting to make sure my patients got the treatment and medication they needed. Too often the high cost of health care prevents hardworking Mainers from getting basic medical care. This is true whether it’s the cost of prescription drugs, outrageous health insurance premiums or surprise medical bills. Enough is enough — my colleagues and I worked to change that.

In 2019, we took on “Big Pharma” and won, passing an aggressive prescription drug reform package. These new laws improve drug price transparency, hold “middlemen” accountable, create an affordability board, and allow for prescription drug importation from Canada. In recent months, we adopted a wholesale importation plan and sent it to the FDA for approval. We also passed a new law to hold drug manufacturers accountable for their role in the opioid epidemic. Maine is now leading the nation on prescription drug reform.

This year, I helped introduce a suite of bills that put patients before profits. We clamped down on abusive billing practices and fees that nickel and dime or surprise families.

Over the last two years, we worked to make sure insurance companies don’t stand in the way of care by

putting patient protections into state law, improving coverage of telehealth medicine, and eliminating the waiting period for children’s dental coverage. We also stepped up to fill gaps in rural health care by investing in rural hospitals, funding ambulance services, allowing EMTs to work in hospital settings, and recognizing the care that physician assistants can provide. We’ve made serious progress, but the COVID-19 pandemic proves that we can’t stop now.



As a retired family physician, I was so proud to sponsor one of the bills in the Patients First reform package.

2020 Legislative Report
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SURVEY: I want to hear from you!

1. What is your biggest concern in the wake of COVID-19?

- Keeping your family safe and healthy
- Making sure you can pay your bills
- Supporting struggling small businesses
- Addressing racial disparities in COVID-19 cases
- Reopening the state's economy
- Protecting good-paying jobs
- Other (please specify):

2. What should Maine's focus be as we restart our economy?

- Providing direct relief to workers
- Keeping workers healthy and safe
- Providing direct relief to businesses
- Supporting Maine's tourism industry
- Investing in high-speed, reliable internet
- Other (please specify):

3. COVID-19 has exposed key health care challenges in Maine. What is the biggest challenge you face?

- High cost of prescription drugs
- High cost of health care coverage
- Surprise medical bills and fees

- Lack of medical services in our area
- Other (please specify):

4. COVID-19 has also exposed where Maine still needs work. What should be our biggest priority next year?

- Making sure more people can get health care
- Expanding high-speed, reliable internet
- Investing in education, career tech and child care
- Improving access to affordable housing
- Protecting natural resources
- Other (please specify):

5. What grade would you give Maine's COVID-19 response? _____

I appreciate your comments. Please feel free to contact me anytime if I may ever be of assistance.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

To fill out this survey online,
go to www.mainesenate.org/2020Survey