

# President of Maine's Senate — Beth Edmonds

Beth Edmonds brings a fresh outlook to her Senate presidency. She is an optimist, a keen intellect, and manages to make anyone feel comfortable in her presence. She's guided by a strong belief in our democratic system and a focused commitment to see that everyone works together to get the job done. "As long as everyone comes to the table, then there is always hope. There will always be differences, but I believe we have much more in common than our differences," she stated.

Before the session started, Edmonds took the Senate to dinner, giving them an opportunity to get to know one another. Party affiliations were left at the door. "It was a friendly gathering. We talked about families, interests ... everything except politics." She smiled, adding, "We got to know everyone's human side."

The members of the Joint Select Committee on Property Tax Reform were chosen by Edmonds and House speaker John Richardson because of their experience. Their selection proved successful. The passage of Property Tax Reform LD 1 became an unprecedented way to start the session. "The Tax Committee did a wonderful job. They came in over the holidays — only receiving gas money, and they got the job done," said Edmonds.

The passage of LD 1 has also been attributed to the working relationship between the leaders of state government: the governor, Richardson, and Edmonds. "It was important to set a good tone at the beginning of the session," said Edmonds. "It is also important to begin to talk about bonds now, so we have time to work out our differences. The state needs

investments through bonds, to continue to grow. Continued investments in people, research and development, and infrastructure are needed. It will take a two-thirds vote to get the bonds passed, but by working in a bipartisan manner, I know we can do it," she stated with certainty in her voice.

In the past, bond issues have been announced and taken to the Appropriations Committee much later in the session. This year they will also be discussed openly in public hearings.

Edmonds became excited by the governor's announcement of his bond package, especially the bond request

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under the New Centuries Community program for the creative economy, which she had been working with him on. "It's about creating the infrastructure for the creative economy. We need funds for our libraries, museums and cultural centers," she said.

The creative economy recognizes the importance of cultural institutions as an integral part of economic prosperity, as they have been proven to be catalysts for growth.

Edmonds also cosponsored bipartisan legislation, LD 756, for additional monies for the creative economy. "Working together we will ensure funding for the creative economy," she stated. In both bond initiatives, the funds would be used for bricks and mortar restoration/renovation/new construction of theaters, museums, arts centers, libraries, and historic preservation projects.

Edmonds is passionate about the creative economy, believing that the value and knowledge creativity can bring to a society is underrated. As she expressed it, "All great civilizations were cultural experiences. The creative economy adds value to our society that can't be measured by monetary means alone."

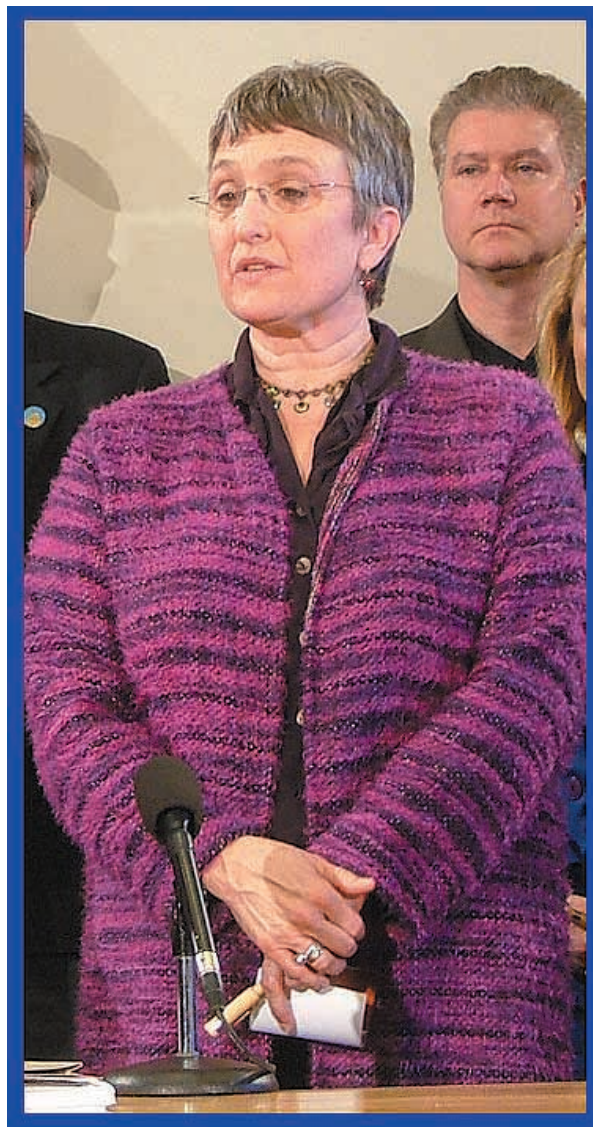
It's not surprising to find that Edmonds works as a children's librarian at the Freeport Community Library. "I can't say enough about libraries. They are the only totally free institutions. They are almost the perfect social institutions.

"I just ordered a book about a librarian in Basra who feared that all the antiquarian books — all the country's written cultural heritage — would be lost once the bombs began to fall. Day after day she took books home, managing to save them for future generations." She smiled in respect and appreciation for the librarian, concluding, "There is a magic about books. They speak to things that are hard to quantify."

Edmonds was first elected to the Senate in 2000 and has served as the chair of the Labor Committee and on the Marine Resources and Natural Resources committees. She represents District 10, which includes Brunswick, Harpswell, Pownal, and Freeport where she resides with her husband, Dan Nickerson.

Her accomplishments include the successful negotiation of a bipartisan compromise to resolve the long-standing deadlock at the Workers' Compensation Board. She was instrumental in efforts to successfully raise Maine's minimum wage and to provide unemployment insurance for part-time workers. She was also influential in the state's electronic waste recycling initiative, and had a significant role in positively affecting the Baxter School for the Deaf Compensation Fund. Additionally, Edmonds has a long-standing working relationship with Maine's fishing industry.

Edmonds has pledged to encourage a spirit of bipartisan cooperation. She likes



Edmonds speaking during the signing ceremonies for LD 1 Property Tax Relief

the challenge of solving big problems, she said, "by getting people to come together." It is always a challenge to get to a consensus on any issue, but that is the president of the Senate's goal. "You have to listen to everyone and be willing to make compromises in order to get the job accomplished. That is all part of working in a democracy," she said, smiling. "I believe that the process of democracy is a process where we are always improving our democracy."

Edmonds' goals for the 122nd Legislature include enacting meaningful tax reform legislation — which has been accomplished — expanding access to healthcare and prescription drugs, investing in quality K-12 education, and raising Maine's per-capita income.

Edmonds was the state coordinator for the Maine chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and is currently a board member of National NOW.

Prior to joining the Senate, Edmonds chaired the Maine Choice Coalition, and was co-chair of Dirigo Alliance. "I got into politics because I became involved in women's issues at college," said Edmonds, a graduate of Clark University, with an MA from Goddard College. "With the election of the first female Senate president, Beverly Daggett of Augusta, the 121st Legislature ushered in a new era and forever altered the definition of a woman's role in the Maine Senate. I am proud to be able to follow in her footsteps."



President of the Senate Beth Edmonds at home in her office at the Capitol

