

Senate President **BETH EDMONDS**

SENATE DISTRICT 10

2006 Legislative Update and Survey



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Dear Friends,

As your State Senator and Senate President, my goal is to improve the well being of Maine people through good paying jobs, a livable wage, education, and high quality of life.

I am pleased to report that Maine is moving forward in many ways, and the legislature is doing its best to help. This year we took major steps to encourage new business investment and job creation, to improve educational opportunities for Maine people of all ages and we raised the minimum wage.

Maine's economic progress has not gone unnoticed. We learned in May, according to an analysis by the newspaper USA TODAY, per capita income in Maine grew 6.1% from 2000 to 2005 after adjusting for inflation; exceeding the national average. Maine's income growth ranks 17th among the 50 states. Our Maine story is one of emerging from the 'old economy' of manufacturing to the 'new economy' of innovation, generating new kinds of jobs.

This year we made progress on other basic issues like consumer protection, sound fiscal policies, affordable health care, and a clean environment. This newsletter contains more details about these and other matters.

It is a pleasure and an honor to serve you in the Maine Senate. If I can ever be of assistance, please call me at (207) 287-1500 or email me at SenBeth.Edmonds@legislature.maine.gov.

Sincerely,

Moving Maine Forward ~ Putting People First

www.mainesenate.org/edmonds



Economic Development = Good Jobs in Maine

Brunswick Economic Development

With the impending closure of Brunswick Naval Air Station, I worked with people in the Midcoast community to move forward with the Local Redevelopment Authorities. I also cosponsored legislation with Speaker Richardson to create a Regional Economic Development Authority for the area, with the ability to issue bonds for redevelopment.

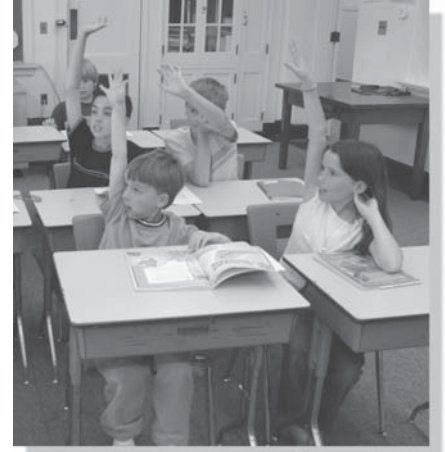
Eliminating the Personal Property Tax on Business Equipment

Efforts to repeal the tax and provide municipalities with alternate revenues were successful this session. A compromise was reached which removes a major roadblock to economic development in Maine.

The Best in Education for the Brightest Futures

College Funding

The legislature also expanded the student loan deduction to make higher education more affordable. To help high school students take college courses, we invested \$500,000 in the Early College Initiative at Maine Community College System. For those adults trying to go to college, \$200,000 has been devoted for the College Transitions Program. Nursing is one of the top employment fields right now, and the legislature added \$750,000 to increase the nursing faculty in Maine's community colleges and universities.



K-12 School Funding

This session, the legislature provided \$42M in new K-12 education funding for local communities, bringing the states share of education funding to 50%. This investment is now the highest it has been since the early 1990's.

Update Teachers' Minimum Salaries

We made a major step toward providing the best possible teachers for Maine's kids this session. The Legislature raised the minimum teacher salary from \$15,500 (set in 1987) to \$27,000 in FY 2006-07, then to \$30,000 in years thereafter. The bill's sponsor, Senator Libby Mitchell said "This bill will make a huge difference in retaining and recruiting teachers who want to stay and work in Maine."

Sound Fiscal Management and Smart Energy Policies

The Bipartisan Budget

This year, Democrats and Republicans worked together to pass a comprehensive balanced supplemental state budget, which increased our state's "rainy day fund" to \$100 million. The supplemental budget also brought state support of local school districts to 50%, helping us move toward the 5% goal we will attain by 2009. It also provided transition adjustments for towns like Harpswell in school administrative districts such as SAD 75 that had adverse affects from recently enacted cost sharing.

Encourage Energy Independence for Maine

This law provides a multi-faceted approach to energy conservation, including consumer education, technical training for managers of public buildings and incentives to reduce energy use.

Protecting Consumers, Workers, and Families

Maine Workers are the Gold Standard

The Legislature approved an increase in Maine's minimum wage from \$6.50 to \$7.00 over two years starting in the fall of 2006. The increase brings Maine in line with most other New England states.

Identity Theft

This law will protect consumers by prohibiting the sale of private cell phone records, including the data that can be obtained from them.



Affordable Health Care

Help for Seniors with Medicare Part D

The State provided over \$10 million to ensure seniors continue to receive prescription drug benefits despite the disorganized federal implementation of Medicare Part D. We helped maintain benefit levels for MaineCare and Drugs for the Elderly eligible people in an effort to protect Maine seniors during the implementation of President Bush's Medicare Part D program.

Consumer-directed Personal Assistance Services

I was proud to sponsor an increase in the rate of reimbursement to personal care assistants (PCAs) who provide services under the state's consumer-directed personal care program for persons with disabilities. These individuals would otherwise be in nursing homes or other facilities. It is an innovative solution for access to affordable health care at home.

Protecting our Heritage and Environment

Working Waterfront

We adopted standards to implement the constitutional amendment approved by voters last year, which provide protections for Maine's working waterfront. This measure encourages the continuation of a working waterfront by increasing the tax advantages for such property. It will help to preserve the tradition of fishing in Maine.

Mercury Bills

Strong cooperation between environmental groups and the business community yielded the passage of a number of new laws that will better protect Maine people from Mercury.





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Cut here Cut here

Your Voice Counts!

Please rank the top five issues that are important to you with 1 being your top pick!

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Protection | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to Health Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K-12 School Funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs/Economic Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Protection | <input type="checkbox"/> Taxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education Funding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> and Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Roads and Bridges |

Please detach survey and mail back to

**Senator Beth Edmonds
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333**

You may also fill this survey out online at:
www.mainesenate.org/edmonds

- Yes** or **No** Did you take advantage of the recently expanded Property Tax Relief (Circuit Breaker and Homestead) Programs?
- Yes** or **No** Should more be done to create savings in Maine’s health care market in an effort to improve access to health care?
- Yes** or **No** Should lowering taxes be a priority for the legislature, even if it means cutting funding for higher education, state parks, health care, public safety, law enforcement or environmental protection?
- Yes** or **No** Should we invest more in economic development initiatives, including research and development or fixing our roads and bridges, in an effort to create good jobs in Maine?
- Yes** or **No** Should the State increase its rainy day fund, even though current reserves total approximately \$100 million?

Please share other comments you may have: