

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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has a 3.76 percent total increase over two years when you deduct the GPA ramp up that we have to pull out of that, that mainly has 3.76 percent over a two-year period, roughly 1.9 percent per year. I have never been a believer that we can go aggressively and cut spending, because that is really a very, very difficult thing to do, but to control spending is an admirable objective and we have done that, and we have reduced spending in those areas that are growing out of control.

To Representative Fischer, I want to say well done. He is a very hardworking, young leader, who is an outstanding diplomat, and he treated our Committee with the greatest fairness throughout this whole process. Representative Millett, he told you a little white lie before: He said not everyone can have an answer for every single question in the 800 pages—wrong—he does. You just ask him, he has the answer for everything within 10 seconds of the question being asked, and it has been a true honor to serve with him, and to see that talent and all of that focus toward the good of Maine.

To my colleagues in this Chamber tonight: I hope you will pass a strong state budget, and I think that it is worthy of the people of Maine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Waterville, Representative Trinward.

Representative **TRINWARD**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. I, again, would like to rise and thank all of the people that have worked so hard to bring together this budget, I know the negotiating was hard, and we as members of the House appreciate all of their work. But on behalf of the more than 320,000 Maine voters who approved the citizen-initiated Maine Clean Election Act, I would just like to, for the record, object to the \$1.3 million that was cut to the program.

When the Maine people endorsed campaign finance reform in 1996, they endorsed a voluntary, full, public funding system for candidates for all state races. That system has become the default system in Maine, and more than 80 percent of this current Legislature benefited from it.

In that initiative, Maine voters did not leave the funding for Maine Clean Elections to chance. They included a responsible funding mechanism that provided several separate revenue streams that would build the Fund over the four-year election cycle, ensuring that adequate funds would be available for both the Legislature and the gubernatorial candidates.

The law that Maine voters passed describes the Fund as a "special, dedicated, non-lapsing fund," which generates interest that accrues to the Fund. The largest source of revenue is the annual \$2 million allotment that is automatically transferred into the Fund on January 1 of each year. Other sources are the qualifying contributions that so many of us collect from supporters in our district. In addition to these statutory revenues, Maine taxpayers earmark another quarter of a million dollars each year by checking "yes" on their income tax form.

Maine voters passed this law and trusted future candidates to use the funds in a responsible manner. For the most part, this has been done. They also trusted future governors and legislators to meet the financial obligations laid out in the law, so that the program would truly, unduly burden the coffers of this state. Unfortunately the idea of "special, dedicated, non-lapsing fund" has been violated, and monies from the Fund have been borrowed to pay for other state programs. More than \$3 million has never been restored to the Fund; thus, the interest that would have been earned has not been accrued to the Fund. In order to balance budgets and still have money for the program, in 2004 and 2006, we have advanced funds from future annual transfers. These short-term fixes have kept the fund afloat, but they do not conform with the voters' mandates.

The cut that was proposed in this budget was even worse: It cuts more than half of the annual transfer for 2009. Combined with the previous raids on the fund, this cut is going to make it very difficult and challenging to fund the 2010 election cycle. I am sure that it is a great disappointment to all of us that we have not been able to keep faith with the Maine people, who have created and passed this groundbreaking, public funding system, not to mention the tens of thousands of Maine voters who willingly make qualifying contributions in each election cycle. Never before have so many individual Maine people from across the political and economic spectrum participated in funding for our elections.

Most of us use the Clean Election system, many of us would not run any other way, and some of us would not have run without it. Many of the goals of the Clean Election have been met, and I am very proud to say that our program is a model for other states and cities. I just hope that future budgets will restore funding and repair the responsible, incremental, sustainable funding mechanism that the Maine voters approved.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Wilton, Representative Saviello.

Representative **SAVIELLO**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I, too, want to rise today to thank everybody, because no doubt this has been a group effort.

I really want to thank my fellow members of the Rural Caucus for the early mornings and the time we put together. We remained professional, positive, and most of all persistent as we established our message and stayed with it. I would like to offer special recognition to Representative Cain, who truly wanted her position on this Committee, and attended five sessions in a row so she could become an official member of rural, Orono, Maine. I want to thank the Appropriations Committee for listening to us, and I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, because you provided real leadership in this and I mean that sincerely. Thank you to everybody, and we got a way to go, but we really got a good start. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Portland, Representative Adams.

Representative **ADAMS**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Men and Women of the House. It is our legislative intent that when in January 2008, as required under Section XXXX-46 of this bill, LD 499, the Commissioner of Education reports recommendations regarding the subject of this bill to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Those recommendations shall include, but not be limited to the following issues concerning home rule:

1. Protection of municipal charter and ordinance, hearing and voting procedures, and authority in budget validation matters and referendums. It is our belief that at a minimum such conflicts may be resolved by 20-A Section 1487 of this bill, among others; and
2. In the other potential conflicts between local provisions, charters, and ordinances in any provisions of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Representative from Newport, Representative Tardy.

Representative **TARDY**: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House. I am proud to support this budget and I certainly look forward to it being enacted; and I respectfully request that members from both sides of the aisle join me as we close a process that I would suggest was open, was respectful, and principle; and a process that brought honor to this institution, and most importantly a better budget to the people we represent. When we entered this