

Dear Honorable Members of the 126th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1509, "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2013, June 30, 2014 and June 30, 2015."

This veto is not one done lightly. When I submitted a balanced budget, I knew there would be areas of concern for many legislators. That is why we had nearly six months to work together and find a solution that would have made hard decisions while still protecting our most vulnerable. It was an opportunity for our State to do something great, to make real changes for the better. Unfortunately, it was an opportunity missed.

There are two groups harmed by this budget, the first being students. They are harmed by the education cuts forced through the process. This budget reduces funding for the Job's for Maine Graduates program. It reduces funding for our innovative programs, such as career and technical education and the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services. These cuts were supposedly to help support General Purpose Aid for our schools – aid that I have significantly increased since I took office. But money alone will not fix education in Maine. We need to give our students options, to recognize that each student is an individual and each one learns differently. Throwing more money at administration and overhead merely continues the status quo.

The second group harmed in this budget is our elderly. Some have said that "no one cares" about rate increases in our meals, lodging, and sales taxes. That could not be more wrong. Retired mill workers living on fixed incomes, elderly widows collecting social security, and our veterans who receive nothing more than their military pension – each of them care about this tax increase. We are already one of the highest taxed states in the nation. We have some of the lowest per capita income in the country. Now is not the time to ask Mainers to give more to fund government. It is time for us to make hard decisions and make real, structural cuts.

There is so much we can do. Our overly generous welfare programs can be reformed, cutting waste, fraud, and abuse. We can rethink our subsidies to cities and towns – Lewiston and Auburn are already doing much together and could do more. I have told everyone where the efficiencies lie in Waterville, Winslow, Oakland, and Fairfield. And often we forget that our counties can be partners to increase efficiencies and reduce cost in

local government. But we need to start somewhere, and that somewhere starts in Augusta.

There are some good pieces in this budget – I recognize that. Those pieces can be a starting point for us to go back to the table and do more. I have extended an offer to Legislative leadership that can avoid a shutdown in the near-term and give us time to eliminate these sales, meals, and lodging tax increases. However, while these increases remain in the budget, I cannot support it. Mainers cannot afford it and with them I will stand.

For these reasons, I return LD 1509 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage

Governor