



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

August 30, 2011

Although the Legislature is not in session, there is a lot of activity in Augusta. There are policy committees meeting to continue the work they were unable to finish with the June adjournment date. There are also many study groups that are meeting as a result of the need for more time to review and analyze a specific topic.

Included in these is the 12-member bi-partisan task force to identify at least \$25 million in government savings to bring the state budget into line. The group will analyze departments and agencies with the goal of prioritizing services, consolidating functions and eliminating duplication and inefficiencies. The task force will report their recommendations by Dec. 15th on how to achieve these savings.

In addition to the efforts of the Streamline and Prioritize Core Government Services Task Force, Governor LePage has asked his Commissioner of Department of Administration and Financial Services, Sawin Millett to reinforce to department heads the importance of zero-based budgeting for the next biennium. Zero-based budgeting is a planning and budgeting tool that uses cost-benefit analysis of programs and activities to improve the allocation of funds and staff resources in an organization. Governor LePage emphasized to commissioners that every program must be examined to calculate the need versus benefit to the State of Maine.

Outside of the fiscal issues, the Administration has also been active on the regulatory front. On August 24th, the Governor issued an Executive Order regarding Agency Rulemaking. In summary, it says that “no proposed state agency rules shall be published for public review and comment until the agency receives the approval of the Governor’s Office that such rulemaking may proceed.” The full context of the Order may be viewed: http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=Gov_Executive_Orders&id=288536&v=article2011

SPECIAL SESSION SCHEDULED

The Legislature is scheduled to convene for a Special Session on Tuesday, September 27th. The primary focus of the work is the “redistricting plan” for Maine. Congressional redistricting is required every decade to reflect updated U.S. Census data but the process in Maine has moved up two years because of a federal lawsuit and court order.

The 15-member bipartisan redistricting commission is tasked with finding a way to even out the population in Maine’s 2 congressional districts. That amounts to adding around 4000 people to District 2. The original Democratic plan, known as the Vassalboro plan, would move the town of Vassalboro from the first District into the second District. That would have meant more than 4,300 voters would switch districts. There is another round of meetings of the commission to see if they can develop a compromise. For more information on the maps and the plans being discussed, go to: http://www.kjonline.com/news/redistricting-panel-has-party-line-vote_2011-08-30.html.

Have a great fall and enjoy!

— Cheryl Timberlake
Executive Vice President