At the Legislature

2015

The long and winding road
Labor and workforce

• LD 487: Efforts to increase Maine’s $7.50 minimum wage failed, but a referendum drive is underway for a $12 minimum wage.

• LD 489: Right-to-work bill failed in both houses, in spite of the governor’s view that the change is crucial if Maine wants to attract new investment.

• LD 979 and 1373: The PLC assisted Speaker Mark Eves in a successful effort to put this should include lo, into the budget.

• LD 402: There was no support for this bonded labor bill as legislators recognized the need to recruit future loggers.
Taxation

- BETR fully funded in budget. LD 941 OPEGA review of tax expenditures.
- LD 30, 290, 432: A large fiscal note doomed the PLC’s effort to achieve fuel tax exemptions.
- The Maine estate tax exemption amount for individuals dying in or after 2016 is now pegged to equal the federal estate tax exemption.
- The Tree Growth proposal in the budget was defeated, but we must deal with the administration’s concerns about abuses to the system, whether real or perceived.
Fiber Supply

- Logger Training
- Healthy Forest Initiative
- Report on the Competitiveness of Minnesota’s Primary Forest Products Industry

Report on the Competitiveness of Minnesota’s Primary Forest Products Industry

December 2014

Submitted by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council
LD 640: A Council-sponsored bill designed to review and design a process to exclude certain activities (forestry) from species not considered to be imperiled from those activities (Northern long-eared bat). Prompted by the bat listing at both the federal and state level, a comparable exemption must be designed at the state level. This is important for the forest industry working forest operations. Carried over.
Energy

Costs

• LD 357: Resolve to study state demand response program 2016. Enacted.

• LD 881. Allows PUC to contract for LNG storage and distribution during peak winter months. Carried over.

• LD 1215: Carries out the Legislature’s intent regarding funding of Efficiency Maine. Enacted.

• LD 1398. Reduce electric rates for Maine businesses by increasing the amount of regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Trust Fund revenue returned to business ratepayers (15% to 55%). Carried over.

Renewables:

• LD 132: Remove the 100 megawatt limit for a hydroelectric generator. Died between the houses.

• LD 1263: Increased access to solar energy. Amended to create stakeholder process to develop alternative incentive. Enacted.

• LD 193: Establishes a stakeholder process to find alternatives to net energy billing. Enacted.

• LD 828: This wind power zoning bill initially focused on ‘restoring the rights of citizens of the UT.’ MFPC and its partners successfully negotiated a process to trigger hearings on re-zoning petitions.
Land

- LD 870: Amended the Maine Spruce Budworm Act to reflect a modern SBW management program and set the stage for rulemaking to design a variance procedure for harvesting in a severe SBW outbreak.

- LD 1378: Intended to force the governor to release LMF bonds being withheld until timber harvests increased on public lands. Bill failed. The budget funded a legislative group to review harvest and determine use of funds.

- LD 162, 309: Regulatory takings issue continued the debate.

- LD 750: Mining rules were reviewed for second time. Despite committee work, ENGO community worked to defeat.

- LD 791-828: Intended to remove regions from expedited wind zone without due process. LUPC to conduct hearing when petitioned by voting members of a township.

- LD 911: Wind power visual siting criteria submitted by AMC to further define visual standards. DEP to conduct rulemaking.

- LD 1074, 1325: Public easement damage becomes Class E crime and a public process to discontinue roads. Carried over
Maine Gov. Percival Baxter’s vision did not include national park
By Patrick Strauch, Special to the BDN
Posted May 26, 2015, at 1:33 p.m.

National park, or monument, a misguided attempt to provide a legacy for Quimby

Columnist erred in recommending Quimby pursue national monument designation.

Aiding the effort, the Quimby community is divided on the proposal. Some view it as a way to preserve the legacy of an iconic figure in Maine’s history, while others believe it would have a negative impact on the economy and local residents.

Sen. Susan Collins, Sen. Angus King and Rep. Bruce Poliquin were simply “wrong,” he added, to say that “initiative is essential for the success of any new endeavor.”

We advise Roxanne Quimby to take a shortcut around all that wrong thinking and aim for a national monument. “And here’s the thing about national monuments, as opposed to parks,” Rocks wrote. “They’re created by the president. No one else has any say.”

Amazingly, Roxie thinks that there’s a good thing.

Maine Voices: Quimby’s promises don’t sound right

pressherald.com/2015/06/21/maine-voices-quimbys-promises-dont-sound-right/

By Patrick Strauch

AUGUSTA — “I thought I would be appreciated,” Roxanne Quimby told Yankee magazine in 2008. “I mean, doesn’t everybody love a park?”

Only until people start asking questions. That’s why Quimby and park proponents have done everything in a multi-millionaire’s power to keep from giving us answers.
Federal issues

- Ozone Standards
- Biomass Carbon Neutrality
- Northern Long-Eared Bat
- Boiler MCAT
- H2B Guest Workers
- Clean Power plan
- Tax Reform
- Waters of the US (WOTUS)