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Keeping everything in perspective this week, the most important news is that Deputy Director Krysta West had an 8lbs. 6 oz baby boy named William James West on Tuesday. We wish them well while Krysta is out on leave.

The legislature is working diligently to finish committee work by next Friday the 26th. Committees will vote on the bills that should be carried over into the next session. The activity will then shift to the House and Senate where bills will be debated and voted on. There are still big-ticket items like the Part II Budget and whether parties can agree to a bond package. Other issues include Paid Family Leave, Tribal Sovereignty, and a host of Labor and Environmental bills. This is a lot to deal with prior to the planned June 21st adjournment and, there are rumors that the legislature may return in late summer to continue with unfinished business. We will keep you posted because your voices are important and make a difference.

Here's a look at the bills we engaged on this week in Augusta:

In the ACF Committee on Monday, we had several bill hearings. The first was **LD 1874**, "An Act to Support Maine Loggers' and Truckers' Right to Work in Maine by Improving Labor Standards. This bill turned into an indictment of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, with claims by the sponsor that the standards did not support labor rights. The Professional Logging Contractors also spoke against SFI in favor of the Forest Stewardship Council standard (**find their testimony here**). The SFI State Implementation Committee will weigh in on the issue. (**Our testimony can be found here**)

The second hearing was **LD 1849** "An Act to Ensure Fair and Timely Payment In the Harvesting of Forest Products". Senator Jackson testified that the provision for loggers to get scaled by an alternative method (e.g., "Butt Scaled") if loads were to remain unhailed for 15 days, was not being adhered to and suggested the MFS should perform spot checks of compliance. It's still unclear if the provision also includes a 15-day payment schedule. We disputed the concern that this was a widespread issue (**read our testimony**). We will provide more information at the work session.

The Tax Committee on Wednesday held a hearing on **LD 1648** "An Act to Make Changes to the Farm and Open Space Law." The Council **testified in opposition** to this bill because it needs further work. We seek input into the re-design of the program and also

need to ensure it compliments the Tree Growth Taxation program. We are willing to work with stakeholders if the bill is carried over into the next session.

The ENR Committee continues to discuss Mining bills. It appears that **LD 1363** "An Act to Support Extraction of Common Minerals by Amending the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act" will be the vehicle to a negotiated agreement enabling Lithium mining.

Also in ENR, **LD 1926** "An Act to Impose a Moratorium on New Point Source Waste Discharge Licenses On the Lower Presumpscot River" had a hearing. The Council is opposed to this legislation that could affect member mills located in that section of the river.

The Labor Committee met on Thursday for a hearing on **LD 1794** An Act to Enhance the Predictability of mandated Overtime for Pulp or Paper Manufacturing Facility Employees. Ryan McAvoy from SAPPI testified as the Council President against this bill along with Executive Committee member Scott Beal from Woodland Pulp (**our testimony can be found here**). The proposed bill would legislate overtime terms that are typically part of contract negotiations and could significantly disadvantage both employees and the companies they work for. In order to run operations 24/7, overtime is a requirement for pulp and paper mill jobs. In exchange, workers are paid well with generous benefits packages. Recent mill closures show what happens when expenses get too high. LD 1794 would undoubtedly drive up costs and exasperate the ongoing workforces shortages that are being felt all across the state.

The Week Ahead

Next Thursday the hearing on **LD 1964**, "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program" will be the focus of the business community. We are evaluating the language as we speak in preparation for the hearing on Thursday in front of the Labor Committee and will share talking points the first of next week. The bill is arriving at the ninth hour and involves many provisions. Complicating the debate will be the Maine People's Alliance Ballot Initiative which will be submitted if the legislation fails. The Council will be opposed to the bill because increasing costs and potential leaves of absence during at time of labor shortages will place a severe strain on our member companies and communities. We will provide more materials for your review early next week.

The full schedule is provided below. If you have any questions, or need help submitting testimony, please don't hesitate to reach out to **me** for assistance.

Best,



Bills scheduled for a public hearing

Public hearings are **livestreamed and archived here** on the Legislature's Website. Testimony will be accepted in-person, via Zoom or in writing. Committee meeting guidance for public/interested parties can be found **here**.

To sign up to testify via Zoom or submit written testimony, **click here**.

LD 1964 - "An Act To Implement The Recommendations Of The Commission To Develop A Paid Family And Medical Leave Benefits Program"

Public Hearing in LAH on Thursday May 25, 2023 @ 1:00 PM in Cross Building, Room 202

MFPC Position: Oppose

Sponsored by Sen. Matthea Daughtry, this bill implements a paid family and medical leave benefits program based on the recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program established by the 130th Legislature. The program provides up to 12 weeks of family leave and up to 12 weeks of medical leave to eligible covered individuals. No more than 16 weeks of family leave and medical leave in the aggregate may be taken in a 12-month period. An individual is eligible for leave under the program after earning at least 6 times the state average weekly wage in the preceding 4 calendar quarters prior to submitting an application or if the individual is self-employed and has elected to be part of the program. The maximum weekly benefit amount is capped at 120% of the state average weekly wage. The weekly benefit amount is 90% of the covered individual's average weekly wage. Covered individuals are required to file claims for benefits in accordance with rules adopted by the department administering the program and to provide certification that they qualify for family leave or medical leave. The bill establishes the Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund to support the program. The funds for administrative costs and payment of benefits come from payroll contributions of no more than 1% of wages shared by employers and employees, except that employers with fewer than 15 employees are not required to make employer contributions to the program. The bill also authorizes employers to provide these benefits through a private plan as long as the benefits for family and medical leave provided to their employees are the same as provided in the program. The bill establishes the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority to advise the administrator on the implementation and administration of the program. The bill requires payroll contributions to begin January 1, 2025 and benefit claims to be processed beginning January 1, 2026. The bill authorizes the Department of Economic and Community Development to conduct outreach with businesses about the paid family and medical leave benefits program. The bill requires the program to be reviewed under the State Government Evaluation Act in 2029.

Bills scheduled for a work session

Work Sessions are [livestreamed and archived here](#) on the Legislature's Website.

LD 1726 - "An Act To Build Maine's Economy By Supporting Child Care For Working Families"

Work Session in HHS on Wednesday May 24, 2023 @ 12:00 PM in Cross Building, Room 209

MFPC Position: Support

Sponsored by Senator Troy Jackson, LD 1726 would establish the Maine Child Care Scholarship Program within the Department of Health and Human Services to encompass the former child care subsidy program and new eligibility for child care providers. The bill directs the department to amend its procedures regarding eligibility and reimbursement, submit an annual report relating to child care subsidies to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters and to implement various departmental improvements to the child care subsidy program. The bill establishes the Child Care Task Force to make recommendations to the department regarding quality child care. The bill provides funding to increase eligibility and wages for child care services and to implement the improvements to child care subsidies. The bill also directs the department, by 2030, to implement a program to achieve affordable child care.

LD 1794 - "An Act To Enhance The Predictability Of Mandated

Overtime For Pulp Or Paper Manufacturing Facility Employees"

Work Session in LAH on Wednesday May 24, 2023 @ 10:00 AM in Cross Building, Room 202

MFPC Position: **Strong opposition**

Sponsored by Sen. Troy Jackson, this bill would place restrictions on mandatory overtime and schedule changes for employees of pulp or paper manufacturing facilities.

LD 1849 - "An Act To Ensure Fair And Timely Payment In The Harvesting Of Forest Products"

Work Session in ACF on Wednesday May 24, 2023 @ 9:00 AM in Cross Building, Room 214

MFPC Position: **Oppose**

Sponsored by Sen. Troy Jackson, LD 1849 would require the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry or a wood scaler under contract with the department to conduct random inspections to ensure that a contractor is paid within 15 days of weighing wood.

LD 1874 - "An Act To Support Maine Loggers' And Truckers' Right To Work In Maine By Improving Labor Standards"

Work Session in ACF on Wednesday May 24, 2023 @ 9:00 AM in Cross Building, Room 214

MFPC Position: **Oppose**

Sponsored by Sen. Troy Jackson, LD 1874 provides that the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry may obtain certification from a forest certification program for state land only if the program requires labor standards for logging and trucking.

LD 1918 - "An Act To Modernize Maine's Business Incentive Programs By Creating The Dirigo Business Incentives Program And Eliminating Certain Other Tax Incentive Programs"

Work Session in IDEA on Tuesday May 23, 2023 @ 1:00 PM in Cross Building, Room 206

MFPC Position: **Support**

Sponsored by Pres. Troy Jackson, this bill creates the Dirigo business incentives program to provide a tax credit to qualified businesses. The bill provides an exemption from the requirement for confidentiality of tax records for information disclosed as part of certain reports to the Department of Economic and Community Development and legislative committees regarding the Dirigo business incentives program. The bill extends the end date of the Pine Tree Development Zone program by one year, eliminates the Pine Tree Recreation Zone program and eliminates the Maine capital investment credit as of January 1, 2025. The bill prohibits issuing a certificate of approval for employment tax increment financing after December 31, 2024 and eliminates the employment tax increment financing benefits as of December 31, 2034.

Regulatory Calendar

Board of Licensure of Foresters

Who: Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation

What: Proposed rulemaking - Chapter 70: Qualifications for Forester License; Chapter

100: Code of Ethics and Chapter 70-A: Licensure by Endorsement pursuant to Public Law 2021, Chapter 167 An Act to Facilitate Licensure for Credentialed Individuals from Other Jurisdictions.

When: Thursday, May 25, 2023. Oral comments will be accepted at the public rulemaking hearing and written comments will be accepted until Monday, June 5, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

FMI: <https://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/board-licensure-foresters/home/board-meeting-information>

About MFPC



Since 1961, the Maine Forest Products Council has been the voice of Maine's forest economy. MFPC's members are landowners, loggers, truckers, paper mills, tree farmers, foresters, lumber processors and the owners of more than 8 million acres of commercial forestland, but they are also bankers, lawyers and insurance executives. The Council represents members at the Maine Legislature throughout the state, in Washington D.C. and the U.S.

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