



STATE REPRESENTATIVE SUSAN MORISSETTE

*Proudly Serving the People of District 54
Winslow and Benton (part)*

PLEASE CONTACT ME AT:

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Dear Friends & Neighbors of Winslow,

Businesses and families have all struggled over the past decade to prioritize their budgets appropriately, working to compensate for a staggering economy. During the First Legislative session of 2011, State government began to take vital steps toward more responsible spending and less government interference in your life and business. This is called good governance. The 125th Legislature was able to pass bipartisan tax, regulatory, welfare reform and pass THREE budgets with near unanimous support. This is the way Maine citizens want their government to function. While encouraging and promoting a positive business climate. We also changed how state government spends YOUR hard earned money.

Good government means more than passing laws. It is about attentive management and tough oversight. It means saying "no" once in a while. It is a task for those who are inherently skeptical of government. Good governance is about competence. It is about relentlessly pursuing the best value for the taxpayers and demanding the highest level of integrity and accountability from those who have been given the highest level of public trust. Good governance is making a comeback in Augusta.

The Second session of the 125th Legislature is fast approaching and we will again be faced with some very difficult financial decisions that will need to be thoughtfully deliberated in a bipartisan way. These decisions must be fair and financially prudent so that all Mainers can trust that their money is being handled responsibly.

Thank you for the honor of representing you in Augusta. Please feel free to call upon me anytime if you have questions or concerns about the contents of this or any other matter pertaining to your State government.

Sincerely,
Susan Morissette

TAX REFORM

The Largest Tax Cut in Maine's History -- Passed with Strong Bipartisan Support

With one of the heaviest tax burdens in the country, it was obvious that tax reform was vital to help restore Maine's economy. The Legislature and Governor LePage worked to provide relief to stimulate job growth, while allowing Maine people to retain more of their hard-earned money. Members of the Taxation Committee delivered a package consisting of the largest tax cut in Maine history – more than \$150 million. Their efforts became part of the biennial budget, which was passed by more than 2/3 of the membership in both the House of Representatives and Senate.

Details of the plan include the elimination of the 2% income tax bracket and a higher personal exemption, thus removing approximately 70,000 lower income filers from the income tax rolls. Moreover, the top income tax bracket is reduced from 8.5% to 7.95%. The State Alternative Minimum Tax has been done away with, and Maine's estate tax is reduced to help preserve family farms and businesses. In addition, meals at seniors' retirement facilities will no longer be taxed.

Maine taxpayers will save more than \$60 million a year by conforming personal exemptions to federal standards.



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HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM

More Options – Reduced Premiums – Improved Quality –
Guaranteed Access

Maine's health insurance system has been reformed to broaden the market and ease regulations that have caused our health insurance rates to be some of the highest in the nation. Policymakers enacted meaningful, substantive changes to increase competition that will likely reduce premiums and promote higher quality. Public Law 90 is designed to do just that.

Small businesses are permitted to form an association captive insurance company to obtain better rates for their workers, while more Maine residents will be able to afford private coverage. Demand for the option to purchase health insurance across state lines has been overwhelming, thus we acknowledged constituents' outcry by giving you the chance to do so beginning in 2014.

All of these improvements occur while guaranteeing coverage for all individuals through the Guaranteed Access Plan, regardless of their health status.



WELFARE REFORM

Helping People to Better Help Themselves – Passed with
Strong Bipartisan Support

The Legislature made changing Maine's welfare culture a priority. Under new rules passed this session, a five-year limit has been imposed on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, bringing us in line with federal guidelines. However, rules are to be developed to deal with special exceptions such as the elderly and disabled.

TANF recipients convicted of a drug felony will now be required to take a drug test in order to receive benefits. Those who fail have the right to appeal. Another failed test will result in termination of TANF benefits unless they enroll in and fully participate in treatment mandated by the Department of Health and Human Services. Those found in violation of TANF rules will lose adult benefits on the first offense, while one's entire family will be sanctioned on the second offense. Finally, the Legislature put an end to MaineCare (Medicaid) benefits for legal non-citizens unless they meet strict hardship criteria, and also stopped legal non-citizens from receiving TANF and food stamps. However, current recipients are grand fathered for TANF cash assistance and food stamps.

These sweeping welfare reforms began the process of changing the norm in Maine; however, more work still needs to be done to further reduce costs and promote self-dependency. Lawmakers will continue to make this a focal point during the Second Regular Session.

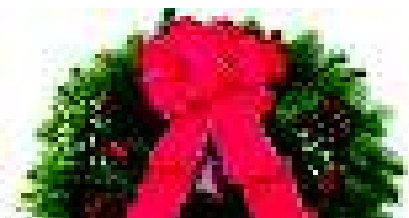
REGULATORY REFORM

Eliminating "Red Tape" – Passed with Near
Unanimous Bipartisan Support

L.D. 1, "An Act To Ensure Regulatory Fairness and Reform," is the result of several public forums held across the State where a select group of bipartisan legislators met with business owners, workers, community leaders, farmers, fishermen, and other entrepreneurs. The overall theme was clear: "government should work with job creators instead of standing in their way." The legislation streamlines government regulations and eliminates unnecessary "red tape," while maintaining Maine's pristine environment and quality of life.

Specifically, it creates incentives through reduced penalties for businesses to voluntarily disclose and correct environmental violations, allows legislative committees to direct agencies to review specific rules for relevancy, clarity, and appropriateness, creates a stakeholder group to review options for paperwork reductions for businesses, establishes a new business ombudsman program to help business owners comply with State regulations, and creates the office of "Special Advocate" within the Secretary of State's office to assist small businesses in seeking resolutions to agency actions that may result in the closure of the business or termination of employees.

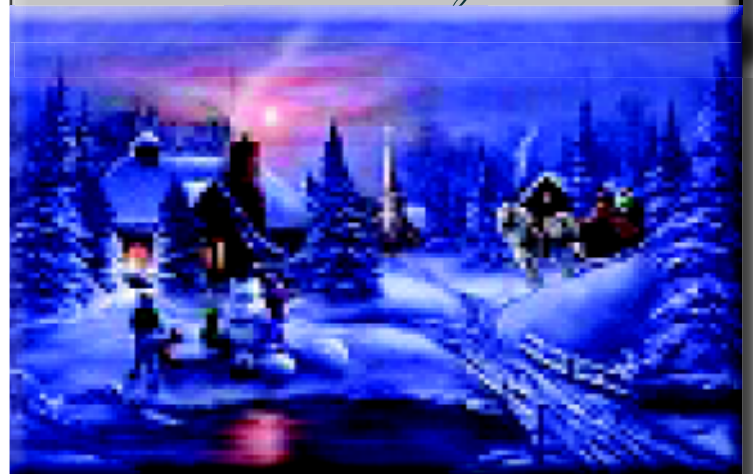
With a persistent focus on job creation and retention, L.D. 1 illustrates what can be done when divergent interests work towards the same goal.



From our family to all the families of Winslow and Benton, may your Christmas and holidays be filled with joy and peace and all the blessings this great country holds.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

*Representative Susan Morissette
and Family*



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