

## **Ernie Hilton**

Thank you Peter, and thank you for coming Governor, we certainly appreciate it, we all appreciate you having been here. I'm Ernie Hilton, I come from Starks, a small town, poor town, poor county; Somerset County. I too like Hoddy am a life long republican; in fact both my parents were big box republicans as it were. I think the Governor probably knows what that means, many people here probably don't.

I'm an attorney and engineer in practice at Madison. My background, though, is in mining engineering. Having worked for my father in his coal business I went down to western Pennsylvania and worked there in Ohio and west Virginia in the coal mines, and later working for a mining consulting firm as an engineer, had occasion to study surface mining throughout the country, including mountain top removal in West Virginia. I can barely describe for you the economic and social dislocation that comes from that, let alone the environmental aspects of it. Even now we're seeing from a less than enlightened enforcement and development rules in the gas shales of Pennsylvania the major disruptions of groundwater and other issues.

I'm here to attest to not only the environment but the extreme social disruption that comes from these sorts of approaches to environmental regulations. These dislocations can occur not just with large scale impacts such as those, but even from the small, almost imperceptible issues, such as the BPA issue and others that we've heard all down the panel here. I'm concerned when I see, as I did yesterday, a list of some of the statutes which are pending before the legislature, such as shoreline zoning and LURC, and it strikes me as being a race to the bottom approach to our environment. You call for a major rewrite and relaxation of environmental rules but in fact the principle deterrent to job creation in Maine I don't believe is the environmental rules; rather the principle attraction to Maine as was spoken of earlier is the bring-in of quality jobs is the quality of place to be had here. As a small business man myself, the principle deterrent to doing business here is the high cost of health care and insurance. I was a member of the board of environmental protection for 9 and a half years, chairman of it for the last year, my wife Glenn is the chair currently of the LURC board, during that period, the period of the Baldacci period, over 10,000 permits by rule were issued for small projects, there was five and a half billion dollars in major projects permitted by the DEP alone, and that of course doesn't account for the myriad projects, massive amounts of projects, that don't even fall within DEP's scope but rather fall within just local review or LURC review.

I spent 18 years on a local school board, and I can tell you that what is needed here in Maine is not a relaxation of environmental rules, but a reinvigoration of education. We need to pore more effort, and not necessarily more money, but more leadership and moral authority, the kind of leadership that you can provide, into educating our kids and just as importantly educating the parents of our kids in the importance and sheer joy of learning, and of setting goals and attaining them. I would suggest that your goal, on leaving the governorship, and going back to Marden's, and I live on Route 2, and I know that there's a substantial electorate base for you throughout the state, but certainly along Route 2, your goals should be on leaving the governorship and returning to Marden's of having a

difficult time finding workers because the graduates have all found something more fulfilling to do. And quite frankly, I think that would be a major source of satisfaction to you, being the Governor of this great state.

Thank you very much.

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