

## **Governor LePage's remarks at Environmental Roundtable – January 20, 2011**

Thank you.

First of all, I would like to say that the one thing that I heard today that I don't agree with is: I will not be returning to Marden's.

And secondly there were some comments made about the air pollution in the State of Maine and I am very, very sensitive to the pulmonary problems the state has. But I will venture to argue that most of the bad air that we suffer with in the summer does not come from Maine, it comes from other parts of the country, which as your governor you're going to hear a lot about because I'm going to be challenging some of those states.

As for the environment, and there's several things I did hear today, is stewardship, fishing, farming, forestry. And if you've really followed what I've been saying through the whole campaign, is that that is the foundation of the state of Maine. That is what had at one time made Maine a very prosperous state and will once again make Maine a very prosperous state. However, there are things that we have a very difficult time looking ahead.

Currently we are ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation in business climate. We're 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in regulatory environment. We are 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation in cost of doing business. We are 16<sup>th</sup> in the nation in quality of life. And the people of Maine make an average of 80% of the national average per capita income in this country. We are the oldest state in the country because we have a very difficult time convincing our kids to stay here and earn a living here.

Now, I was born in Maine. In fact, I think I'm the thirteenth generation in North America. We spent about 200 years in Canada and 200 years here in this country. So I'm very, very proud, particularly of the Northeast. I believe that our forests should be a working forest, and what I mean by a "working forest" and when I met with the people from the Land's for Maine's Future, I asked them one simple question. A working forest is a forest that has many, many uses. And one of the uses that I think is important is our wildlife. So I asked them, "How many deer yards do you own?" They don't own any. I'm encouraging them to invest in deer yards because wildlife is very important in Maine, and up north we're losing all our deer. We *have* to protect the deer herd because it's important for hunting. It's important for tourism. And it's part of our lives.

As far as fishing – you know, I have the greatest admiration for lobster fishermen – one of the toughest jobs in addition to a woodcutter. Now, wood cutting has been automated in the last twenty years, but the lobster fisherman goes out there every day. I would like to see the Maine brand be maintained for Maine lobster. And I heard that there's quite a few fishermen out there that make a living off lobsters. But do you know that sixty percent of the lobsters in Maine go to Canada, are processed, and sent back as a product of Canada, not a product of Maine. We need to work on that. We have to make the Maine

lobster become the Maine lobster, and brand it forever as one of our major success stories here in the State of Maine.

I got a letter today from a very long-standing and successful lumber company telling me that they can't buy logs in Maine. They're very, very concerned. But every day, logs go right by their mill into Canada. We need to address that issue too. Between half of the logs that are cut are exported to foreign countries, the added value is placed in the foreign countries and they come back here and we buy it as a finished product. While our people in Maine, Maine people, are earning eighty percent of the national average. These are the issues that I'm concerned with.

Now let me tell you what I think about the environment. I believe that those who are good stewards of their land, who have a stake in the end game, are much better stewards of our resources than people who sit on the sidelines. I don't believe that the forest industry is bad. I don't believe the fishing industry's bad. I don't believe the agriculture industry's bad. What I think is in the state of Maine is that the regulations we have are good, strong, and are needed. What we have done in the State of Maine is we've forgotten to use a little bit of common sense. We forgot to take science as our guide for good environmental regulations because not all our regulations are based in science and they should be. The other thing we've done is we've become adversarial to the private sector, and we need not do that because ultimately, at the end of the day – you've heard it here around this table – is everyone needs to make a living. And the folks here making a living, they want to protect the resource, they want to be good stewards, they want good, strong environmental laws, and I believe in real, strong environmental laws. And I would never challenge a strong environmental law that's based in science. And that we're going to enforce them. And I believe in flexibility. I believe in working in a partnership atmosphere with the private sector, and if they break a regulation, I think the penalty should be severe. But if they're good stewards and they're working with the government as a partner, then I think we can move forward as a state and not have "us" and "them" because that is our problem.

Now we've been holding red tape audits around the state, and the regulatory environment is being hit hard, but not because the regulations are too tough – that's never the argument. The argument is they're adversarial; they're not friendly; some of them make no common sense. I'll give you one that people are just absolutely – and it's in the agricultural industry. Now whether or not we – and I do agree there's an organic industry, and there's the traditional industry. I think there's room for both, and we need to make room for both. But one of the things that I heard from potato farmers is there's a new regulation in the State of Maine that you have to give 90 day notice before you spray your crop. Now, our growing season is 130 days. If halfway through the season you find that there's a disease that's hit your potatoes, you can't spray them because you don't have 90 days left. Now we need to think about that. That's where science and common sense need to sort of communicate. Because if farmers are saying that once we plant and we're into a month less season, if the potatoes get hit with some disease, we're all over. We've got to let them die. And that's not realistic.

So, good science, good technology, common sense, and a partnering atmosphere and attitude is what we in Maine need to do to move the state forward. And that's the only way that we're going to solve some of the problems that we have. Now, major issues that we need to address that I heard today: 1. Health care costs – one of the highest in the country; 2, Energy costs – clearly in the top five in the country. And, an atmosphere that our educational system, which is, I will tell you, is very sad. We have an education system that 48% of every child that comes out of high school going into the community college system in the State of Maine needs remedial training before they can take college courses. That's my number one objective, is get our education system under control, eliminate the remediation that we have to do once they get out of high school to get into college because that is where the money's being wasted. We need to do the job correctly the first time.

And so, I am very, very strong on the environment. I spent 25 years of my career in the forest products industry, and there is nothing better than a healthy forest. Thank you.

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