

## Maine Legislative Update

After working through the night Wednesday, Maine legislators completed their work just before 6:00 am on Thursday morning. Session is now adjourned "until the call of the Presiding Officers" which should occur later this month or in early May in the form of a "veto day" to allow override votes on any bills vetoed by the Governor. In the meantime, specific logistical details about additional session day(s) remain in flux. Here are some additional highlights from this week in Maine politics and policy:

**Maine Legislature adjourns with many bills left unresolved.** The Maine Legislature adjourned on Thursday morning with many issues left on the table. Many bills were stranded as "Unfinished Business" in the House and Senate, including bills to ban the sale of flavored tobacco products, institute nurse to patient ratios in hospitals, and enact an electronic right to repair law. In addition, the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee has over 200 bills on the Special Appropriations Table awaiting funding. Lastly, there are many study proposals on the Special Study Table, which is overseen by the Legislative Council. In order to advance any of those proposals, the members of Legislative Council would need to meet and vote to fund certain studies. It remains unclear whether the Legislature will take action on any of these remaining bills. While there was some talk on Wednesday about the Legislature potentially advancing additional bills from the Special Appropriations Table and Special Study Table when they return for "veto day," it remains unclear whether this is allowed. In addition, the Legislature did pass a Joint Order on Thursday morning carrying over any unresolved bills to any Special Session of the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature. In order to return for a Special Session, the Legislature would need agreement from both Democrats and Republicans, or would otherwise need to be called back by the Governor. At this time, both of those paths seem unlikely. If the Legislature is unable to deal with these unresolved bills on "veto day," and they do not return for a Special Session, the bills will die.

**Legislature passes Supplemental Budget with additional funding for storm damage repairs.** On Monday of this week, the Legislature's Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee met to amend controversial parts of the Supplemental Budget bill advanced last week by majority Democrats on the Committee. Last week's version included cuts to transportation and a roll-back of pension tax relief for State employees. With those issues fixed, the budget then moved to the full Legislature for approval on Wednesday. Lawmakers worked through the night, continuing to negotiate portions of the Supplemental Budget, and the House and [Senate ultimately gave final approval to the proposal early Thursday morning](#). Lawmakers in both chambers debated for hours whether to include additional funding in the Supplemental Budget proposal beyond what was advanced by Democrats on the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Both the House and Senate voted to add \$60 million in storm relief funding into the proposal, which had originally been advanced through the Legislature in [LD 2225](#). The Senate also considered adding \$7 million in additional spending for school support staff and ed tech pay, mental health and substance use services, funding for Maine Veterans' Homes, and funding for recruitment and retention bonuses for State employees. While the Senate adopted this amendment shortly before midnight, the House opted for an amendment that only included the \$60 million in storm relief funding, which was the amendment also supported by the Governor. The Senate later agreed to adopt the House version of the budget, leading to its final enactment. The Governor stated that she was "pleased" with the proposal advanced by the Legislature and will sign the budget into law.

**Bond proposals enacted in House and Senate.** On Wednesday, the Senate voted to enact three bond proposals that were enacted by the House last Thursday, each garnering the necessary 2/3 vote to pass in both chambers. Two weeks ago, the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee finalized and voted to advance the three bond proposals to the full Legislature. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of [LD 416](#), a bond to invest in research and development infrastructure in the amount of \$25 million; [LD 912](#), a bond to restore historic community buildings in the amount of \$10 million; and [LD 1156](#), a \$30 million bond to develop and maintain outdoor recreational trails. The three bond proposals will now be placed on the ballot in the upcoming November election for voters to weigh in on.

**Legislature passes several firearm safety proposals, fails to hold vote on "red flag" bill.** On Thursday, the [Legislature gave final approval to Governor Janet Mills' package of firearm safety proposals](#). The proposal, [LD 2224](#), would expand background checks on advertised gun sales, strengthen Maine's "yellow flag law" for removing guns from individuals with significant mental health issues, and fund violence prevention programs. The bill received initial approval from the House and Senate in recent days and will now be sent to Governor Mills' desk where she is expected to sign it into law. Additionally, the Legislature adjourned early Thursday morning [without considering a proposed "red flag" bill](#), effectively killing it. The House was scheduled to take up the bill on Wednesday but never did. The [Legislature's Judiciary Committee advanced an amended version of the proposal](#) last week, which would have provided families a path to restrict firearms access for people who pose a risk to themselves or others without needing a mental health evaluation.

**Legislature kills proposed data privacy bills.** On Wednesday, the [Senate voted down a proposal to strengthen the State's consumer data privacy protections, with 15 Senators in support of passage and 18 opposed](#). The Senate's final vote to oppose the bill was bipartisan with all three members of Democratic leadership, along with Sen. Joseph Baldacci (D-Penobscot), joining all but one Senate Republicans - Sen. Richard Bennett (R-Oxford) - in opposing the legislation. The bill, [LD 1977](#), which was sponsored by Rep. Maggie O'Neil (D-Saco) and was supported by majority Democrats on the Legislature's Judiciary Committee, would have applied some of the most restrictive limitations on the collection and use of consumer data that is traceable to an individual or a device, while excluding a number of entities such as nonprofits, hospitals, financial

institutions, and educational institutions. The Senate vote came [the day after the House voted 75-70 to pass the bill](#). A competing bill, [LD 1973](#), which was advanced by minority Republicans on the Judiciary Committee, proposed treating consumer data in a manner more similar to the laws of a dozen other states, but with fewer entity exemptions. That bill was rejected by both chambers on Wednesday.

\*\*\*\*\*

We hope everyone has a restful weekend and enjoys the lovely spring weather. Since the Legislature adjourned yesterday for the moment, the House and Senate are not scheduled to be in session next week. Both the House and Senate will convene in the coming weeks to conduct any override votes, if necessary, and possibly engage in other work; however, no such date has been set. Until then, stay safe and be well!

---

## Printed Legislation