

Maine Legislative Update

The Maine Legislature officially adjourned its First Special Session early Wednesday morning after working through the night - over a month after many had aimed for the Legislature to wrap up. Lawmakers reconvened on Tuesday to finish their review of the bills that advanced from the Special Appropriations Table two weeks ago, and to conduct override votes on the Governor's two recent vetoes - both of which were ultimately sustained. Now, session is finally over for the year, though we do expect some committees to meet later this fall. Here are some updates from the week in Maine politics and policy:

Legislature sustains Governor Mills' most recent vetoes; voters to weigh in on one proposal in November. On Tuesday, the Maine House [voted 61-61 to override](#) Governor Janet Mills' veto of [LD 398](#), falling short of the 2/3 support required. Similarly, lawmakers [voted 73-50 to override](#) the Governor's veto of [LD 1610, meaning that veto was also sustained](#). LD 398, which was sponsored by Speaker of the House Rachel Talbot Ross (D-Portland), proposed to make agricultural employees and seasonal farm employees subject to Maine laws that limit mandatory overtime and include agricultural employees in Maine's minimum wage law. In her [veto letter](#) to legislators last week, the Governor stated that she "reluctantly" vetoed the bill, but she had concerns about the potential for unintended negative impacts of the bill on farmworkers and farms. Upon her veto being upheld, the Governor signed an [executive order](#) establishing a formal stakeholder group to address these issues with the ultimate goal of submitting a Governor's bill in 2024. LD 1610 was a citizen-initiated bill that [proposed to prohibit business entities owned in whole or in part by foreign governments from attempting to influence referendum campaigns through campaign donations or other types of "electioneering."](#) The Governor stated in her [veto letter](#) last week that she supports reducing foreign influence in local elections; however, the language of the bill raised First Amendment questions and would potentially prohibit Maine-based businesses that have a small share of foreign government ownership from participating in ballot campaigns. Because the veto of LD 1610 was sustained, voters will now weigh in on the referendum question in November.

President Biden visits Maine. On Friday, [President Joe Biden visited Auburn to discuss his economic policies and manufacturing gains made during his administration](#). Governor Janet Mills met the President at the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport and accompanied him to Auburn Manufacturing, Inc., where the President delivered remarks focused on highlighting investments into local economies and creating manufacturing jobs in the state. Senator Angus King, Congresswoman Chellie Pingree, and Congressman Jared Golden were also in attendance, along with Maine Senate President Troy Jackson, Speaker of the House Rachel Talbot Ross, state Senator Eric Brakey, Auburn Mayor Jason Levesque and Lewiston Mayor Carl Sheline. In addition to making remarks, the President also signed an executive order to prioritize the Administration's policy of "invent it here, make it here." The executive order increases the incentive to manufacture new inventions in the United States when those inventions are developed using taxpayer dollars. Further, the executive order also improves transparency and encourages the expansion of domestic production for critical industries. The visit marks the President's first visit to Maine [since 2018](#), when he visited Portland.

Lawmakers approve compromise offshore wind project proposal. On Tuesday, [lawmakers endorsed a compromise bill to jumpstart offshore wind projects](#). The proposal, [LD 1895](#), is sponsored by Sen. Mark Lawrence (D-York), and aims to start Maine's offshore wind industry by instituting rules regarding port and project construction. Governor Janet Mills [vetoed an earlier version of the bill because of protections for organized labor that she said were too broad](#). However the Governor and unions [reached a deal](#) earlier this month, and it was approved by the Maine Senate on Tuesday by a vote of 19-8. The compromise bill leaves half the jobs in the nascent industry for non-union companies and half for unionized companies if they can fill them in a way that prioritizes hiring Maine workers. The bill now heads to the Governor's desk, where it is likely to be signed into law.

Governor Mills "pocket vetoes" legislation to change Maine flag. On Wednesday, [Governor Janet Mills issued a "pocket veto" of legislation that will let Maine voters decide whether to change Maine's state flag](#). Normally, the governor has ten days to sign a bill, or it automatically becomes law, but that changes when the Legislature adjourns for the year, as it did early Wednesday morning. In that case, the governor is able to delay bills until the Legislature reconvenes and either sign or veto them at that time. This is also called a "pocket veto." Governor Mills will have until the fourth day the Legislature is back in session in January to sign or veto the bill. Governor Mills' pocket veto will have the effect of delaying the referendum until November 2024. The Governor's spokesperson, Ben Goodman, said that "rather than sign the bill and rush the question to ballot in little more than three months," the Governor will "allow time for robust public debate and discussion on all sides of the issue." The [initial flag proposal, LD 86](#) - which was sponsored by former Rep. Sean Paulhus (D-Bath) - would have changed the current flag featuring the 1909 state seal design back to the "lone pine tree" version, but an [amendment from Sen. Eric Brakey \(R-Androscoggin\)](#) will instead let voters decide the issue.

Mills Administration names new Maine CDC Director. On Thursday, [Governor Janet Mills' Administration named Dr. Puthiery Va as the next director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Dr. Va received her medical degree from the University of New England, and is currently the director of the Division of Public Health in Chinle, Arizona, with the Indian Health Service Navajo Area Chinle Service Unit. Prior to joining the Indian Health Service, Dr. Va was an epidemic intelligence service officer for the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, where she led research examining the impact of sodium intake on health and its relation to chronic diseases. Dr. Va replaces Dr. Nirav Shah, who [resigned in March to become principal deputy director of the U.S. CDC in Atlanta](#). Dr. Va will begin her new role as Maine's top public health official on August 28.

We hope everyone has a relaxing weekend and enjoys the sunny summer weather. While the Legislature is officially adjourned, a number of legislative committee meetings are likely to take place over the fall. We do not anticipate any meetings in the next several weeks, although that could change. Our Legislative Update will likely become more intermittent in the coming weeks as we take a break from legislative activity, but rest assured we will share any important updates that arise. Until next time, stay safe and be well!

Printed Legislation

L.D.s 2019 to 2019 have been printed. The following bill(s) appear to be of interest to Maine County Commissioners Association