



Senate President TROY JACKSON

DISTRICT 1

Proudly representing the people of northern Aroostook County



Honoring Jack Doody of Caribou Scout Troop 184 for earning the rank of Eagle Scout.



Inducting Lise Pelletier of Fort Kent and Rep. John Martin of Eagle Lake into the Maine Franco-American Hall of Fame.



Touring the Forest Bioproducts Research Institute at UMaine and learning about new opportunities for the forest products industry.

Dear friend,

Back in December, I gathered with my colleagues at the Augusta Civic Center to be sworn into office. To put it bluntly, we had no idea what to expect from 2021. But one thing was clear: Maine people and small businesses were counting on us to get our state back on track.

Mainers don't care whether we are Republican, Democrat or Independent. All they care about is whether or not we deliver for them. Mainers work hard, show up on time and get the job done. Their lawmakers should do the same whether it's reining in the price of prescription drugs or fighting for property tax relief.

This year, we wasted no time getting to work. Here are the highlights:

- **Delivering on property tax relief.** We expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit, bolstered the Homestead Exemption Program, restored revenue sharing and so much more.
- **Delivering on 55% for education funding.** This marks the first time Maine has met the 55 percent threshold mandated by Maine voters in 2004. This will ensure Maine schools have the resources they need while shifting the cost off of towns and property taxpayers.
- **Delivering \$300 to working Mainers.** We voted to provide a one-time \$300 "hazard payment" to eligible Mainers who worked throughout the pandemic.

Finally, we grew the Rainy Day Fund to \$492 million — a historic high.

This session, we also made it easier for Mainers to participate in the legislative process. Instead of taking time off from work and driving to Augusta, folks in Aroostook County and other areas could testify remotely by phone or Zoom. I hope this continues well into the future.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns. It's truly an honor to represent you and your family in Augusta.

Sincerely,

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Supporting seniors and veterans

Maine seniors and veterans are always at the top of our agenda. Unfortunately, Maine nursing homes and senior living facilities have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, we prioritized funding for nursing homes and long-term care facilities to ensure they can continue serving the individuals in their care. We also raised MaineCare wage rates for direct care workers.

To help Maine seniors remain in their homes, I helped revive a program that allows the state to pay property taxes for eligible seniors and recoup the costs later.

I proudly voted for bills to support our state's veterans. We made it easier for veterans and their families to move to Maine and find jobs, invested in mental health services for veterans, and reduced their property tax burden.



It was an honor to be recognized by Commander Leroy McKenzie and the Smart-Soucie American Legion Post 176 in Madawaska.

Protecting rural industries

Our farmers and foresters have formed the backbone of our economy for generations. This year, lawmakers passed a number of laws to support these rural, heritage industries.

We invested \$20 million in farms and food processors to drive growth and \$20 million to support jobs in the forest products industry. We also bolstered a program that allows food pantries to buy from Maine farmers. This supports our farmers while reducing hunger.

I sponsored a new law that creates a tax credit for paper companies, like Twin Rivers in Madawaska, that provide good-paying jobs and invest in long-term growth. With the increased demand for PFAS free-packaging, this tax credit will help companies like Twin Rivers lead the nation in the production of sustainable packaging while also supporting working families in The County.

We also passed a law to protect Maine trucking jobs. For too long companies have violated federal cabotage laws by hiring cheaper Canadian labor for in-state point-to-point hauling jobs and Maine workers have paid the price. Now, this new law will hold large landowners and trucking companies accountable for knowingly violating the law.

Finally, we passed a law to provide incentives and low-to-no-interest loans to strengthen the state's forest products industry and lower energy costs through biomass.



I'm proud of the new law we passed with the help of the Aroostook County Action Program to increase access to child care in Maine.

Putting Maine kids first

Investing in Maine kids and families is an investment in Maine's future. That's why I introduced the Kids First plan – two laws designed to improve access to reduce student hunger and improve access to child care. Our kids shouldn't have to worry about where their next meal will come from. Yet, too many kids go to school hungry and are expected to learn on an empty stomach. **The first law ensures that all students have access to free school meals – no questions asked. The other law will work to end Maine's child care deserts. It expands access to child care by working with existing providers to open child care slots, train staff and improve wages.**

Helping young Mainers identify pathways to good-paying jobs is an easy way to set them up for success while growing our workforce. It's why we also invested in Jobs for Maine Graduates, career exploration and career and technical education programs that lead to good-paying jobs or higher education. Lastly, we put funding towards the award-winning Maine School of Science and Mathematics in Limestone to help weather the effects of the pandemic.

Championing workers and small businesses

After a tough year, I made it a priority to make it easier for workers and small businesses to rebound. **We passed laws to support Maine's restaurant industry, inspired by the businesses like First Mile Brewing Company in Fort Kent who reached out for help.** We opened up new economic recovery grants for businesses still struggling to rebound and ensured businesses won't be penalized for increased unemployment caused by the pandemic.

We invested in high-speed, reliable internet. Lawmakers also invested in programs to address long-standing workforce shortages, which will help Maine workers find good-paying careers, and help businesses find qualified workers. We also worked to help new businesses open their doors and expand by creating a grant program, offering technical assistance and cutting red tape. Finally, to recognize those who worked through difficult and even dangerous conditions during the pandemic, we included funding for a "hazard pay" check this year. More than 500,000 workers will get a \$300 check later this year.

“When I had an issue with the state, Sen. Jackson stopped by my child care facility in Caribou, listened to my story and then quickly resolved the issue. He then introduced a bill to increase access to quality, child care in Maine. I’m grateful that he’ll continue supporting child care providers, families and businesses in Augusta. He knows there is more work to do.”

—Jordyn Rossignol, Caribou



Speaking at a press conference to talk about our efforts this year to lower prescription drug costs and improve access to health care.

Lowering health care and prescription drug costs

Far too often, quality affordable health care is out of reach for working class people and their families. It’s something I think about every day. It’s why I sponsored a new law establishing the COVID-19 Patient Bill of Rights, which requires state-regulated health care plans to cover the cost of testing, screening and vaccination. However, the fight to lower health care costs didn’t stop there.

I proudly sponsored a new law that establishes the Office of Affordable Health Care to rein in outrageous health care spending. **My colleagues and I took on Big Pharma to create an emergency insulin program, improve drug price transparency and increase access to life-saving HIV prevention medication.** We also provided funding for the low-cost drugs for Maine’s elderly program to reduce the burden of prescription drug costs on our seniors.

I also worked to ensure that health care coverage plans actually cover the needs of Maine people. We expanded access to preventive dental care and made sure that both new and expectant mothers have access to vital care to ensure the health and safety of themselves and their children. At the same time, we defeated proposals to allow junk insurance plans to be sold to Mainers.

Finally, we passed a law ensuring access to telehealth care beyond the pandemic. Telehealth is a game-changer, providing timely, quality care to older and rural Mainers. We still have work to do but these laws will save lives.

Delivering for Maine property taxpayers

Hardworking Maine families and seniors have long raised the alarm about skyrocketing property taxes. It’s why I have made it my mission to continue delivering meaningful relief.

Here’s what we did this year:

- **Funded education at 55 percent:** For the first time since voters mandated the state pay 55 percent of public education costs, the state has fulfilled its obligation to students, teachers and taxpayers. As the son of a public school teacher, I know that this historic funding will help schools best serve our kids and shift costs away from property taxpayers.
- **Restored revenue sharing by 2023:** We laid out a plan to fully restore revenue sharing by 2023. This influx in funds reduces the burden property taxpayers have to pay for essential municipal services, like paying our first responders, maintaining our parks and plowing.
- **Boosted the Homestead Exemption Program:** We agreed to fully reimburse municipalities for the Homestead Exemption program. This program allows residents to deduct \$25,000 off the value of their home before calculating their property tax bill. To benefit, Mainers must file an application with their local tax assessor by April 1.

- **Expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit to cover 95,000 Mainers:** We temporarily increased the Property Tax Fairness Credit, boosting the maximum benefit from \$750 to \$1,000 for eligible working families and \$1,200 to \$1,500 for seniors. We also permanently expanded eligibility so it will cover an estimated 95,000 Mainers. Eligible Mainers can access this benefit when they file state income taxes.



I joined County Commissioner Norm Fournier and County Administrator Ryan D. Pelletier to honor Register of Deeds Louise Caron with a Legislative Sentiment for her years of service to the Northern District of Aroostook County.

2021 Legislative Report
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SURVEY: Your voice matters!

Please take a moment to fill out this survey!

1. What is the biggest challenge facing you and your family?

- ☐ Health care & prescription drug costs
- ☐ Finding quality affordable child care
- ☐ Rising property taxes
- ☐ Shortage of affordable housing
- ☐ Cost of workforce training & higher education
- ☐ Other (Please explain):

2. What is the best way to improve our economy?

- ☐ Keeping Mainers safe and healthy
- ☐ Supporting small businesses
- ☐ Addressing workforce shortages
- ☐ Investing in heritage industries
- ☐ Embracing new economic opportunities
- ☐ Other (please specify):

3. What is the biggest health care challenge your family is facing?

- ☐ High cost of prescription drugs
- ☐ High cost of health care coverage

- ☐ Surprise medical bills & fees
- ☐ Lack of medical services in our area
- ☐ Other (Please explain):

4. What should the Legislature's biggest priority be next year?

- ☐ Making sure people can get health care
- ☐ Expanding access to high-speed internet
- ☐ Investing in education, career tech & child care
- ☐ Improving access to affordable housing
- ☐ Lowering energy costs & protecting natural resources
- ☐ Other (Please explain):

5. What bills would you like to see brought before the Legislature next year?

Thank you for sharing your comments!

Name:

Address:

Email:

To complete this survey online, go to
www.troyjackson.org/2021Survey