

Under the Dome: Inside the Maine State House 2.24.12

Friday, February 24, 2012

Augusta, ME

Under the Dome: Inside the Maine State House is a weekly update that provides a high-level overview of recent activity at the Maine State House. If you would like more specific information regarding an item in this newsletter or related to government relations, please contact a member of our Government Relations Practice Group: [John Delahanty](#), [Andrea C. Maker](#), or [Avery Day](#).

This Week's Highlights

- [Legislature Approves and Governor Signs Department of Health and Human Services Budget Bill](#)
- [Appropriations Committee Holds Public Hearings on Bond Bills](#)
- [Member of Governor LePage's Cabinet Resigns](#)
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Legislature Approves and Governor Signs Department of Health and Human Services Budget Bill

On February 23rd the Senate reconsidered its latest vote on the Department of Health and Human Services supplemental budget, LD 1816. This same bill failed enactment in the Senate last week but garnered enough votes this week due to a bi-partisan deal regarding the effects of this bill on veterans. This bill closes the budget gap at the Department for the current fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2012, and implements \$25 million in savings recommended by the streamlining task force, which met over the fall. Governor LePage was presented this budget bill, which he signed, later in the day.

The passage of this supplemental budget does not end budget challenges for the 125th Legislature. An \$84 million shortfall for the Department of Health and Human Services for the next fiscal year, which begins on July 1, 2012, needs to be addressed. A further supplemental budget bill implementing recommendations to reorganize the State Planning Office and to account for shortfalls in other areas of State government is also expected. The completion of this first supplemental budget likely means that the Governor will soon submit legislation to implement his education and energy priorities, which have been on hold, pending resolution of this first budget bill.

Appropriations Committee Holds Public Hearings on Bond Bills

On February 23rd and 24th, the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee held public hearings on over 15 separate bond proposals. This fall, the Committee heard a number of other bond proposals. While the

details of any bond package will likely not emerge until the end of the legislative session draws near, there are many who anticipate that some modest bond package will be proposed by the Legislature. At this point, it appears that legislators are most interested in funding road and bridge projects over other spending proposals. As is usually the case, this issue will heat up during the final days of the Legislature.

Member of Governor LePage's Cabinet Resigns

On February 22nd Major General Libby, Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard and Commissioner of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, announced that he is resigning in mid-March. Major General Libby has served in this position under both Governor Baldacci and Governor LePage and was one of Governor LePage's first nominations when he was first forming his Cabinet. Major General Libby, who is 68, stated that he wanted to spend more time with his family. The Governor's Office is now working to find a permanent replacement and have that replacement confirmed before the Legislature adjourns in April.

Maine Democrats to Caucus This Weekend

On February 26th Democrats throughout Maine will caucus. As the Democrat candidate for President is not at issue, Maine Democrats will focus on local issues. These caucuses will decide local party leadership positions and delegates to the State Convention will also be selected. This election year, Republicans will hold their State Convention in early May and Democrats will hold their State Convention in early June.