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# 2011 Inaugural Address of Governor Paul LePage

Office of Governor Paul LePage

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January 5, 2011

## Inaugural Address of Maine Governor Paul R. LePage

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the 125th Legislature, Governor Baldacci, former Governors King, McKernan, Brennan and honored guests. Welcome.

Mainers have a long tradition of working together.

As I begin I would like to thank John Baldacci. John, Karen and his entire administration have done all we have asked to make this transition a success. Ann and I are very grateful, and we join all Mainers in thanking the Baldaccis for their service to city, state and nation.

Like every proud dad and husband, I did not need to take the oath of office to believe I have Maine's first family. But now that it is official, let me thank Ann and my children for their love and support during the last 16 months.

First and Foremost, I am a businessman who served his community as a Mayor and now as Governor. My pledge to the Maine People is to put you before politics:

The parents trying to make a better life for their kids; The retirees trying to hold onto their homes on a fixed income;

The college graduate trying to find a good paying job; The entrepreneurs with the courage to take a chance on an idea; and

The taxpayers tired of footing the bill for a bloated establishment in Augusta.

It is time to make state government accountable. It is time to deliver value. It is time to put people first.

The word "people," appears in the Maine Constitution 49 times. You cannot find a single mention of the words "politics," "Republican," "Democrat," "Green," or "Independent" in 37 pages of preambles, articles and sections of our State Constitution.

The framers had it right. People come before politics.

Partisan affiliations, political leanings and the obsession with winning and losing have been getting in the way of solving Maine problems. We need a new approach and it starts right here and right now!

I am willing to listen and work constructively with anyone committed to honest solutions that benefit all Maine people.

To ensure I get plenty of input, I will be hosting monthly breakfast meetings with groups of teachers, business leaders and environmental leaders. Oatmeal and solutions will be on the menu.

I will re-introduce Governor McKernan's "Capitol for a day program" where town hall meetings are held in each of Maine's 16 counties. We are going to get around and learn from the people of Maine.

I will host constituent service hours to meet directly with the people of Maine. Come in and share your concerns, tell me about your ideas and, if we disagree, we can look for common ground so we can move Maine forward.

While I will listen to anyone, my Administration will be focused on making Maine work for everyone. There will be no favorites, carve outs, or favors for the special interests. Good policy is public policy for everyone.

There is no greater example of serving the common good than the sacrifice of our service men and women. The peaceful transfer of power, our rights and our liberties are not free. They are earned each and every day by those who serve.

Forty-Six service members from Maine have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our state and our nation in the last seven years.

I am honored that some of the families of our fallen heroes are here today.

Dan and Suzanne Brochu along with their daughter Sadie are with us. They lost Private First Class Jordan Brochu in Afghanistan in August of 2009.

Starting tomorrow, Suzanne will be the receptionist in my office at the State House.

The family of Corporal Andrew Hutchins of New Portland is also with us.

Corporal Hutchins gave his life in service to Maine and the Nation last November in Afghanistan. Corporal Hutchins' wife Heather is due to give birth to their first child, Allyssa Braelynn, in March.

All of Maine shares the sorrow of the families of our fallen heroes and we all honor their service to protect our liberties.

Please join me in a moment of silence to honor the sacrifices of our fallen heroes and to reflect on the loss their family members continue to endure so each of us can be free.

Thank You. One area where we must put politics and special interests aside is education.

Students are the most important people in the classroom. Every decision we make and every dollar we spend must be focused on the individualized needs of our kids.

Our standards need to be high, administration must be lean and we have to make sure we find solutions that work for all students.

I believe we need to make vocational education a priority again in our schools. Training our young people in a trade while they earn their diploma is a path to a good living.

I believe we also need to create five year high schools in Maine where students can graduate with an associate's degree that is a leg up for entering the workforce. And these credits can be transferred into our four year degree universities, reducing the time and expense of earning a college degree in Maine.

Approximately one in every three Mainer is on some form of state or local government assistance for food, shelter, income or health care.

For the truly needy and impaired, these programs are an important life line that combines with charitable programs, churches and the individual generosity of Mainers to form the safety net for a healthy society.

While we have a generous spirit in Maine, we do not have limitless resources. Our programs have to be focused on Maine residents, we must make every effort to move people from dependency to self-sufficiency and we must have a tiered system that rewards work and progress.

And we have to have a five year time limit so kids in Maine grow up in families where self-reliance and work are a way of life.

I recently met Jennifer Cloukey, a single mother of four and a full time nursing student. Like me, Jennifer has escaped domestic violence.

Jennifer works two or three jobs at any given time but also has to rely on Temporary Assistant to Needy Families and the Food Supplement Program to make ends meet for her family. Seven years ago, she built a home for herself and her kids through Habitat for Humanity.

Jennifer was determined to be a good example for her kids and other single moms. This coming May she will graduate from Nursing School.

Nearly every day someone asks Jen how she does it. She tells all that will listen that a life well lived does not happen all at once.

Today, Jennifer, all of Maine is listening and I am proud to share your story. In my administration your example will be our goal, and eventually the norms.

Please join me in recognizing Jennifer Cloukey.

Maine is the hardest place in the country to start and grow a business. Consequently, we earn just 80% of the national per capital income and we are failing to make the investments needed to grow our tax base.

Only the private sector can create the jobs and investment we need to move Maine forward. Profit is not a dirty word. In fact it is the direct and indirect solution to all of our challenges.

The search for profit is what drives investment and innovation. Without profit, no one has an incentive to create jobs or build our tax base. Profit is what will keep our young people from leaving Maine in search of better opportunities.

Profit is what makes the public sector possible. Without profit, we do not have economic activity, we do not have income and we do not have a tax base. Profit pays the bills for every sector of society.

Profit leads to more competition. And through competition "We the People" end up with more choice and greater value.

Every private or public sector job, every program, every non-profit, every state service and every advancement in society started because someone took a nickel worth of input and turned it into a dime of output. It is a trend that has to continue. Here is a four step process of how we are going to do it.

**Simplicity:** It needs to get a lot easier to do business in Maine. We are now conducting a state-wide Red Tape removal audit to identify the statutes, rules and bureaucratic road blocks to job creation in Maine. We can have vigorous protections for what makes Maine so great as long as the safeguards are clear, decisions are quick and we have a cooperative relationship between regulators and the private sector.

**Savings:** It needs to be less expensive to do business in Maine. Everything from the cost of licensing a business to health care, workers compensation and utility costs needs to go down.

**Business is just math.** It is the same for everyone whether you're an international player in the paper industry or a corner deli fighting to reach the breakeven point.

The costs that we can control through public policy need to go down. Our forests, fisheries and farmland will never reach their full economic potential in Maine if it is cheaper elsewhere to operate factories that turn wood into paper, process fish into a meal and turn potatoes into chips and fries.

Skills: We need to train the next generation of workers in Maine in the industries that offer the most potential. We have one of the world's best Science and Math magnet schools in Limestone, Maine. Motivated teachers, motivated students and affordable access make it all work.

Representative Terry Hayes, the Assistant Democratic Leader in the Maine House of Representatives is a proud magnet school mom. Her son Danny participated in a one-week summer program and applied for enrollment in the magnet school because of his interest in math and science.

Today Danny is a Dean's list engineering student at the University of Maine who aspires to live and work in Maine as a mechanical engineer. Let's work together to make sure Danny Hayes, and others like him, can stay close to home and prosper.

Scale: We need to provide our industries with competitive advantages in terms of costs, regulatory environment and trained labor that give Maine businesses a leg up over the global competition. We are fighting for the future of Maine and every decision we make has to be considered in these terms. That is how you achieve competitive advantage.

If we can make Maine a place where it is once again cost effective to make paper or process potatoes, we are going to have the business climate that attracts new economy jobs in information technology, biotechnology and semi-conductors as well. It is about balance. We can find balance in life, if we work together.

I ran for Governor because I know how to run a business and create jobs. In my experience you pick your team, make your decisions and you stand accountable for things that matter.

I will spend every day of the next four years working to make Maine a better place for ALL of our sons and daughters to find work, to start businesses and to stay here to start families of their own.

A Governor cannot do it alone. It is going to take hard work from everyone, but I am ready to provide the leadership and focus needed to move us forward.

I do not care about editorials, opinion polls or the next election. I have four years and a job to do.

At the end of my term I will be ready to stand accountable for the job we did at putting people first and creating prosperity for working Maine families.

Being Governor is not about me, my administration, the Legislature or Augusta bureaucrats. It is about Maine people, and I will let you be the judge.

Thank you for coming. Thank you for listening. Now let's get to work for all Maine people.