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# LD 1787 Means Saving Maine's History: Please Let Your Representatives Know

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## **LD 1787 Means Saving Maine's History: Please Let Your Representatives Know**

There is a bill now being considered in the current Maine legislative session that is of vital importance to Maine Historical Society and all those interested in preserving the character and history of our state. It is **LD 1787, An Act to Support the New Century Community Program**. This bill has been proposed by the Maine Cultural Affairs Council and sponsored by Republican Minority Leader, Joseph Bruno, of Raymond, and Democratic Senator Margaret Rotundo, of Androscoggin County, among many others (see below). Please let your own representatives know that this is important legislation.

The bill provides \$4.5 million in ongoing funds to strengthen local cultural resources, including community arts activities, humanities programs and historic preservation activities. It will provide educational services beyond the reach of the standard educational system and preserve both the State's material culture and its built environment through grants for preservation and restoration. Most importantly, funding from this bill will enable MHS to sustain and develop its Maine Memory Network.

The Maine Memory Network is a statewide, on-line archive and museum, designed to overcome the digital information divide between rural and urban communities. One of the first comprehensive sites of its kind in the country, the MMN helps organizations in every part of the state place digital copies of key historical images, documents, and artifacts on the network. Over 130 organizations have now contributed to MMN. In the next phase of its development, MMN will build local and regional community networks that tie users and contributors together through schools, libraries, museums, and historical agencies.

The Maine Cultural Affairs Council is composed of seven statewide cultural agencies: Maine Arts Commission, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Maine State Library, Maine State Museum, Maine Historical Society, Maine State Archives and the Maine Humanities Council. The agencies came together five years ago to find a common approach to the cultural and economic problems of Maine's communities. The result was the New Century Community Program, a cost effective, collaborative, broadly public effort that has been hailed as an innovation in government by the Pew Charitable Trust and Harvard's Kennedy Center. The first New Century efforts supported programs that reached every corner of the state, affected hundreds of cities and towns, and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Maine people, young and old.

LD 1787 supports the next phase of the New Century Community Program. Subtitled, **Smart Communities, Creative Economies**, this program is designed to strengthen the ability of Maine's cities, towns and villages to prosper in a changing economic world. It promotes four essential and interconnected activities: 1) linking economic and cultural planning, 2) fostering efficient cross-community and regional cooperation 3) preserving and stimulating local culture and history, and 4) using cutting edge information technologies to accomplish community and educational goals. In short, it is a program for Maine's future.

The bill is sponsored by a number of legislators who have been strong supporters of the New Century initiatives. In addition to Representative Bruno and Senator Rotundo, sponsors include Speaker Pat Colwell, (D) Gardiner; Representative Glenn Cummings, (D) Portland; Representative Ben Dudley, (D) Portland; Representative Jeff Kaelin, (R) Winterport; Senator Arthur Mayo, (R) Sagadahoc; Representative Hannah Pingree, (D) North Haven; Representative Chris Rector, (R) Thomaston; and Representative Richard Rosen, (R) Bucksport. We thank them all for their sponsorship and their belief in the New Century Program. If you would like to know more, please call Sara at MHS at 774-1822, or contact the Maine Cultural Affairs Council at 207-287-3235.

---- Richard D'Abate, Executive Director, Maine Historical Society (January 27, 2004)