

# Bangor Daily News

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## MAKE LePAGE IRRELEVANT CONSENSUS IS LEGISLATURE’S BEST OPTION

Now that an effort to impeach Gov. Paul LePage has failed, as expected, lawmakers must continue to work together to address the critical issues facing Maine, such as job creation, the rising costs of medical care and drug abuse.

During the last legislative session, LePage showed that he was more an impediment to than a partner in lawmakers’ work to tackle these and other issues. LePage spent the final weeks of last year’s legislative session vetoing nearly every bill that came to his desk. After lawmakers handed him defeats on his state budget plan and many of his proposals to restrict social services, his admonishments of the Legislature were harsh and frequent. LePage and lawmakers later clashed — taking up valuable time better used for constructive policymaking — over whether he had missed a deadline to veto 65 bills. The Maine Supreme Judicial Court ruled unanimously that he had.

Lawmakers should expect more of the same from the governor this year, as the governor has suggested he may not even take the simple step of delivering a State of the State address, an opportunity for the governor to lay out his priorities to Maine citizens via live broadcast.

This makes building consensus, to override vetoes and simply get things done in Augusta, more important than ever. Lawmakers invested in good governance should do all they can to marginalize LePage since he has refused to be a constructive participant in state government.

Although LePage has done reprehensible things — such as demanding the resignation of the president of the community college system and refusing to issue voter-approved bonds — an effort to impeach him didn’t gain traction. After hours of debate Thursday, the House voted 96-52 to effectively end the impeachment effort.

LePage and his supporters in the Republican Party tried to portray the effort as purely political. This is a convenient oversimplification. LePage’s actions — or in some cases inaction — are unacceptable behavior coming from a governor.

But state statutes do not outline a viable path for holding a governor accountable for undermining the intent and spirit of these same statutes.

Members of the Government Oversight Committee, for example, acknowledge that LePage was wrong to interfere with the hiring of Speaker Mark Eves by Good Will-Hinckley. But their committee didn’t recommend action against the governor because there is no statute delineating abuse of power.

This and the failed impeachment effort do not exonerate LePage or his divisive and unproductive style of governing.

Even before the new year started, legislative leaders worked together to draft a bill aimed at tackling the state’s opioid abuse epidemic, also a priority for the governor. It was not perfect, but it included funding for expanded treatment as well as 10 new drug enforcement officers LePage has long demanded. Shortly after the details were announced, LePage said he would veto the bill because it earmarked money for the Maine Association of Substance Abuse Programs, which is made up of different nonprofit and health groups.

Then, Public Safety Commissioner John Morris said the money for the drug agents wasn’t even necessary because alternative funds were available. The whole episode begs the question of why LePage, on multiple occasions, threatened to call out the National Guard if he didn’t get this money for new drug agents.

The Legislature’s Appropriations Committee approved a pared-back and revised version of the bill earlier this week.

On this and other issues, especially Medicaid expansion — which would improve medical care and financial security for thousands of Mainers — legislative leaders must work together, in the face of threats and obstruction from the governor, to do what is best for the state.

At this point in LePage’s tenure as governor, lawmakers’ best option is to make LePage irrelevant so they can tackle the constructive policymaking their constituents elected them to tackle.

## OTHER VOICES

### SEAN PENN VS. REAL JOURNALISM

Whatever actor Sean Penn’s cloak-and-dagger interview with Mexican drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman is — vanity project, movie treatment, friendly chat between celebrity and sociopath — treating it as real journalism would be a mistake.

Real journalism about the Mexican drug cartels can get you killed. Just ask the families and colleagues of the 32 reporters and photographers murdered and another 30 who have disappeared since 1992 in Mexico, the vast majority while covering crime and corruption.

Those reporters didn’t settle for drinks with Guzman, pose for photos, then jet home to plan their next bit of global activism. And the price they paid in pursuit of the whole truth is worth noting, if only to put Penn’s “scoop” into context.

In his 10,000-word piece in Rolling Stone magazine — published online Saturday after Guzman was recaptured in a shootout Friday — the actor navel-gazed about interviewing the leader of a bloody criminal gang, bragged about fearing for his own safety while traveling to the secret rendezvous and pontificated about the failed war on drugs and Americans’ complicity.

He also listened to Guzman’s story, and shared it; that was in-

teresting and useful. But real reportage would have challenged Guzman’s excuses for his barbaric behavior, and included rebuttal from law enforcement.

“Look, all I do is defend myself, nothing more,” the man who claimed to be the world’s No. 1 drug trafficker told his credulous interviewer. “But do I start trouble? Never.”

Tell that to the relatives of his dozens, if not hundreds, of victims. Somehow, in all his words, Penn managed not to include their voices, or of those who live in the drug war zone where he wrote that Guzman is a “Robin Hood-like figure.”

Guzman is probably used to such gentle treatment with corruption rampant in Mexico’s justice system. He has twice escaped a “top security” prison, in 2014 and again last July. This time, Mexican authorities may extradite him to the U.S., where he faces drug trafficking, kidnapping and murder charges. Unfortunately, that process could take a year or more.

If and when that happens, readers should seek out the reports from the courtroom, where they’ll learn the rest of the story, and perhaps learn why, for reporters who aren’t famous actors, the job is so dangerous.

*The Sacramento Bee (Jan. 12)*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fighting addiction

If we could harness Bill Ellsworth’s recovery coaching model, as reported in the Jan. 7 BDN, to help people get off drugs, we would have more than a million dollars in savings in all directions.

This is what this country needs: Help people help themselves, and they will feel better about themselves and be productive, happy people. It’s infectious.

Coaches are needed everywhere, not just in sports. Hopefully, Maine will adopt Ellsworth’s approach.

**Carolyn Hallee**  
*Hampden*

### GOP and the poor

When reading the Jan. 11 BDN article “Probe of state lottery to proceed,” it struck me that Republican Sen. David Burns might consider how the tax cuts endlessly promoted by Gov. Paul LePage and the Republican Party might actually be the culprits “exploiting Maine’s poor.”

The Maine Center for the Public Interest report finds that lottery sales jump 10 percent for each 1 percentage point increase in unemployment. “Trickle down” economics promoted by conservatives does not produce jobs, but cutting taxes to benefit the wealthy forfeits opportunities to repair infrastructure and is a disincentive to make new investments. Instead of stigmatize the poor for hoping to escape this Dickensian economy, better to improve our economy and infrastructure by demanding a return to the progressive tax policies that allow every Maine resident to prosper.

In the same newspaper edition, Rep. Bruce Poliquin portrays the “war on terror” as though the situation in the Middle East arose today. After the attack on Sept. 11, 2001, some suggested the terrorist threat demanded a police-style response. President George W.

Bush declared a “war on terror” that has become perpetual war.

Politics as usual has decimated the middle class, given us catastrophic climate changes creating unending waves of refugees, while the war on terror continues two centuries of colonial exploitations. American voters must ask, is more of the same viable? I don’t believe the world or America can survive more of the same. Do research, then caucus for Sen. Bernie Sanders.

**Jay Skriletz**  
*Perry*

### WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

### Donald Trump

As a first-time voter, I am intrigued by the vast differences each presidential candidate displays week to week, as well as how the media displays these candidates. It is particularly interesting looking at Donald Trump, whom fellow Republican candidate Jeb Bush describes as a “chaos candidate.”

Although I do not agree with many of the opinions, beliefs and political strategies he has put forth during his campaign, Trump’s blunt and shocking statements and views have continued to keep him in news headlines week after week.

Trump has made a political reporter’s job much easier and juicier through his constant remarks about current and future crises of our nation — one of the most baffling being his re-

marks on the banning of Muslims entering the United States.

As he is continuing to make these outrageous statements, he is doing what every presidential candidate hopes for: attracting substantial media coverage.

Whether Trump says what he says to get media coverage or actually intends to implement his so-called “policies” if he were president, one can never be sure until the election is over. But it is certain Trump knows just the right strings to play to get the media, as well as the nation, in constant chatter around his candidacy.

**Julia White**  
*Orono*

### Thanks, Obama

Car sales are a realistic indicator of economic health, and 2015 beat all records with 17.7 million vehicles sold. Remember 2009 when jobs in the total economy were disappearing and banks were failing? Job losses, plant closings and vehicle sales plummeting within the auto industry were a significant part of the broader economic collapse.

In early 2009, President Barack Obama had the intelligence, courage, realism, patriotism and optimism to know that to rebuild the broader economy he needed to help the auto industry. The government worked with the auto companies, supply-chain firms, unions and lenders to restore our vital auto industry with new management techniques and lending them about \$80 billion. Of that, \$70.7 billion has been paid back to the federal government. Since June 2009, more than 500,000 jobs have been created in the auto industry, just some of the 15 million jobs created over the 70 consecutive months of job growth in the American economy.

Thanks, Obama, for your faith in America.

**Pam Person**  
*Orland*

## .COMMENTS

**OpEd contributor George Campbell, “Pay-as-you-throw is solid waste solution for Maine”:**

If someone wants to go through my trash and separate everything, feel free to volunteer.  
— *homemaine*

I have been practicing waste minimization protocols for years, and unless we are doing our once-a-year clean up and “dejunking” my small family rarely fills more than one standard trash can per month to take to the transfer station. Part of my lifestyle includes giving as much consideration to the packaging as the product it

contains. I also opt for unpackaged and bulk items that I can place into containers I bring along when possible or in recyclable containers only when there is no other option. It matters, and it makes me sad and angry that so many people are unwilling to be responsible.  
— *Jj Starwalker*

My family has been recycling since the 1970s. We work at it all the time. I don’t think that my family and others who already recycle should be penalized.  
— *Akguc Celik*

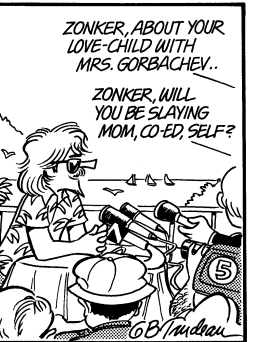
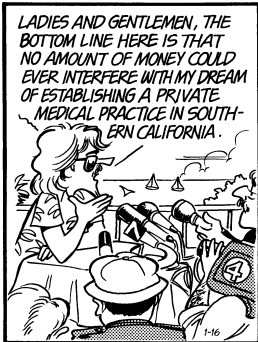
It makes so much sense. The only reason really to be against

pay-as-you-throw is the extra time and steps involved in sorting trash. It’s easy once you get going and the benefits are clearly more than worth it from multiple standpoints.  
— *wolfndeer*

I religiously sort my trash into two separate groups: the stuff that burns, and the stuff that sinks.  
— *lee RoylX*

This is my worry: illegal dumping. I would also worry if I owned a business with a dumpster downtown in a town with pay-as-you-throw.  
— *DirtyLew*

## DOONESBURY



## GARRY TRUDEAU