

# Bangor Daily News

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## MAINE MUST RECOVER DEALING WITH LEPAGE-INDUCED DAMAGE

Should Maine experience an infectious disease outbreak today that requires a coordinated state response, it's far from certain that Maine would be capable of responding adequately.

That's because the LePage administration has been steadily chipping away at Maine's public health infrastructure.

For nearly a century, public health nurses have been the "boots on the ground," contributing to emergency preparedness; monitoring treatment for those infected with tuberculosis; training health-care providers in TB treatment protocols; visiting expectant and new mothers in their homes; carrying out immunization clinics; and much more.

But over the course of the LePage administration, the state's staff of public health nurses has been cut in half. Today, there are 25 who are regularly out in the field and in a position to stage an effective response the next time there's a public health crisis. The LePage administration has undermined the public health nursing program in other ways, too, from barring its director from emailing staff without approval from staffers in Maine Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Mary Mayhew's office to closing many of the program's regional offices and forcing nurses to complete paperwork in their cars.

Public health nurses have long been part of local efforts across the state aimed at preventing and containing health problems before they become full-blown crises and helping local communities respond to emergencies. These local efforts have involved the Healthy Maine Partnerships, 27 coalitions located across the state that held state contracts to work on a range of community health issues, from preventing tobacco use to promoting physical activity.

But the LePage administration is no longer funding the Healthy Maine Partnerships, which effectively made up for Maine's lack of county health departments, a public health structure that is common throughout the nation.

The state's ability to fulfill other key public health functions also is in doubt.

Research has shown home visits from nurses or trained parent educators can reduce the likeli-

hood of pregnancy complications, infant deaths, family violence and child maltreatment. They also contribute to improved parenting and school readiness.

But as a series of BDN articles in recent weeks have demonstrated, the LePage administration never expanded home visiting services, even with the help of a \$5.7 million federal expansion grant. Indeed, the administration recently outsourced management of the state's largest home visiting program to a nonprofit organization without putting the work out to a competitive bid. And the administration, with its favoritism of one home visiting program at the expense of others, failed at efforts it pledged to undertake to inspire collaboration among home visiting providers, not competition, and expand the reach of their services.

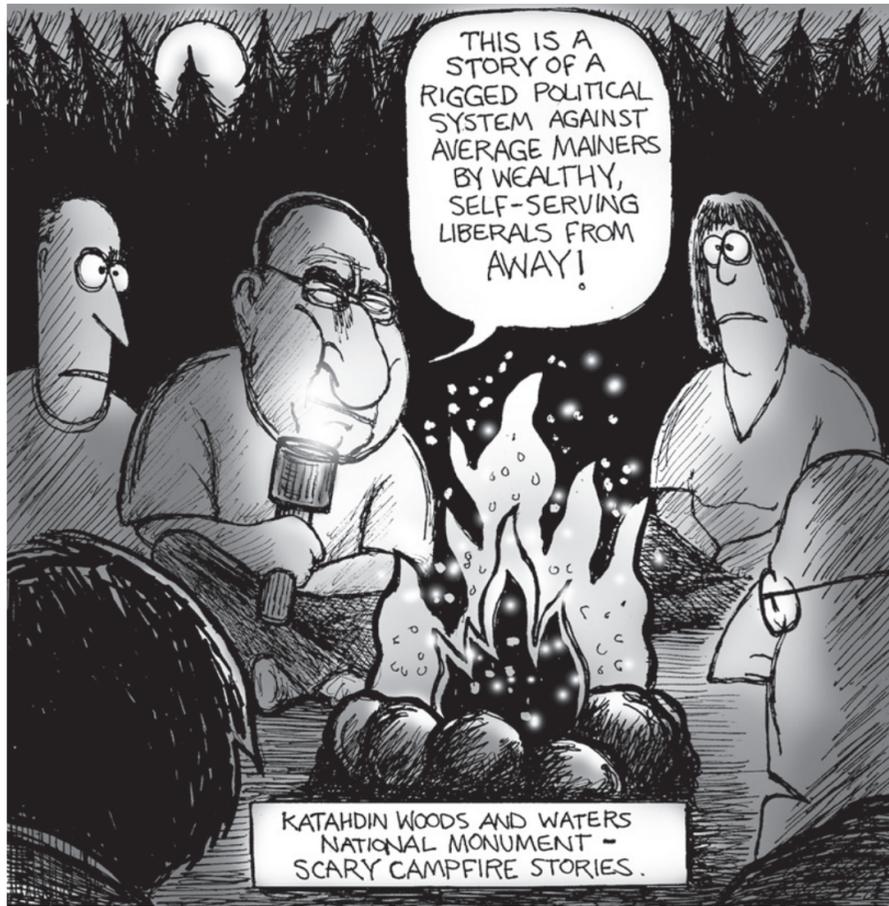
These are damning failures for a state government that's charged with ensuring the public's health — a function that should involve, first and foremost, ensuring that the state's youngest residents have a healthy start in life.

Maine's challenges are many when it comes to improving the public's health and the well-being of children, in particular. Extreme child poverty is on the rise, Maine's national ranking for child well-being has slipped and more Maine infants are dying. But in Augusta, the administration in office has proven unwilling to pursue policies that respond to the state's real problems.

The LePage administration has more than two years left. The minute Gov. Paul LePage leaves the Blaine House, his successor will have to start digging out from the damage he and his administration leave behind.

In the two years before that change in power happens, Maine needs a shadow government of people with the state's best interests — and its future — in mind. Lawmakers, public health and child development experts, business people and others with the right expertise should come together now to take stock of the damage done and develop plans that are ready to launch on the first day of a new administration.

Maine will be recovering from LePage-induced damage for years to come. It might as well start now.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A prime opportunity

President Barack Obama's designation of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is a really good thing for Maine.

As my family and I live in Bar Harbor, I know firsthand how important Acadia National Park is to the communities surrounding it. The park brings diversity — economic and human — to the region. It also protects and celebrates something unique, beautiful and special.

The lands around the East Branch of the Penobscot are just as special and beautiful, though in very different ways. As National Parks Service Director Jonathan Jarvis said while visiting Maine in May, the lands of the new monument are "absolutely worthy." They are just as deserving of this protection and recognition. And the communities bordering the country's newest national monument deserve the economic vitality that accompanies global notoriety the park service brings.

After growing up in Maine, I attended the University of Maine in Orono and, like so many of my fellow Mainers, fell in love with the Katahdin region. I spend as much time as possible there, hiking, camping and enjoying a part of Maine that hasn't received nearly the recognition it deserves — until now.

The president's wisdom in accepting such a generous gift from a visionary landowner means my son and someday his son's grandchildren will be able to enjoy this amazing place. It also means, with proper planning and thoughtfulness by the gateway communities, there can be a vibrant economic future that doesn't diminish the landscape or the culture that's grown up within it.

Glen Beane  
Bar Harbor

### Monument thanks

I would like to thank Roxanne Quimby, her family and Elliotsville Plantation Inc., the foundation they set up to make incredible conservation gifts to the nation. While they have recently announced a host of gifts, the one that will have the most profound benefit to Maine is the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

Thanks for the generous donation of nearly 90,000 acres of property and for the millions of dollars pledged along with it. Thanks to President Barack Obama for recognizing the importance of our national parks system, and the near universal popularity it enjoys. Maine's pristine and unique North Woods now has the recognition

it has always deserved.

Thanks to the Natural Resources Council of Maine as they have been instrumental in making this a reality. The Natural Resources Council of Maine has worked with stakeholders to help adjust Elliotsville Plantation's proposals. The Natural Resources Council of Maine has worked hard to educate people throughout Maine about the facts of the proposal and the opportunities it provides.

Thanks for conserving this amazing place for us all to enjoy.

Emily Parker  
Newport

### 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.

### Keep common sense

Several anti-gun writers have claimed that in states that require background checks for all handgun sales, fewer people are killed. They've never specified which states those are. I suggest they haven't because their statement is just another bit of false propaganda supplied by Michael Bloomberg, and they hope if it's repeated often enough, someone will believe it. Think about it. New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C., all have extremely restrictive handgun laws, yet their murder rates dwarf those in Maine, Vermont and other freer states. Don't believe everything the anti-gunners say.

The anti-gunners say universal background checks are a "common-sense" limitation on our Second Amendment rights. They can't say these checks would have prevented most recent mass murders because most guns used in those were legally obtained. They can't say gun transfers without background checks have been even a minor problem in Maine because they haven't.

Though universal background checks wouldn't reduce gun violence significantly, they would make gun ownership more expensive, less convenient and less common, which is the goal of the anti-gunners. No doubt if this referendum passes, there'll be another one soon asking for even more onerous limitations on our rights.

Bloomberg and his wealthy anti-gun friends are spending millions of dollars to try to change the system that's worked well in Maine for centuries. Please vote "no" on Question 3. It's not common sense to give away our constitutional rights.

Lawrence E. Merrill  
Bangor

### Can't afford two parks

First of all I would like to clarify that as a seventh-generation landowner on the coast of Maine (my family celebrated our 200th anniversary on the family island last summer), I appreciate and understand the importance of publicly-owned and accessible land. But I must say after every summer of listening to people tell me what we should do with our property, that not everyone has the experience and ability to be a landowner. If they did, they would be paying more attention to their own holdings instead of thinking that they know what's right for the rest of us. I have yet to hear anyone mention the financial impact to all of us whose tax dollars will go to support yet another national park in Maine and never feel the need to go visit it.

Plus, I don't know what is stopping people now from visiting the Roxanne Quimby land. As far as I know, it's accessible for those who want to go for a hike or a canoe ride. It seems that the National Park Service is always running a maintenance backlog that it doesn't have the money to cover. So how responsible is it to add yet more land the public can't afford? Enough about the park already, it's time to represent all the people, not just the ones who think because it's free they are entitled and their free time and enjoyment is something we all should pay for.

Andy Arey  
Warren

### Thanks, Roxanne

Roxanne Quimby made a fortune and, for years, has diligently been preparing an enormous gift to the people of the United States, which was delivered Tuesday. It would be a better world if more people with such disposable wealth worked so hard for the benefit of society. I say thank you so very much to Quimby.

To Gov. Paul LePage: It's not ego. It's grit, compassion, generosity and self-sacrifice. Excellent character traits for a successful businessman or businesswoman, I believe.

Matthew Leahy  
Bangor

## OTHER VOICES

### EPA MUST MAKE AIR TRAVEL GREENER

The Environmental Protection Agency's intention to limit greenhouse-gas emissions from airplanes may sound like a small thing. U.S. aircraft are responsible for just 3 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions and 0.5 percent of total emissions worldwide. In the U.S., coal-fired power plants generate nearly seven times as much carbon dioxide as planes.

But air travel grows by 5 percent per year, and by 2050, if nothing changes, the industry will consume more than one-quarter of the world's remaining "carbon budget" — the amount of CO2 that can be emitted without increasing global temperatures more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The EPA's challenge is to ensure that its limits are great enough to make a difference. The agency says its rules will be "at least as stringent" as those being developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization, which call for new aircraft to use just 4 percent less fuel than the average plane uses today, starting in 2028.

The EPA needs to resist pressure from the airline industry to settle on such a low standard.

Aircraft manufacturers could reduce emissions from new planes by as much as 25 percent by 2024, according to the International Council on Clean Transportation. That would raise the price of a typical plane by a third. But savings on fuel and other costs could offset that increase after seven years.

The airline industry says those projections are overly optimistic. And there's always a danger that airlines will pass the greater upfront costs on to passengers.

But recall that, in 1975, when Congress first passed mandatory fuel-efficiency standards for automakers, the head of General Motors warned that Americans would be forced to drive cars no bigger than the Chevy Nova. Today, the company's best seller is the Silverado truck and average fuel efficiency has doubled.

Before setting its airplane emissions limits, the EPA should undertake the same rigorous process it applies in assessing any regulation: Calculate how much reduction is technologically feasible, and what benefits and costs that would bring. It won't be surprising if the cut it comes up with is greater than 4 percent.

Bloomberg View (Aug. 24)

## DOONESBURY



## GARRY TRUDEAU