

Bangor Daily News

Founded in 1889

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DOES THIS UPSET LePAGE? THAT'S NOT A STANDARD MAINE SHOULD LIVE BY

After a lengthy hearing — and pleas from the public to investigate more — the Legislature's Government Oversight Committee on Thursday voted to take the unusual step of sending subpoenas to two members of Gov. Paul LePage's staff to learn more about a threat to withhold money from Good Will-Hinckley after it hired Speaker of the House Mark Eves as its president.

This is a needed, and serious, step as LePage increasingly shows his disregard for state rules and laws. The committee will subpoena the governor's counsel, Cynthia Montgomery, and senior policy advisor, Aaron Chadbourne.

LePage has effectively admitted that he threatened to withhold state funds from Good Will-Hinckley if the nonprofit organization followed through with its hiring of Eves, a Democrat whom the governor has repeatedly said was ill qualified for the job.

Yet he has stood in the way of a fuller investigation. First, LePage's lawyer argued that the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Oversight didn't have the authority to look into the matter. State law clearly said it did. The governor's office then cited pending litigation (Eves sued LePage after Good Will-Hinckley rescinded its job offer to him) in declining to answer questions from OPEGA or to appear before the Government Oversight Committee. LePage also accused the Senate chairman of the committee, Roger Katz, of launching a "witch hunt" against him. It's not the first time the governor has attacked Katz, one of the most respected members of the Senate.

This stonewalling from the gov-

ernor's office left the committee, if it is to do its job, no choice but to issue subpoenas. On Thursday, the committee voted 8-3 to do so. The three opponents were Republicans. Two Republican committee members, Katz of Augusta and Rep. Richard Campbell of Orono, voted to issue subpoenas.

The most disconcerting comments about the bullying of the Good Will-Hinckley board of directors came from Sen. David Burns, who opposed issuing the subpoenas. The Republican from Whiting said he didn't agree with all the governor's actions, but that the board shared some of the blame for what happened. The school should have known that hiring Eves would upset LePage, Burns said.

This is a horribly disturbing standard and precedent to set, especially given how easily LePage is upset. Should the Department of Environmental Protection not take legally required enforcement actions because they might upset the governor? Should lawmakers not submit legislation that LePage will dislike? Worse, should private citizens worry that bumper stickers for causes LePage opposes will get them speeding tickets?

Should Maine set up a "Does this upset LePage?" board to review big decisions that could incur the governor's wrath?

Of course not. It is up to LePage, and his staff, to know that he cannot use the power of his office to intimidate others. Failing this recognition, the Government Oversight Committee must continue gathering information, as it plans, to determine if the governor and his staff crossed legal boundaries in their efforts to ensure that Eves did not become the next president of Good Will-Hinckley.

OTHER VOICES

HILLARY CLINTON'S PRAGMATISM

Five Democratic candidates debated for the first time on Tuesday night, but only one performed like a potential president. Hillary Clinton staked out ground to the right of Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, but to the left of the center, sticking to substantive issues and arguing for practicality in policymaking.

It was an impressive performance. Yet the debate also surfaced one of Clinton's vulnerabilities: the possibility that Sanders and the leftward drift of the Democratic Party will drag her away from pragmatism — and from general-election voters. Her challenge is to continue defending her approach to progressivism instead of watering it down with more concessions to loud activists in the Democratic base.

What is Clinton's approach? It can be summed up in one line from Tuesday night: "I'm a progressive," she said. "But I'm a progressive who likes to get things done." Instead of promising to make public colleges free for everyone, she argued only for making college debt-free and for requiring students to work 10 hours per week.

Instead of lazily calling for breaking up all the big banks, she insisted that only banks that pose a systemic risk should be broken up. Instead of hopping on the ever more crowded bandwagon of Democrats who favor expanding Social Security for all seniors, she said any expansion should be targeted at those who are really struggling.

"I will focus on helping those people who need it the most," she declared.

In a Democratic primary, it's tempting to refrain from drawing these sorts of lines. But balancing principle and practicality, government action and inevitable

trade-offs, is the key to successful governing in the real world of resource constraints, unintended consequences and political opposition.

Moreover, Clinton took a political risk by sticking to her more ambitious instincts in foreign policy. The controversy over her vote for the Iraq war helped sink her 2008 candidacy, but that has not turned her into another advocate for U.S. withdrawal from the world. She was the only candidate onstage willing to call for a no-fly zone in Syria, which would enable desperate refugees to find shelter from Bashar al-Assad's bombs and bullets. She rejected the notion that playing an active role in Syria or elsewhere would require a massive commitment of U.S. troops and inevitably lead to a quagmire.

Clinton's performance wasn't flawless, however. She was weakest when she tried to explain away the pandering she has done to placate Democratic interest groups. She disingenuously insisted that "I never took a position on Keystone until I took a position on Keystone," even though she strongly — and correctly — signaled as secretary of state that there wasn't a good case against the oil pipeline before recently coming out against it. Her excuses for opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade deal she helped advance when she was in President Barack Obama's administration, were similarly unconvincing.

We would be surprised if this obviously calculated positioning helped her enough in the Democratic primary season to justify the damage it would do to her general-election campaign. Going forward, she should focus on what won her Tuesday night's debate — directness and pragmatism.

The Washington Post (Oct. 15)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Yes on Question 1

The American dream is to ensure that each generation has the opportunity to succeed and create a better future for themselves and their children. Yet, when so many Mainers are just scraping by, something must be wrong.

Right now, those with the most money are able to shout the loudest and drown out the rest of our voices. Too often our representatives make choices on important issues that will shape the lives of our children and grandchildren — such as education and the economy — that are out of balance with the needs and wishes of everyday Mainers.

Mainers have a chance this November to ensure we have a government truly of, by and for the people — not wealthy special interests.

Question 1 will limit the influence of special interest money in our elections by increasing fines and penalties for those who break election laws, creating transparency by revealing who is spending to influence Mainers' votes and encouraging strict campaign finance spending and contribution limits.

We need to work together to ensure the needs of working people come first, and that means giving everyone a voice in our democracy, not just the wealthiest among us.

We can show the next generation that America provides freedom and opportunity for all. Let's come together to vote yes on Question 1 and make a better future for our children.

Cindy Todd
Etna

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.

Gun laws won't help

I keep seeing OpEds and letters to the editor in which people propose we enact "common-sense gun laws" to combat mass shootings. It makes me wonder whose definition of "common sense" we are going to use. Many say that universal background checks are one of those "common-sense" laws that would help. But that is pure speculation on their part. Few of the people responsible for horrendous mass shootings may have been stopped by a background check, according to a recent analysis.

People are so anti-NRA that the tone of their letters and OpEds makes one think that the staff at the NRA and NRA members must be raving lunatics and would commit the very atrocities that have fueled the current drive to weaken our Second Amendment right.

"Something needs to be done" is their vague battle cry, but no one is proposing legislation that would have prevented these very tragic mass shootings.

If stricter laws for the ownership of firearms is the an-

swer, could someone who proposes them please explain to those of us who disagree with their stance why the cities of Detroit, Chicago, New York and Boston, all with incredibly strict laws already in place, have such a high crime rate where the use of firearms is part of the crime?

Kevin Grant
Belgrade

Small businesses

Far too often people write in to complain about our elected officials. But I believe it is just as important to weigh in with supportive commentary when our representatives stand up for Maine's business community. That's exactly what Sen. Susan Collins and Rep. Bruce Poliquin did last week when they voted in support of the Protecting Affordable Coverage for Employees Act that maintains the current definition for the small group health insurance market.

Not only did these legislators vote yes on this important bill, they played an important role in shepherding this bill through the legislative process. Poliquin also signed on as a co-sponsor of the legislation.

If this legislation had not been passed, small businesses across our state would have been faced with significantly higher health insurance premiums or worse — some businesses may have been forced to change their health insurance plans.

Thankfully, Collins and Poliquin proved once again that representing the interests of Maine's small businesses is their priority. And for that, I am especially grateful.

Cary Weston
Bangor

.COMMENTS

OpEd contributor, Beth Stickney, "The Maine immigrant norm: Working quietly, contributing positively to state's economy":

LePage does one thing really well: He gins up the resentment class and gets them all frothy about the "illegals" and welfare. He may not be focusing on our economy at all but he sure loves to bang the resentment drum.

— bigsky

Asylum is a lawful process and having a robust asylum program is mandated by international obligations.

— KC1979

I refuse to accept that anyone has any credibility whatsoever who talks about "immigrants" these days if they do not make any distinction between those

who come here under the terms of U.S. law and all of those who come here in violation of the law.

— countryboy8

If these people are here legally, then they should be allowed to do whatever it takes to make a living. It is the people who aren't here legally who I have a problem with. It doesn't make any difference if they are contributing or not, they are breaking the law and they should be prosecuted, sent home and told to get in the line of people waiting to get here legally.

— somewhrinmaine

I'm the grandson of an Irish immigrant. The Irish came here to escape British brutality and starvation and were not well received. The same ignorance the Irish immigrants faced has been passed down to

a new generation.

— Mike White

We do not have jobs enough for our own low-skilled unemployed but people want to bring in thousands more.

— Whatsup303

Immigrants are twice as likely to start a new business than a U.S.-born citizen. Maine also has one of the oldest populations. It needs more workers, period. Regardless of whether they are young Americans or immigrants.

— DirtyLew

The people of Afghanistan were not lazy at all and led very productive lives for living in such a third world country. They reminded me of Mainers, in the sense of being mainly poor but very ingenious at the same time.

— Sheepleherder

DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU