

A LESSON IN LOBSTER LEGISLATION



Students from the Brewer Community School hover around Gov. Paul LePage in April as he signed into law LD 1609, the bill that made the American lobster the official crustacean of Maine. The third graders from the school went to Augusta a month ago to lobby for the bill. Now that it is official, Maine is the fourth state in the nation to have a state crustacean.
BDN Photo by Linda Coan O'Kresik

Students in Mrs. MacInnes' third grade class had more than 30 seconds of fame this year.

The group of 8- and 9-year-olds from Brewer Community School had learned that Maine had a state flower, tree, motto ...but what about a state crustacean?

After researching how laws are made, writing their own legislation and visiting the State House, Maine Gov. Paul LePage came to the school in April to sign LD 1609 into law.

Only three other states have official crustaceans. Louisiana gave that honor to the crawfish in 1983, Maryland recognized the blue crab six years later and Oregon in 2009 named the Dungeness crab its state crustacean.

"We wanted one for our state, too," 9-year-old Allie Flagg said, explaining why she and her classmates brought forward and advocated for the legislation.

The bill was sponsored by state Reps. Peter Lyford, R-Eddington; Arthur "Archie" Verow, D-Brewer; Kim Rosen, R-Bucksport; and Tori Kornfield, D-Bangor.

The vote by the Legislature's State

and Local Government Committee was unanimous.

"It's important because people come from all over the world to eat our lobsters," said Natalie Francis, one of four students who testified Wednesday.

"And they make a lot of money for our state," said classmate Reese Smith.

A month after the bill was signed by the governor, the students had the chance to Skype with U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, who commended the students for their legislative work, and explained how bills become law at the national level.

"She also told us about meeting the amazing Margaret Chase Smith and how we can all achieve our dreams through hard work," Mrs. MacInnes wrote on the class's blog.

In addition to being featured on local TV news broadcasts and in the Bangor Daily News, the students' work was mentioned in a short article in Scholastic News.

"It's really awesome, because we made this happen," 8-year-old Mitchell Mercier said.



(left) The State and Local Government Committee hosted about 100 Brewer third-graders in March to hear them talk in support of the lobster being named Maine's state crustacean.
(top right) Brewer third-grade teacher Cherrie MacInnes adjusts the microphone for Natalie, who spoke to the State and Local Government Committee in March
BDN photos by Micky Bedell
(bottom right) Gov. Paul LePage high fives third-grader Tyler Alexander as he exits the performing arts center after signing LD 1609 into law at the Brewer Community School in April.
BDN photo by Linda Coan O'Kresik