



STATE OF MAINE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
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AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage  
GOVERNOR

29 May 2012

The 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the State of Maine  
State House  
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1781, "An Act to Restructure the National Board Certification Program for Teachers."

I am not vetoing this bill because I disagree with the benefits of National Board Certification. Rather, I am vetoing it because it is a band-aid to a problem – the need for highly qualified teachers—requiring a larger more coordinated state-wide solution. Moreover, this bill requires teachers to partially fund the program, while simultaneously paying union dues which are squandered on a host of activities not even remotely related to professional development.

Research clearly demonstrates the single most important single factor in student progress is an effective teacher. Over the last year, I have repeatedly challenged the largest organization of teachers in the state – the Maine Education Association— to refocus its efforts on improving teacher effectiveness. Unfortunately, the union bosses have declined my offer matching dollar-for-dollar any union increase in funding towards improving the profession of teaching.

In fact, just days ago – the executive director of the union stated "[m]aking sure we have highly skilled work force is the job of the employer . . . In this case, the people who fund this are the local school districts and the state." That is not an acceptable answer from the largest organization of teachers in the State.

Yet, the union refuses to focus on improving teacher quality. Instead of better educating educators, the union is suing the State to block release of insurance data that would decrease the overhead cost of education. Instead of looking for new ways to inform teachers on the latest pedagogical techniques, the union is participating in political campaigns and lobbying efforts with nothing to do with education. Instead of working towards ensuring that every Maine student has a quality teacher in the front of the classroom, the union is focused on providing golf and skiing discounts.



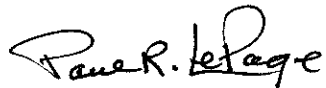
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Worse yet, this program would require the teachers themselves to partially fund the program. Rather than fund this new program on the backs of teachers, I propose eliminating teacher certification fees and working with the MEA to refocus its efforts on professional development of teachers not the pet political projects of union bosses. Maine teachers are undercompensated. We should be lowering the cost of being a teacher while providing the best professional development opportunities possible.

Unfortunately, this bill would simply provide a false victory and an excuse to not take on real substantive reforms resulting in better teachers in the classroom. I believe that we – the state, the local districts, superintendants, parents, and yes, the teacher union — must all work together for what is best for the student.

For these reasons, I am returning LD 1781 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul R. LePage". To the right of the signature is a small circular mark containing the number "3".

Paul R. LePage  
Governor