

Dear Readers,

Times are tough. Declining revenues and increasing demands are forcing all of us—not just our elected officials—to find innovative ways to bring our fiscal house in order. We face tough policy choices. We also must cope with the current administration in Washington D.C., which has decided to pass unfunded mandates on education reform and homeland security onto the states, and which is now proposing a second round of tax cuts that many states say they cannot afford. Where do we turn for relief?

There is no easy answer to this question. Health-care costs continue to escalate. Medicaid is underfunded. And here in Maine, as in many states, we have a governor and plurality of legislators who have pledged not to raise taxes. In the short run, we need to get very creative if we are to successfully implement \$1 billion in efficiency and cost-saving measures. Changing how we do business is no longer just cliché.

In the long run, we need to invest. To quote State Economist Laurie Lachance in this issue: “Failure to invest means failure, period.” Indeed, what’s critical to Maine’s (and many other states’) future, is our investment in higher education, research and development, tax reform, a healthy environment and a healthy citizenry.

These issues are precisely what the articles in this issue of *Maine Policy Review* cover. First, we feature several articles on higher education attainment, economic prosperity, and what we need to do to improve on both these measures. Not only is it important that we educate more of our young—it is just as important that they stay in Maine and work. It is also crucial that they are healthy, viable participants in our communities and democratic processes.

To that end, we feature articles on teen pregnancy in Maine and the state’s childhood lead-poisoning problem. We also have edited for publication two recent addresses given by prominent scholars on what more needs to be done to further the involvement of citizens in our democratic processes.

Finally, we conclude this issue with an article about Maine’s snowmobiling industry. Growth in the industry over the last 20 years has brought not only economic benefit but also a number of disamenities that require state and local attention. As a major tourist draw, Maine needs the dollars and the repeat visitation of out-of-state sledders. It’s important that we act now to maintain the viability of the industry.

Thanks to all readers who have supported *Maine Policy Review* this past year. Enjoy the issue.

Yours,

