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DIRIGO HEALTH

State senators Sharon Treat and Michael Brennan and co-author Ann Woloson provide an overview of the components, structure and financing of Maine's pioneering Dirigo Health program, and discuss some of the challenges and opportunities in implementing it. They also give an insider's perspective on the process by which the program was enacted. In their commentaries, Godfrey Wood, CEO of the Portland Regional Chamber, and Deborah Cook, executive director of the Maine Small Business Alliance, discuss Dirigo Health from the viewpoint of small businesses. While both are supportive of Dirigo Health's goals, Wood raises concerns about the program's assumptions, its cost to employers and employees, and its financing.

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Campaign Finance Reform, Free Speech and the Supreme Court

In December 2003, the United States Supreme Court upheld all the key provisions of the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002. In their 5-4 decision, the justices deferred broadly to the limitations set by Congress on unregulated "soft money" and "issue ads" in political campaigns. Derek Langhauser, counsel in Senator Olympia Snow's office in this McConnell v FEC case, gives a history of the challenge of balancing Congress' interest in protecting election integrity with the Constitution's competitive rights of free speech and association. He describes the Supreme Court's decision, its implications, and the role of the Court in representative democracy.

Derek Langhauser 28

The Maine Economy—Through A Different Lens

William Knowles, a banker "from away" who has retired to Maine, reflects on the state's economy. In his examination, he uses four different "lenses," which he terms: comparisons (how does Maine compare with other states and regions), cultivation (economic development), capital (especially human capital), and culture. He challenges us to think about whether Maine's culture or belief system may be an important factor in restraining economic development.

William T. Knowles 36

Revitalizing Maine's Service Centers

Maine's 77 "service center" municipalities account for a large proportion of all the state's consumer retail sales, jobs, services, and tax revenues, and are home to most of the state's higher education and health care institutions. However, John Melrose suggests here that Maine's public policy turns "worse than a blind eye" to these communities. He outlines the series of policy recommendations put forth in a strategic plan by the Maine Service Centers Coalition for supporting and strengthening service centers.

John Melrose 48

The Impact of Cruise Ship Passengers in Maine: The Example of Bar Harbor

Maine's expanding cruise ship industry can provide local economic benefits and add to the state's already large tourism economy. Todd Gabe, Colleen Lynch and James McConnon share the results of a survey conducted among passengers visiting Bar Harbor, which has emerged as a popular port-of-call on New England summer and autumn cruises. They found that cruise ship passengers have higher household incomes and spend substantially more per day than the typical Maine tourist. They make several suggestions for how ports can maximize the benefits from cruise ship passengers.

Todd Gabe, Colleen Lynch and James McConnon 56

Potential Efficiency Gains from Consolidation of Maine's Educational Resources

Economist Philip Trostel analyzes the size of Maine's schools and school districts, and the costs and quality of education. He argues that some schools and districts may be too small to be cost-efficient, that on average education in Maine costs more per student than in the rest of the country, and that education quality may not be as high in smaller schools as in larger ones, at least on some measures. Trostel suggests that declining school-age populations and increasing costs should lead policymakers to seriously consider consolidating schools and districts, not only to achieve cost-savings but also to enable more opportunities for Maine's children.

Philip A. Trostel 64

School Size Choices: Comparing Small and Large School Strengths

In this article, Janet Fairman expands the discussion of school quality using data from her study of high schools in Maine, as well as research literature. Comparing small and large schools on quantitative measures yields inconclusive results, while qualitative data suggest that small high schools may have certain strengths compared to larger ones. As school systems are redesigned for greater cost efficiency, Fairman suggests that we should try to make the strengths of both small and large schools a part of all high schools, no matter their size.

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