

Dear Readers,

This issue covers a wide range of topics from healthcare, education and taxes, to forest ownership and the creative economy. We feature two retrospective articles—the first, a *post mortem* on the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission process, and the second, a personal reflection on the tenure and legacy of Governor Jim Longley. We also include one Maine student's essay on U.S. security and the war in Iraq, which was awarded first place in the 2005 Margaret Chase Smith Library Essay Contest.

We draw your attention to two articles that, we believe, illustrate Mainers at their best and, perhaps, worst. We begin with the best: Maine's response to the BRAC Commission's announcement of imminent closures in Portsmouth-Kittery, Brunswick, and Limestone was focused, swift, and largely successful. Although Maine did not "win back" the Brunswick facility, this was not due to errors on our part, but to larger political maneuvering over which Maine held no sway. Not only did Maine rescue the facilities in Portsmouth-Kittery and Limestone, it secured additional resources for the Bangor Air National Guard and Bangor Naval Reserve Center and was granted an expansion of the Limestone accounting center. As Derek Langhauser conveys, Maine's response to BRAC Commission's original announcement is testament to the extraordinary capacity of the people of this state for focused, collaborative effort.

On the other hand, Mainers face another threat that is no less potent, but certainly less clear and immediate—the fragmentation and loss of Maine's forests and wilderness and, with it, a quality and way of life that is unique to Maine. In this issue, Lloyd Irland gives a national perspective on forest-ownership changes and the threats posed by rapid turnovers and a corporate mindset that prioritizes short-term gains over long-term stewardship. There is, perhaps, no issue that more deserves rational discourse and focused, collaborative effort among Maine people—and no issue where these attributes are so noticeably absent.

It may not be fair to compare one situation in which the threat of job loss was acute and without question, to another where even the meaning and impact of what is happening are debated. But the lack of civil discourse and collaborative action to decide on a desired course for the forested lands of Maine is deeply troubling. Mainers have shown that when the stakes are clear, they are capable of coming together and achieving great things, but when the stakes are not clear, Mainers have shown they are capable of petty rivalries and a close-mindedness that can stifle even the honest broker. In upcoming issues, we will devote a great deal of space to this topic. Our hope is that the articles we publish will promote new understandings and be used to start new conversations about the desired future of Maine's forested lands.

Finally, some readers may have noticed in the past several issues (and on page 24 in this issue), a graphic insert to highlight our ongoing philanthropic partnership with the Maine Health Access Foundation. Although we have long concentrated on publishing articles related to Mainers' health and the state's health care system, our partnership with the foundation has enabled us to deepen this focus. In the years ahead, we anticipate readers will see more targeted sponsorships of this type. Similar to the Public Broadcasting Corporation, such partnerships enable us to fulfill our mission of disseminating timely and independent analyses of key issues facing Maine and the region. We invite you to join us!

Best,

