

Dear Readers,

Thanksgiving has just passed as I write, and I've been thinking about the many things for which Mainers can be thankful—family, friends, and community; the state's natural beauty and resources; and our people's resilience and resourcefulness. Yet, the state's economy and finances remain on a shaky footing, and many among us continue to live on the edge. In this issue, we present varied articles on policies related to the well being of the state and its people. Several articles focus on the ways Maine raises revenues in difficult economic times. Richard Woodbury describes Maine's current tax system and the tax reform approaches considered in recent years, analyzing how alternatives might be evaluated and structured to achieve different goals. Joel Johnson argues that recent changes to Maine's income, sales, and property taxes have made state and local tax systems more regressive, with a heavier tax burden falling on lower-income residents. Emily Shaw discusses how municipalities have had to restructure the funding and provision of local services as they have received substantially less state revenue in the past several years.

Another group of articles focuses on education. Christine Donis-Keller, Beth O'Hara-Miklavic and Janet Fairman analyze the impacts of Maine's 2007 school district consolidation legislation on educational opportunities and equity in 24 regional districts. Alan Majka, Janet Fairman and Kathryn Yerxa look at programs addressing food insecurity in general and nutrition education in particular, analyzing their efficacy, limitations, and recent threats to their sustainability in the face of national and state budget cuts. Sarah Butler Jessen's commentary considers Maine's recent charter school movement in light of national research, noting that like charter schools elsewhere, Maine's charter schools vary in purpose, challenges, and opportunities. The Margaret Chase Smith Library's 2013 essay contest asked students to propose how they would improve the American educational system; we present here the three top prize-winning essays.

Rounding out the issue, Vaishali Mamgain describes the vital contribution of Hispanic migrant workers in Maine's blueberry industry and the potential impact of proposed state and federal laws and policies on migrant workers. And, the Margaret Chase Smith Essay by Trish Riley is a timely piece discussing lessons that can be learned from Maine's experience with Dirigo healthcare reform in light of national healthcare reform under the Affordable Care Act.

Here at MPR we have a number of changes. Barbara Harrity has assumed increased responsibilities as managing editor. We have a redesigned interior with a revised layout and other changes that we think give the journal a more modern look. We hope that you like what you see, and that this and future issues will continue to provide food for thought on policy issues facing Maine.

Best,


