

REFLECTIONS

Maine Policy Review and the Culture of Engagement

by Linda Silka

We welcome you to the latest *Maine Policy Review* issue, which once again offers readers thoughtful policy analyses by diverse authors on a range of policy issues confronting Mainers such as how can we attract new people to our state as we struggle with the loss and outmigration of young people? How can we prepare for climate change in our coastal areas? One, of course, hears about these issues in the daily news. What is distinctive about *MPR*'s coverage is that it sits at the nexus of timeliness and timeless perspective taking. *MPR* brings together perspectives on the past and visions of the future. *MPR* authors not only analyze the problems but suggest solutions based on good policy and good science. For example, how can the latest research on cooperation science be used to address problems in Maine's local food system? How can the data on the demographics of suicide be used to craft effective suicide-prevention policies? The authors of the various articles bring their deep and extensive understanding of relevant research to policy analysis and recommendations. Dan Soucier's column "Intersections: At the Confluence of Public Policy and History: The Value of Historical Thinking in Public Policy Development" reflects this strong emphasis in working across topics and time. *MPR* also places a strong focus on new voices and new generations. You will see this exemplified in this issue in the student essay on the Equal Rights Amendment. And *MPR* does not shy away from difficult issues as evidenced in this issue's Margaret Chase Smith Essay on the myth of electability,

which examines the challenging issue of how we ensure fairness in the democratic process.

This fall I have had the opportunity to travel for work to many parts of the United States including Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, and Virginia. In these visits, I highlighted *Maine Policy Review*'s articles about Maine. I've been struck by people's reactions. First, when I say that I've come from Maine, the immediate reaction of most people is to enthuse about the state and the great experiences they have had in Maine. Then, they often mention Maine's history of effective and thoughtful policy leaders who become prominent on the national stage. Then, the conversations often turn to how Maine is addressing problems. Most states do not have a nonpartisan resource that brings together science and policy as *Maine Policy Review* does: one that is nonpartisan, invites diverse authors, and looks forward by examining the past. Even though Maine faces many challenges, other states see that in Maine we are working together to solve them.

I was reminded in these discussions of how important it is to have conversations. Wherever I go, I try to bring along issues of *MPR* and encourage people to look at the thoughtful articles. I use relevant articles to start conversations, and I encourage you to start such conversations with those in your lives. If you are a teacher, our articles lend themselves to classroom discussions. If you are a parent, some of our articles lend themselves to dinner table discussions. If you live in a retirement community with

frequent gatherings, focusing a discussion on the latest *MPR* issue can lead to interesting opportunities to use your expertise to assisting in solving problems. If you are a community leader or community member, many of the articles lend themselves to community discussions. People I talk to in other parts of the country are interested in learning how to build the culture of engagement in communities we have long had in Maine. Let's take advantage of what we have and talk together: across our differences and drawing on our similarities. Those of us associated with *MPR* are interested in coming to discuss *MPR* articles with groups. Don't hesitate to let us know if we can be of assistance (Silka@maine.edu).

Enjoy this issue. Share with us what you learn! 🐟



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