



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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April 25, 2023

*Testimony of Rep. Bill Bridgeo introducing*

## **LD 165, An Act to Increase the Governor's Salary**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government*

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Bill Bridgeo and I represent House District #60, the east side of Augusta. I am here today to present LD 165, a bill to increase the Governor's salary to \$125,000 and the Governor's expense allowance from \$30,000 to \$40,000.

For all the years that I have taught state and local politics at the University of Maine at Augusta as an adjunct faculty member, I have struggled to explain to my students why Maine pays its governor dramatically less than the other 49 states (and the various territories the U.S. oversees).

As a proud native Mainer, I have never thought our motto should be modified from *Dirigo* (I lead) to *Ego Autem Post* (I lead from behind), but it appears that is what should apply here.

When I was elected to this body, one of my first thoughts was, "I can do something about this absurdity." So, I reached out to a person I've held in the highest esteem throughout my long career in city government, Representative Sawin Millett, and pitched my idea to raise the salary of the next governor.

Now, I did my homework. I researched all the national governors' salaries and I figured setting Maine's salary at whatever the average of the salary of New Hampshire and Vermont's seemed reasonable. That came to \$145,000 (in the range of what some of our commissioners now make). So, I caught up with Rep. Millett to discuss it and he said that he thought his caucus would be more comfortable with a new salary of \$125,000 and an increase in the governor's non-taxed expense account from \$30k to \$40k. This seemed like a reasonable middle ground to me, so I stuck out my hand and said "deal!" (We'd still rank 38th of the 50 states in terms of governors' salaries).

The last time the Legislature upped the governor's salary was in 1986, when the salary went from \$35,000 to \$70,000. If you take out your smart phone, go to the inflation app, put in \$70K in 1986 and ask for its 2023 value, you would get something in the neighborhood of \$193,000.

Rep. Millett and I are concerned that in a few years — when new aspirants for the CEO of state government will be contemplating whether they can afford to compete for the office with family obligations and so forth — the salary, abysmal as it is, will deter good men and women from entering the contest.

This salary increase is long overdue. I hope you will agree and vote the bill Ought to Pass. Thank you.