

Governor Janet Mills' State of the State Address
January 21, 2020

Readiness, Resilience

I: Introduction

President Jackson, Speaker Gideon, Chief Justice Saufley, distinguished members of the 129th Legislature and honored guests, I am here tonight to continue the story of our state — to talk about the progress we have made, the challenges we face, and the strength and resilience of the people of Maine.

To you, the people of Maine — those watching in homes, businesses and shops across the state — you who are working the second shift, you who are putting the little ones to bed and making sure they have clean clothes and a lunch for tomorrow –

You work hard, you get the job done — and you expect nothing less from all of us. You have entrusted us to put aside our differences and come together to do what's right:

- To protect your health care and to make it more affordable.
- To create new jobs and expand opportunity.
- To take care of each other, to welcome new Mainers home and to ensure that our people are safe, happy and have the chance for success.
- And you are counting on us to take action — now — on the climate crisis that threatens our very way of life.

We have made progress. And we have done so without rancor or bitterness.

Together, we enacted a visionary paid leave law, workers compensation reform and important gun safety legislation.

Together, we restored the Maine Indian State Tribal Commission and empowered it to become a forum for substantive communication, problem solving, and dispute resolution. Critical work that I remain committed to.

We successfully negotiated seven collective bargaining agreements in timely fashion that provided cost-of-living raises, first-time parental leave and a long overdue wage study.

And so much more.

Our state is strong. Our state is resilient. Our state is ready.

This year, we celebrate Maine's 200th year as a state.

After we separated ourselves from Massachusetts and embarked on creating our own destiny, we, Maine people, learned to be self-reliant and, at the same time, to rely on each other.

We carved our character and our living out of Maine's forests, hills and tablelands, its fields, shores, and mighty rivers.

Using two-man saws and their own strength, Maine lumbermen withstood our coldest months to fell our tallest trees. Our state became the lumber capital of the world because of their resilience.

Maine families dug potatoes, picked corn, squash and pumpkins; harvested oats and rye side-by-side with their neighbors. Our state

became the breadbasket of the Northeast because of the resilience of Maine farmers.

Hundreds of Maine craftsmen each worked from dawn till dusk to build world-class ships, piece by piece. Our products reached markets oceans away because of their resilience.

And of course, our state's history goes much further back before statehood to those who first hunted, farmed, fished and set their stones on these grounds. We stand here today because of the resilience of Native Americans.

Living in Maine has not always been easy. We have survived wars, depressions, prohibitions and booms and busts. We've seen hatred and bigotry. We've suffered loss — as a state and as families.

Through it all, we have been lifted up by the courage, conviction and resilience that comes from loving a place and its people.

That resilience defines our history.

That resilience will define our future.

These are trying times. Politics from Washington and beyond are marked by rancor, divisiveness and fear.

During this volatile presidential election year, the noise is deafening, turning us away from the security and saneness of our own small outpost.

Tariffs and trade wars, threats of terrorism and partisan fighting paralyze the nation's capital.

But here in Maine, we are doing what Mainers have done for more than two centuries: putting our shoulder to the wheel and working across the aisle to get things done for Maine people.

Because we are not Washington. We are Maine.

Marked by strength, pragmatism and resilience, Maine has always been ready and willing to do our part for our communities, for our country, for our world.

We have always welcomed people who were not fortunate enough to grow up here, including the ancestors of those in this room who came from other places.

We have always faced loss together, mending our broken hearts as one people and one state.

For a moment, I want to bow my head with you to remember three good people who left this chamber unexpectedly in the past ten months — people whose kindness and decency and dedication to this state left a mark on all of us: Representatives Dale Denno, Ann Peoples, and Archie Verow. Let us also remember Representative Jim Campbell of Sanford, who served in this body for many years and who left us this past week.

[PAUSE]

God bless them and may the memories of their lives bring peace to their families and wisdom to us all.

This chamber is not alone in experiencing loss this past year.

II: Tragedy

In April, a young state police detective was on a routine assignment when he stopped to help a stranded driver.

While in that act of kindness, Detective Ben Campbell was struck by a tire that had spun off the axle of a passing tractor trailer, killing him and leaving his community and his state shocked and in mourning.

Tonight, Ben's wife, **Hilary Campbell** of Millinocket, is with us. Hilary and her young son Everett, and the rest of Detective Campbell's family, are a reminder of the risks taken and sacrifices made by our courageous first responders.

Hilary, while we can never repay Ben or your family for his service and sacrifice, we will never forget him, and we will honor his memory.

In Detective Ben Campbell's name, I ask this body to enact legislation this session to increase the state's benefit for the families of our fallen first responders.

The current benefit is shamefully inadequate to the sacrifice of those who have given their lives in the line of duty.

We ask so much of the men and women who answer the call to service. Let us be there for their families in times of need.

It is a simple thing to do. The right thing to do. We can do it, because we are Maine, not Washington.

(PAUSE)

On the morning of September 16, 2019, a call rang out. A truck responded. Within seconds disaster struck. An explosion rocked the town and took the life of a first responder and injured many, including one who still lies in a city hospital far from home.

What followed was not only shock and grief, but an outpouring of support from all corners of the state to make sure the town would be safe while the fire department, suddenly bereft of its finest firefighters, recovered.

Our Fire Chief, **Terry Bell**, was severely injured and is still healing. Though we lost his brave brother Captain Michael Bell, the Chief is back, the picture of resilience.

Chief Bell, I am so glad that you and Denise are here with us tonight.

I promise you, and I promise the people of Farmington and the people of towns all across this state, we are going to make sure every department has what they need so that this tragedy is never repeated.

And we will make sure that every young person in our state understands the opportunity and responsibility they have to give back to their communities — the spirit that heroes like your brother and Detective Campbell so selflessly embodied and that you embody today.

In honor of Captain Michael Bell, I will to create a scholarship fund for young people to train in fire suppression, with the first contribution coming from my contingent account as Governor.

Maine needs more firefighters, particularly in rural Maine, and to that same end, I am proud to support Senator Erin Herbig's legislation to fund the Maine Length of Service Program to boost retirement benefits to firefighters and EMS workers to compensate them for their service.

We can do this. Because we are not Washington, we are Maine.

III: The Economy

I am pleased also to report to you tonight that Maine's economy is on solid footing and is growing.

- Revenues are up, our gross domestic product is up, housing starts, construction and auto sales are up; and the state budget continues to have a healthy surplus.
- The private sector created 5,300 new jobs this past year.
- My Administration helped 800 people with disabilities find and keep jobs.
- Our unemployment rate decreased from 3.5 to a historically low 2.8 percent.
- We paid off the \$80 million debt for the Riverview Psychiatric Center and stopped the bleeding of interest payments to the federal government.
- My Administration added \$30 million to the Budget Stabilization Fund, for a total of \$237 million.
- And we provided \$75 million in property tax relief for Maine seniors, families and small businesses — just look in your mailbox, about 300,000 of you should receive a \$104 check, thanks to the bipartisan budget passed last year and the work of Speaker Gideon.

While this is all progress, it is important that we remain cautious.

The Revenue Forecasting Committee and the Consensus Economic Forecasting Commission both express cautious optimism about the Maine economy in the near-term, recognizing “the uncertainty surrounding national fiscal and trade policies that could impact future

economic growth.” Some economists also predict a looming nationwide recession in line with previous economic cycles.

We must be ready for any downturn, any changes. We must remain resilient.

That is why I am committed to setting aside at least another \$20 million for the rainy day fund this year.

Other challenges loom large over our economy.

As any business in this state will tell you, it is difficult to find qualified workers and it is impacting their ability to do business.

Very simply, we need people.

My Administration has developed a ten-year economic plan for the state with a cornerstone of attracting 75,000 people to our workforce and fostering innovation.

The goal is to make Maine an international leader with a vibrant and environmentally-sustainable economy that provides good-paying jobs and an unmatched quality of life.

Already we are seeing in migration – from July 2018 to July 2019, Maine gained more than 7,500 people – people who came here to find work, people who fell in love here, people who came from other states, some from other countries – from Canada, Cambodia, the Congo and beyond. Some at great personal sacrifice.

Kifah Abdullah survived eight brutal years as a prisoner of war in Iran, facing death a hundred times over. Now, as a teacher and poet, he inspires students across our state with his story of survival and resilience.

Maine's newest citizen also joins us. The author of "Call Me American," a young man who nearly starved to death in Mogadishu as a little boy when the U.S. Marines saved him and inspired him to learn English and ultimately to become an American, **Abdi Nor Iftin** fled terrorism, sought refuge in another country and now lives and works in Maine, earning his college degree here.

Abdi, you fought to get here. You belong here. And we welcome you here.

Our Welcome Home Program will entice those who have grown up here and left, and those who are interested in moving here, to come to Maine.

Just look at the success of Tilson Technologies, led by Maine native Josh Broder. Tilson hires many veterans and is leading the world in innovative 5G technology, which is at the heart of our next industrial revolution.

Tilson is here tonight and represented by **Adria Horn**. We want more people like Josh and Adria to start their businesses here.

To foster innovation, my Administration will also support increased funding for the Maine Seed Capital Tax Credit. By helping new businesses take root and grow, we will create jobs and diversify our economy.

To encourage young families to come here and work here, Maine also needs more affordable housing.

Assistant Majority Leader Ryan Fecteau has proposed a Maine Affordable Housing Tax Credit, similar to the Maine Historic Tax Credit which helped boost our economy in recent years. This proposal would create nearly 1,000 additional affordable homes over eight years, increasing Maine's current rate of production by 50 percent.

Send that bill to my desk and I will sign it.

Our ten-year development plan also tells us to enhance critical infrastructure, including broadband, particularly in rural Maine.

DesignLab, for instance, a marketing and design firm in Millinocket, used to upload their video files on a hard drive, then they would drive to the Medway gas station where they would ask a bus driver to deliver the digital files to a video editor in Presque Isle – no way to do business.

Internet speeds for their business were dismal and severely limited their productivity. But now, with broadband, they are succeeding.

As one small businessperson put it to me the other day, “You want to grow the economy? Give me better internet.”

It is time for us to listen. High-speed internet is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. Increasing access to high speed internet will allow our businesses to expand and allow all people to connect with schools, health care providers and markets around the country and around the world.

This session, I propose that the Legislature fund \$15 million to expand broadband for Maine people and businesses. We can no longer afford to wait.

We also cannot afford to let our state’s economic advantages slip away. Our economy and our environment are bound together. This past session, we made smart investments in both.

Thanks to the collaboration of our Administration and this Legislature, particularly Senate President Jackson, **the McCrums**, a family who for five generations has grown potatoes, this year will open a large processing plant in Washburn, Maine, using Maine-grown potatoes and creating needed jobs in the County.

The McCrums are the picture of readiness, of resilience. And we thank them.

Meanwhile, two creative financiers, **Sam May and Scott Budde**, created a first-in-the-nation credit union for farmers. The Maine Harvest Federal Credit Union will help more Maine farmers be successful and give a big boost to the farm-to-table movement that has become so important to our economy.

Thank you, **Scott Budde**, for joining us here tonight.

Also here with us tonight is **Heather Whitaker**. She is an alternative education instructor at Gorham Middle School where I was a student. She started a garden at the school where children are learning about growing food and about public service. They donate more than 800 pounds of produce to the food pantry every year.

Please join me in acknowledging Maine's Teacher of the Year, Heather Whitaker.

But let us not only acknowledge Heather. Let us ensure that the students she teaches will have the opportunity to work our lands and fish our waters when they grow older.

We have to conserve our parks, our working farms, working forests and working waterfronts.

Tonight, I call on this Legislature to send to the people of Maine a bond that provides much needed funding for the Land for Maine's Future program.

Maine people overwhelmingly support this program. Let us give them a chance to vote on a measure that will protect our environment, protect our fishermen and farmers, and grow the economy.

IV. Health Care

We cannot have a healthy economy without a healthy workforce.

That is why my first act upon taking office was to expand Medicaid to provide health care to more Maine people. More than 57,000 Mainers have accessed life-saving health care.

We enacted LD 1 to protect health care for Maine people regardless of age or pre-existing conditions.

And we enacted prescription drug reform to lower prescription drug costs.

And we are providing \$62 million over two years for nursing homes, understanding that that money should go to the employees, to fulfill workforce and patient care needs.

But there is more we must do, especially for small businesses.

Maine's small group insurance market has seen increasing premiums and decreasing enrollment, making it difficult for business owners to offer coverage to their employees.

I have introduced legislation, sponsored by Senate President Jackson and Speaker Gideon, to improve health insurance for Maine people and small businesses – all without any state tax dollars.

LD 2007, the “Made for Maine Health Coverage Act,” offers a Maine solution for small businesses and it creates a marketplace designed to best meet the needs of Maine people.

I ask this body to pass that legislation on behalf of businesses like Becky's Diner, and I want to acknowledge one of the hardest working

women I know, **Becky Rand**, who is with us tonight. This legislation is critical to supporting small businesses like hers and self-employed people, improving health care, and strengthening our workforce.

Thank you Becky!

We can do this because we are not Washington, we are Maine.

And because we are Maine, we love our communities. We love our neighbors, but still today, too many of them are falling victim to another crisis that is harming our state – the opioid epidemic.

V. Opioids

When I took office a year ago, I gave my word to Maine people suffering from substance use disorder, that help was on the way.

I told them then, and I tell them now, they are not alone, and together, we will do everything in our power to bring them back, to make our communities, our families, and our state whole once again.

- Because we expanded Medicaid, more than 6,500 people are now receiving treatment for substance use disorder.
- Gordon Smith, Maine's first Director of Opioid Response, is bringing the resources of the state to bear on this public health emergency. Thank you, Gordon. Part of that mission is to make available the life-saving drug Narcan.
- When I was Attorney General, I used funds from pharmaceutical settlements to buy Narcan and distribute it to law enforcement agencies across the state. Attorney General Aaron Frey has continued that work. And, as of this month, that Narcan alone has saved 880 lives.

- Now, through the new Prevention and Recovery Cabinet and the Attorney General's Office we are making sure Narcan is more widely available, and we are training recovery coaches and supporting recovery centers statewide to help people turn their lives around.
- These efforts complement the efforts of law enforcement to stem the flow of dangerous drugs into our state.

Meanwhile, community leaders are also helping Maine people turn their lives around.

Margo Walsh of MaineWorks, who is with us tonight, is providing jobs to people in recovery. These opportunities are critical to helping people turn their lives around. And this effort helps us fill our workforce needs – it's a win-win for Maine.

Thank you, Margo, for recognizing that Maine people in recovery are ready and able to work and that our economy needs their skills.

Make no mistake, healing our state from the ravages of the opioid epidemic is a complicated challenge that will not be erased overnight.

It will have many ups and downs, and we must always try to understand its driving causes so we can pursue solutions.

I will call for a new panel of experts to review overdose deaths, like the panels that review maternal and child deaths, to learn as much as we can to improve our response to this epidemic.

There is another scourge among us that we must eradicate — child abuse.

VI. Children Come First

No one can think about the past year without remembering 10-year old Marissa Kennedy and 4-year old Kendall Chick, two helpless little girls who died violent deaths at the hands of their families, whose caregivers were tried and convicted last year.

The deaths of these two children represented an awful failure of our society and our state's safety net. Not to have intervened, not to have broken down the door and saved those children was a sin of the highest order.

It is in the name of these children — Marissa Kennedy and Kendall Chick — that we have reactivated the Children's Cabinet, to break down the silos of the bureaucracy that failed to hear their helpless cries.

And, with the approval of this Legislature, we have begun to rebuild our Child and Family Services Division of the Department of Health and Human Services.

My biennial budget included funding for 32 new child welfare caseworkers. All 32 have now been hired.

But that was just a down payment.

As Maine's Child Welfare Ombudsman recently noted, we have more to do, but we are on the right path.

More than 1,300 children came into state custody last year, the majority of them under the age of 5, the majority of their homes torn apart by drugs.

I will ask this Legislature to fund another 20 positions to respond quickly and effectively to reports of abuse or neglect of our children.

I know you agree: our greatest responsibility is to protect our children and provide them with every opportunity to succeed.

VII. Education

In our society, education is that pathway to success and a key to addressing our workforce needs as well.

Equal access to a good education levels the playing field for every student, of every age, in every zip code in Maine.

I believe in Maine public schools.

I believe in our state's 18,855 teachers, who like my mother did for 37 years, devote their lives to making our children responsible citizens with skills to last a life-time.

I am proud to say that our biennial budget:

- includes \$115 million in new state support for K-12 education, bringing the state's share to nearly 51 percent.
- it paved the way for a \$40,000 minimum teacher salary, to ensure that teachers in Maine will not be forced to leave the state to earn a living wage.
- it replenished the fund to renovate schools in disrepair.
- And it increased funding for higher education [The Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy] to help keep tuition affordable.

This year, I ask this Legislature to fully fund the second year of the higher education budget which was cut last spring. These institutions of higher learning cannot withstand rising costs without the prospects of higher tuition. And higher tuition is the last thing our students need.

The average Maine college graduate in 2018 owed more than \$32,600 in student loans – the eighth-highest student loan burden in the country.

We need to simplify debt relief programs like the Educational Opportunity Tax Credit to help more graduates retire their debt. And we must boost the Educators for Maine Loan Forgiveness Program to incentivize young teachers to work in the underserved areas which desperately need them.

While lifting the burden of student debt off the shoulders of our graduates, we also must ensure secondary school students have the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly changing economy.

We are joined by one of those 18,855 remarkable teachers – **Greg Cushman**, Maine’s 2019 Career Technical Education Teacher of the Year.

Greg is an electrical instructor and SkillsUSA advisor from Lewiston Regional Technical Center. **Thank you, Greg**, for training Maine’s next generation of skilled tradespeople. Our CTEs are more important than ever; yet they have not received significant funds for equipment since 1998.

I ask this body to fund equipment upgrades for our CTEs so that teachers like Greg are able to provide our 8,000 CTE students with the skills that we desperately need them to have.

These are important investments that will help us address Maine’s top challenges, including our workforce shortage.

A workforce shortage is driving one of Maine’s other top challenges – our aging transportation infrastructure.

VIII: Transportation

So, while we're at it, in the words of my friend and fellow governor, Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, let's fix the damn roads!

Just last week the Maine DOT released its three-year Work Plan. Chronic underfunding and cost increases keep us from maintaining our essential infrastructure. With a shortfall of as much as \$232 million a year, it's time to put our heads together and get creative. I want that Blue-Ribbon Commission to keep working on this for as long as it takes. I signed the Resolve that allows them to continue that work this morning.

Partisan posturing and skinny mix won't fix the roads. Creative ideas will.

I'm not opposed to using some general fund dollars to improve our infrastructure, boost our economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This is not a partisan issue.

There are no Democratic roads or Republican bridges.

We can fix this. Because we are not Washington, we are Maine.

Galen Cole knew the importance of transportation in our state.

Galen's contributions to our state were immeasurable, not only as Bangor's Mayor, but as a business owner, as founder of the Cole Land Transportation Museum, as a decorated WWII veteran and as a life-long champion for Maine's veterans.

Members of his family join us here tonight as we remember his legacy.

Thank you, **Janet Cole Cross**, for your father's and your family's contributions to our state's readiness, our state's resilience for the over ninety years of your father's life.

I cannot speak to the state of the state, or discuss its future, without acknowledging another, greater, threat to our resiliency that is on our doorstep.

VIII: Climate Change

As we speak this evening, wildfires are destroying far-off Australia, killing every living thing in their path. The Bering Sea off Alaska is ice-free, while drought is paralyzing southern Africa. Maine is not immune from the damage of the climate crisis.

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases from the burning of fossil fuels — the unfortunate “footprints of human activity stomping on the atmosphere,” according to NASA, are impacting our economy, our health and our safety.

It may be easy for some to brush off the warnings of scientists on a day like today, with freezing temperatures, when a one- or two-degree hike in temperature seems harmless, even welcome.

Maine is strong. We are resilient. And we better be ready. Climate change is real. And it is affecting us as we speak:

- Fishermen tell us invasive green crabs from southern waters are eating their clams, decimating their fisheries.
- Ticks are now rampant, and the number of Lyme disease cases in Maine has increased tenfold in recent years.
- Some of our most beautiful towns, built alongside lakes, rivers and shores, may soon become year-round flood zones. Sea level rise and storm surges, in just a few years, will threaten the causeways and piers, the shops, harbors and houses of Boothbay, Belfast, Rockport, Lubec and other beautiful communities.

- And can you imagine when we might have to redesign Route 1, a main artery of our tourism industry, to avoid constant flooding?

I told the 193 delegates to the United Nations last fall, Maine Won't Wait. And I mean it. We are not Washington. We are Maine. We can and will do our part. So, this past year, we have:

- Created the bipartisan Maine Climate Council and became the 22nd state to join the US Climate Alliance.
- Committed to achieving 80 percent renewable energy by 2030 – one of the most ambitious renewable energy standards in the nation.
- Opened the door to offshore wind projects, supported electric vehicles and promoted the installation of heat pumps statewide.
- Removed the cap on community solar and fixed net metering. Now, more than 300 new solar projects are in development. From a fishermen's co-op to a capped landfill in Tremont to the Hope General Store, The Milk House in Monmouth, food pantries in Vassalboro and Saco, credit unions, apartment buildings and trailer parks, water districts, Supercuts in Brewer, farm land in Franklin County and Geiger Brothers in Lewiston — solar energy is changing the landscape and saving money for people all across the state.
- At the Blaine House alone, the new array of solar panels has already saved the equivalent of one ton of carbon dioxide emissions.

In the coming year we will continue to:

- Move away from oil as a primary source for heat.

- Reduce our reliance on gas for transportation, which is 54 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions.
- Support innovative businesses like Atlantic Sea Farms, run by Briana Warner, growing kelp commercially to diversify our aquaculture economy, while reducing ocean acidification.
- We will embrace energy storage and other new technology.
- We will further reduce emissions that harm our health and climate.

Offshore Wind

Meanwhile, all along the Northeast United States, the offshore wind industry is generating thousands of jobs in the development of thousands of giga-watts of renewable electricity. According to the International Energy Administration, offshore wind is set to become a one trillion-dollar industry by 2040.

Maine will not be left behind.

For centuries, the Gulf of Maine has sustained Maine life. From the time humans first migrated to Maine, the bounty of the sea and shore have been a critical part of our sustenance. Food, transportation, communication, recreation all have been gifts of the sea. For Maine people, the salt is in our veins.

But today, the Gulf of Maine is in trouble. Warming more quickly than nearly every ocean in the world, the Gulf of Maine's ability to sustain its rich and diverse resources is diminishing. Cod, herring, shrimp and lobster are some of the staples of coastal life already at risk. We cannot wait to act. We are already fighting for our lobsterman and fishermen. Yet the Gulf of Maine is both our challenge and our opportunity. It is our new frontier...No, not for oil — but for wind.

Thanks to this Legislature, the Public Utilities Commission and our University, Maine will build and launch the nation's first floating offshore wind demonstration project, "Maine Aqua Ventus", with full input from our fishing industry and our people. And I promise you, that commitment is just the beginning of our effort to use the Gulf of Maine and all the world's oceans to slow the warming of our planet.

We can do this.

The University of Maine Advanced Structures and Composites Center, led by **Dr. Habib Dagher**, has already created the first grid-connected floating offshore wind turbine in the United States, and Maine "Aqua Ventus" is positioned to become a leader in this industry. **Thank you Dr. Dagher** for putting Maine on the map.

This spring I will visit Scotland to see the offshore wind platforms they are using to supply that country with clean renewable energy.

I am determined that the business we once lost to them, we will bring back to Maine. We have great potential. And in the coming weeks, my administration will be taking steps forward to unleash it. Stay tuned.

X: Utilities

Mitigating the effects of climate change and moving Maine toward a clean energy future requires that our utilities be reliable and resilient – and that they put Maine consumers first.

For years we have allowed electrical utilities a monopoly on our transmission and distribution lines. Today few are happy with the results of the regulatory framework under which these utilities operate, based primarily on setting rates that allow a reasonable profit to the utilities with little degree of benefit to the public.

I ask your guidance and your help in making sure that these foreign corporations to whom we accede the privilege of operating in our state, are answerable to Maine, not to Spain or some other foreign country.

Let's work together to ensure that Maine consumers are at the table, that profits do not take precedence over service, and that utilities are accountable and answerable to the people of Maine.

XI: The Past, the Present, the Future

The stories of Kifah Abdullah, the Farmington Fire Department, Tilson Technologies, Abdi Nor Iftin, Becky Rand, Margo Walsh's clients in recovery, Heather Whitaker, Greg Cushman and Galen Cole, these are stories of resilience, readiness, preparedness. These are stories of Maine.

They are stories that Maine's first Governor William King would relish.

As I reflect upon the spirit of Maine people, in this our bicentennial year, and as I think about our history, I wonder what our predecessors would think of where we are today.

I wonder, what did Governor William King see when he traveled the state 200 years ago?

- Did he see eagles flying over the Kennebec?
- The same prehistoric sturgeon we now hear leaping in the waves?
- The tall elegant pines, the brightest salmon, fields newly cleared of stone?
- Middens on the islands left by Native Americans thousands of years before?
- The tall rock of Seguin beckoning fishermen and sailors home?

Could he have imagined the wonders of the modern world or the new heights that Mainers have reached.

Could he have dreamed that a young woman from Caribou would be speeding through outer space at this moment, having achieved history by completing the first all-female spacewalk?

Thank you, Jessica Meir, for being a hero to young girls and boys from Maine — proving that the sky is, in fact, no longer the limit. Jessica is yet another example of readiness, of Maine-bred resilience.

What would Governor William King think of our clothing made in China or of a delivery service called “Amazon?”

What would he think of the growing “tech sector,” of the “digital age,” of cyber security or Russian hackers?

What would he think of cars and cell phones, of Uber, Lyft and Air BnB?

Would he have given up sending letters from Maine for Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter or Facebook?

And what about Governor Carl E. Milliken of Island Falls — the first governor to live in the Blaine House one hundred years ago — what would he think of us now?

One hundred years ago, on the heels of national prohibition, Governor Milliken spoke about the impending vote on women’s suffrage. Opponents had gathered ten thousand signatures to force a referendum to block the right to vote.

In his speech to this body, Governor Milliken said unequivocally, “If only one woman in Maine wants to vote, she ought to have the chance.”

This year, the Legislature can take one more step in the direction of full citizenship, full responsibility and equality under the law:

After decades of debate and forty-six years after Maine ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution, it is time to do what 26 other states have done:

Preserve equality of rights regardless of sex. Pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Maine Constitution.

As Justice Ginsburg said, I would like my granddaughters, when they pick up the Maine Constitution, to see that language — that women and men are persons of equal stature — I'd like them to see that it is a basic principle of our society.

So, pass the ERA.

Now, Governor Milliken was concerned about intoxicating beverages too. So, he and Neil Dow would probably roll over in their graves to learn that Maine now has 153 craft breweries — more breweries per person than any other state.

And I would want to reassure Governor Milliken unequivocally that my election fourteen months ago had nothing to do with the fourfold increase in beer consumption in my home state.

What will our state be like twenty years from now, fifty years, one hundred years from now?

Will Artificial Intelligence replace books, normal communications?

Will we have digital codes instead of names?

Will facial recognition replace the handshake?

I can't say for certain what the future holds. But 50 years down the road, I predict:

There will be data centers across Maine, buried in granite, cooled by geothermal cells, providing enough spinoff heat to run a town for an entire winter.

Skyscrapers and homes across the country will be built with cross laminated timber, invented and manufactured here in Maine.

LL. Bean will be still be selling great boots, delivered by robots — they will be good for spending a weekend hiking on the moon.

Visitors will still be flocking to Westbrook to see the formation of yet another ice disk spinning on the Presumpscot River.

There will be high speed passenger rail from Freeport to Lewiston and all the way to Montreal.

We will finally have high speed Internet all across the state and maybe even cell phone service on 295.

And the governor of Maine, whoever she is, will be making \$70,000 a year.

But know this: Everybody will want to live here. Everybody will want to stay here.

XII: Conclusion

We have an ambitious agenda. There will be people who say, "We can't do all of this now. Government should do less, not more."

Building a health care system, saving people from the opioid epidemic, fighting child abuse and domestic violence, confronting climate change, strengthening education and improving our workforce — Is this too much to ask?

Former Speaker of the House Tip O’Neil once said, “Any fool can tear down a barn. But it takes a good carpenter to build one.”

We can do these things. We are not Washington. We are Maine.

Let’s build a barn that shelters our state, that protects our stock and feed, that keeps the evils of the world at bay and makes our state resilient for centuries to come.

One hundred fifty-years ago, Governor Joshua Chamberlain addressed this body. He said, “Government has something more to do than to govern and levy taxes.... It is something more than a police to arrest evil and punish wrong. It must also encourage good, point out improvements, open roads to prosperity and infuse life into all right enterprises.”

I think he meant, build a barn.

Two hundred years ago, we secured our independence from Massachusetts and became a state, though we divided the country in an unholy compromise. Today we set a course for the next decade, the next centennial.

Like the pulse of our common community, the water beneath the now-crusting ice flows deeper than ever, hiding the strength and richness of our rivers, our state’s life blood.

The mountain peaks boast of snow. The high pines that once attracted shipbuilders and the spruce whose roots secure the granite along our shores are sure now of surviving another winter, sheltering the land for many seasons more to come.

We are but a minute in the course of the centuries. But these things will surely be here fifty years hence — ready, resilient, strong and unchanged. Like them, let us preserve what we can, and build what we can, when we can, however we can of this great state in this our bicentennial year.

To all the people of Maine —
Thank you for the great honor of being your Governor.