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Editor's Letter

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Dear Readers,

Many of us in Maine love to talk about the weather, both the “weather” outdoors and the “weather” of our politics, economy, education, and public policy in general. This November has seen the earliest, largest snowfall ever in some parts of the state; Election Day results led to shifts in party balance in legislative and executive branches both nationally and in Maine. Pundits have been opining on both topics, often with little depth or perspective. Depth and perspective, however, is what we offer here. This issue of *Maine Policy Review* is not a special issue on one topic. However, a theme that runs through many of the articles is “then and now.”

The articles in the first part of the issue are explicitly about then and now. Included here are feature articles and short excerpts edited from a fall 2013 lecture series, “Politics Then and Now, in Maine and the Nation,” held at the University of Southern Maine, and the William S. Cohen lecture held at the University of Maine in November 2013. Most of the speakers were prominent public office holders. Speakers were asked to address the issue of political polarization, comparing politics in the past with the current situation. Series organizers Richard Barringer and Kenneth Palmer give an overview of themes from the series, followed by feature articles by Tom Allen and Angus King and short excerpts from the other speakers. Peter Mills, one of the original speakers, provides his thoughtful reflections in the Margaret Chase Essay.

Other articles in the issue focus on “now,” but also provide perspectives on the past in their respective topic areas. Ethan Tremblay and Tim Waring describe the importance of cooperation in Maine’s food industry, looking at the evolution and current status of institutions that are important in supporting this growing sector of Maine’s economy. Travis Blackmer and George Criner analyze the age-old problem of what to do with solid waste and provide policymakers with a useful perspective on the impacts of several recent options for waste disposal. Sylvia Most, in her commentary on a recent *MPR* article by John Dorrer, asks whether Maine is on the right track in its current emphasis on “college for all” and whether students and employers might be better served by revisiting an earlier model of providing increased vocational education opportunities. The issue closes with the top two prize-winning essays from the Margaret Chase Smith high school student essay contest for 2014; students were asked to reflect on the changes in the United States since 1964, the year Margaret Chase Smith announced her candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination.

Best,


