

[View this email in your browser](#)



---

**Knox County Democratic Committee**  
**Monthly Newsletter**  
**September 1, 2023 (No. 17)**

---

**In This Issue**

- *Guest Speakers from Pine Tree Power at KCDC Monthly Meeting*
- *Solving Our Affordable and Workforce Housing Crisis*
- *September 23, 2023 KCDC Community Picnic*
- *Focus on the November Ballot: Question 6: Constitutional Amendment*
- *Legislative Update*
- *Upcoming Events*

---

**Guest Speakers from Pine Tree Power  
at KCDC Monthly Meeting**

KCDC will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at 6pm, via Zoom. This month's guest speakers will be Al Cleveland, Campaign Manager, and Jonathan Fulford of Pine Tree Power. This is an opportunity to find out more about the referendum on the November ballot proposing creation of a consumer-owned utility for the State of Maine.

includes (not necessarily in this order):

- Legislative Update
- KCDC Business, including:
  - Fall events
- Knox County Town Updates
- Announcements

All Knox County Democrats and unenrolled progressives are welcome to attend KCDC meetings.

Pre-registration is required in order to receive the Zoom login and/or phone-in details. Register [here](#) before Noon the day of the meeting to ensure access, or email [knoxdems@gmail.com](mailto:knoxdems@gmail.com). KCDC will do its best to accommodate last-minute registrations. Participants will be able to join the meeting beginning at 5:45pm.

NOTE: Just before publication, we learned of two other opportunities to learn about the ballot initiative related to Pine Tree Power. On Friday, September 29, from 7:30-9:00 there will be an event at the Strom Auditorium at Camden Hills Regional High School co-sponsored by The Society of Fearless Grandmothers, Our Power, 350.Org., Third Act Maine, and the Sunrise Foundation. [Building Bridges Maine](#) will host an online event with leaders from both sides of the referendum on Tuesday, September 26, at 5:30pm via Zoom. We will share more information about these additional events as it becomes available.





## Solving Our Affordable and Workforce Housing Crisis

By Mary Winchell, Camden

Maine's [2.4% unemployment rate](#) for July 2023 is lower than both the New England and US averages, and testifies to the presence of “Now Hiring” signs at local businesses. Even if Maine were to satisfy its need for labor, the lack of affordable housing for both current and future workers has reached a crisis level, not only on the Midcoast, but everywhere in the State. According to the [Midcoast Regional Housing Trust](#), the Maine Dept. of Labor suggests that employers in Knox, Waldo, and Lincoln Counties will need about 800 additional hires by 2028. According to Ryan Cullen, the Executive Director of Community Housing of Maine, the last time Maine had an adequate supply of affordable housing was in 1977. As of May, [Maine needed 20-25,000 affordable housing units](#), and currently only about 1000 are created annually.

As noted in the Legislative Update in this issue, the State legislature is attempting to address the housing shortage and affordability challenges with targeted legislation. Gov. Mills has also earmarked \$65 million of the current budget surplus for Maine Housing programs – \$35 million to build affordable housing in rural areas through the Rural Affordable Housing Program and \$30 million for incentives for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program. According to a recent [Portland Press Herald article](#), that funding is part of what the administration has described as “historic housing investments”, which also includes funding for a housing first program to provide stable housing to people who are chronically homeless so they can address other challenges, such as addiction or mental health issues.

Additionally, various communities in Knox County have mounted their own initiatives. To mention just a few: in Rockland, the Knox County Homeless Coalition is working with various partners to create a neighborhood that will have 13 affordable housing units at Firefly Field on Talbot Avenue. St. George has launched a non-profit Community Development Corporation to “provide housing opportunities to sustain a vibrant year-round community in St. George”. Various communities in Knox have

Some neighboring counties to Knox have Development Corporations, Housing Trusts, or private entities with robust projects planned or currently being built. In Lincoln County, the [Boothbay Region Development Corp.](#) is developing a 137-unit affordable housing project on a 30-acre parcel in Boothbay. In Hancock County, Witham Family Hotels is currently constructing a shared-accommodations unit that will house 84 seasonal employees in Bar Harbor.

But the question remains, will all these initiatives be enough to move the needle significantly? We encourage Knox County residents to find out what's being done in their own communities to address local housing needs and support those efforts.

### **Background articles:**

Bader, Emily, "Legislature passes 'historic' bill to address housing shortage, homelessness": [https://knox.villagesoup.com/news/legislature-passes-historic-bill-to-address-housing-shortage-homelessness/article\\_0220dcee-1f26-11ee-895d-e315368a385f.html](https://knox.villagesoup.com/news/legislature-passes-historic-bill-to-address-housing-shortage-homelessness/article_0220dcee-1f26-11ee-895d-e315368a385f.html)

Billings, Randy, "Maine's budget surplus provides \$65 million for affordable housing": <https://www.pressherald.com/2023/08/17/state-budget-surplus-provides-another-65-million-for-affordable-housing/>

Flynn, Malachy "New employee housing may be ready next summer": [https://www.mdislander.com/news/business/new-employee-housing-may-be-ready-next-summer/article\\_33cd0d50-2fc3-11ee-a937-4ffb4a04d1c1.html](https://www.mdislander.com/news/business/new-employee-housing-may-be-ready-next-summer/article_33cd0d50-2fc3-11ee-a937-4ffb4a04d1c1.html)

Pearson, Bill, "BRDC receives \$300K housing grant": <https://www.boothbayregister.com/article/brdc-receives-300k-housing-grant/177491>

### **What's happening elsewhere:**

Dougherty, Conor, "This Is Public Housing. Just Don't Call It That.": <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/25/business/affordable-housing-montgomery-county.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Mari, Francesca, "Imagine a Renter's Utopia. It Might Look Like Vienna.": <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/23/magazine/vienna-social->

**Local organizations:**

Knox County Homeless Coalition: Affordable Housing:

<https://www.homehelphope.org/affordable-housing>

Midcoast Council for Governments: Housing. <https://www.midcoastcog.com/housing>

Midcoast Habitat for Humanity: <https://midcoasthabitat.org/>

Midcoast Regional Housing Trust presentation to Knox County Democratic Committee, May 9, 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/@knoxdemocrats4026>

St. George Community Development Corporation:

<https://www.stgeorgecommunity.org>

---

## **Plan to Join your Friends and Neighbors at the KCDC Community Picnic**

**Saturday, September. 23, 2023, 12-3pm**

**Rockport Masonic Center, 361 Main St., Rockport**

**Tickets: \$20 for Adults and \$10 for Children**

KCDC will host a Community Picnic at the Rockport Masonic Center on Saturday, September 23, 2023 from Noon to 3 PM to celebrate the arrival of Fall, the Maine state legislature's many accomplishments this past session (with more yet to come) and build our community spirit as we work toward fulfilling our common goals - electing Democrats in 2024!

This is an informal event - an opportunity to bring people together, foster a sense of belonging, chat with our legislators, and have fun! Attendees are invited to bring their favorite lawn chair or picnic blanket to spread out on the green overlooking the hills, while enjoying the music provided by Sea Strings and picnic-style food from the grill. There will be games for the kids and our "Gear Up for 2024" raffle of an e-bike. This is a "rain or shine" event. If the weather is inclement, we'll move indoors to the

Tickets are \$20 for Adults and \$10 for Children. Picnic sponsorships are also available. Sponsors will receive special benefits and recognition at the event. Sponsorships will help KCDC meet the challenges of organizing for the coming 2024 election, including opening a Headquarters.

To learn more, including purchasing tickets or to become a sponsor, go to [KCDC's website](#). To volunteer or purchase raffle tickets only (1 for \$10/3 for \$20), please contact Mary Winchell at [knoxdems@gmail.com](mailto:knoxdems@gmail.com)



## Legislative Update

by Linda Souers, Friendship

The 2023 session for the 131st Maine Legislature has wrapped up. 554 bills have been signed into law by Governor Janet Mills as of August 5, 2023. For further consideration and action, approximately 480 preliminary bills have been held over for the 2024 session of the legislature. Of all the bills that were signed into law this year,

following. Click on the bill number for a link to the legislation.

[LD 654](#) “Resolve, Directing the Finance Authority of Maine to Establish a Pilot Program to Encourage the Development of Accessory Dwelling Units”

[LD 724](#) “An Act to Increase Opportunities for the Development or Preservation of Low-income Housing” This bill was sponsored by Senator Cameron Reny and is reviewed below.

[LD 1289](#) “An Act to Facilitate Property Redevelopment and Encourage Affordable Housing by Allowing the Conveyance of Unfinished Commercial Condominium Units”

[LD 1844](#) “An Act to Support Emergency Housing Facility Construction, Renovation and Acquisition Statewide by Creating a Matching Grant Program”



**Senator Cameron Reny** (pictured above) is serving her first term representing Senate District 13, which includes the town of Washington in Knox County, along with communities in Lincoln County. This year she served as Chair of the Marine Resources Committee, and was a member of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, and the Senatorial Vote Committees. Cameron has been able to navigate freshman year in the Senate while raising two young children, who have also seen more of the State House than most children. Sen. Reny was the primary sponsor for five bills that were signed into law. Her experiences in education and counseling made LD 722 an important bill to sponsor and pass into law for all people, particularly children in crises who may need more immediate healthcare than some insurance plans have allowed. And as a primary sponsor for LD 724, Cameron saw the need for a wider array of groups to be able to access government funds for workforce and low income housing particularly in rural areas of the state. She will tell you that her primary concerns right now are healthcare, housing, and the warming

The KCDC August 2023 newsletter featured links to enacted legislation sponsored by Senator Anne “Pinny” Beebe-Center and Representatives Victoria Doudera, Valli Geiger, and Stanley Zeigler, Jr.

Following are links to new legislation sponsored by Senator Reny. Click on the bill number for a link to the legislation.

[LD 316](#) “An Act to Examine Hazardous Occupations for Minors”

[LD 722](#) “an Act to Expedite the Health Insurance Referral Process for Specialists by Allowing Referrals from Urgent Care Facilities”

[LD 724](#) “An Act to Increase Opportunities for the Development or Preservation of Low-income Housing” Of particular interest, this bill further defines the option for the Maine State Housing Authority or municipal housing authority to purchase a low income housing project if it comes up for sale, thereby allowing the property to remain low-income rental housing.

[LD 920](#) “ An Act Regarding Temporary Transfers of Elver Fishing Quotas for Medical Reasons”

[LD 921](#) “An Act to Allow the Local Foods Fund for Public Schools to Be Used for Processed and Value-added Maine Food Products”



**State Representative Ann Higgins Matlack** (pictured above) is serving her third term representing House District 43; the towns of Cushing , St. George, Thomaston, S. Thomaston, and part of Owls Head. She serves on the committee of Appropriations & Financial Affairs and Taxation committee. Much of her attention is taken up by bills coming to Appropriations for funding. She is particularly happy with the Paid Family and Medical Leave program included in the budget and she co-sponsored [LD 1286](#), “Resolve, to Establish the Blue Economy Task Force to Support



and stakeholders in planning for the future of a coastal economy dependent on ocean resources. Ann was the primary sponsor for the following three bills signed into law.

Following are links to new legislation sponsored by Representative Matlack. Click on the bill number for a link to the legislation.

[LD 283](#) “An Act to Make Changes to the Maine Tax Laws”

[LD 382](#) “Resolve, Naming Portions of a Highway in St. George”

[LD 1336](#) “An Act to Increase Transparency in Municipal Ballot Referenda Expenditures”



**State Representative Holly Rae Eaton** (pictured above) is serving her first term in the legislature representing House District 15: Isle au Haut and Vinalhaven in Knox County, and other island and coastal communities in Hancock County. Holly has served on the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources. As a freshman representative, Holly had guidance from the House Democratic Office, preceding legislators from her district, and other helpful members of the Maine House. Her district has unique challenges of visiting island communities available only by boat and often unavailable due to weather. It is worthy to note that Holly, along with Cameron Reny, juggle motherhood of very young children with the demands of the Legislature, setting the example of younger lawmakers carrying Maine into the future. Beginning in January, Holly will be working on at least two bills carried over with the Marine Resources committee. With a background and family in the lobstering industry, she recognizes the importance of communication and having members of the fishing community involved in discussions about industry innovations and regulations. Holly was also a co-sponsor on five bills that became law this year,

The Legislature will finalize Cloture on September 29, establishing the list of bills to be worked on in 2024. Some committee work may continue through this fall. The second session of the 131st Legislature will convene the first week of January 2024.

---

## **Focus on the November Ballot: Question 6: Constitutional Amendment**

RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Require All Provisions in the Constitution to Be Included in the Official Printing

Ballot Question 6: Do you favor amending the Constitution of Maine to require that all of the provisions of the Constitution be included in the official printed copies of the Constitution prepared by the Secretary of State?

Question 6 on the November ballot provides for a constitutional amendment that would repeal [Article X, Section 7](#) of the Maine Constitution. Article X, Section 7 omitted Sections 1, 2 and 5, of Article X from being included in any printed copies of the Constitution, but did not invalidate those sections. Repealing Article X, Section 7 would provide for Sections 1, 2 and 5 to be included in any printed copies of the Constitution.

Sections 1 and 2 of the original Maine constitution dealt with particulars of the meeting of the first State Legislature and the terms of State officeholders. Section 5 incorporated the Act of Separation from Massachusetts and adopted parts of the Massachusetts Constitution, including language pertaining to the Indian Treaty Obligations of Maine. In 1876, by a statewide vote, Sections 1, 2 and 5 of Article X were prohibited from appearing in printed versions of the Constitution, but the text was allowed to remain valid.

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows supports Ballot Question 6. In her testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary on March 7, 2023, she noted that “...It is imperative to a fair and free democracy that our Constitution be printed in its entirety. To have any provision of the Constitution not printed but in full legal effect is antithetical to the entire premise of a transparent government...”

Reid, noted in his testimony to the same Committee on behalf of the Office of the Governor that "...any legislation that could be interpreted as invoking ancient treaties as the legal basis for modern obligations would be confusing and potentially destabilizing."

The League of Women Voters of Maine - Downeast will hold an Issue Forum on Saturday, Sept. 30, 12:00pm - 1:30pm (via Zoom and in-person) on the topic of Question 6. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

### Background Articles:

"Maine Question 6, Require Indian Treaty Obligations and Other Constitutional Provisions Included in Official Printing Amendment (2023)" [https://ballotpedia.org/Maine\\_Question\\_6,\\_Require\\_Indian\\_Treaty\\_Obligations\\_and\\_Other\\_Constitutional\\_Provisions\\_Included\\_in\\_Official\\_Printing\\_Amendment\\_\(2023\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_Question_6,_Require_Indian_Treaty_Obligations_and_Other_Constitutional_Provisions_Included_in_Official_Printing_Amendment_(2023))

A listing and description of all EIGHT questions on the November ballot can be found on the Maine Secretary of State's website: <https://www.maine.gov/sos/news/2023/2023ReferendumElectionBallotOrderAnnounced.html>



## Upcoming Events

- September 12, 2023** KCDC Monthly Meeting with Pine Tree Power Guest Speakers
- September 23, 2023** KCDC Community Picnic at Rockport Masonic Center

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼



*Copyright (C) 2023 Knox County Democratic Committee. All rights reserved.*

Our mailing address is:

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)