

Legislative Update February 2021

The 130th legislative session is unfolding with creative technological adaptations to COVID.

Though the process is different in many ways, most visible are the lack of in-person committee meetings and morning sessions of the House and Senate, legislative work is underway. Bills were submitted by the December deadline and batches are printed and become public each day. Public hearings and work sessions are “zooming” along, and soon the House and Senate will convene to consider bills released by the committee. In addition, the Governor’s biennial budget is being considered by the Committee on Appropriation and Financial Affairs.

In early January, GrowSmart Maine reviewed all 1600+ bill titles with an eye towards identifying those for which our engagement will provide a unique perspective and a critical voice in determining the outcome. Our focus areas this year include housing, land use and planning, equity, climate change, transportation, and efficient function of government. Our initial review resulted in roughly seventy bills, and we’ve been reaching out to bill sponsors to learn more, and reading bills as they are printed.

We have identified a dozen key bills for which we will likely offer support, and already have for a few! These include:

LR#	LD#	TITLE	SPONSOR	STATUS
780	201	An Act to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promote Weatherization in the Buildings Sector by Extending the Sunset Date for the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit	Sen. Nate Libby of Androscoggin	Public Hearing postponed due to storm.
58	2	An Act to Enact the Racial Impact Statement Act	Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland	2.17: committee voted out a divided report
871	446	An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office	Rep. Kyle Bailey of Gorham	Public Hearing set for 3.4 GrowSmart will testify in support
384		Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions	Spkr. Ryan Fecteau of Biddeford	Not yet printed
934		An Act to Identify and Address Barriers to Housing Choices	Sen. Eloise Vitelli of Sagadahoc	Not yet printed

1616	Resolve, to Study Best Practices and Different Area Needs for Development of Affordable Homes and Expanding Home Ownership in Maine Communities	Rep. Traci Gere of Kennebunkport	Not yet printed
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Highlighting Two Priority Bills:

LR 934: An Act to Identify and Address Barriers to Housing Choices is a direct outcome of GrowSmart Maine’s Summit 2020 and follow up forum, in which housing was identified as one of three priority areas where regional approaches are needed. This, along with land use and planning, and climate action, helped inform our legislative priorities for this year.

LD 201: An Act to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promote Weatherization in the Buildings Sector by Extending the Sunset Date for the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit. GrowSmart Maine continues to support Maine’s historic rehabilitation tax credit by advocating to extend the sunset. We are working with several members of the [Maine Alliance for Smart Growth](#) steering committee and MEREDA in this effort. CEI, Maine Preservation, Greater Portland Landmarks and Genesis Fund all consider this a priority to ensure community revitalization, sustainable economic growth, and municipal fiscal health through rehab and reuse of Maine’s historic buildings. As the title of LD 201 denotes, there is a significant climate value in reuse of existing building materials on location, compared with demolition/new construction and greenfield construction.

Partnerships: In addition to the Maine Alliance for Smart Growth, we are working with two other collaborative efforts this session: We have joined Climate Maine to review and prioritize legislative proposals that fall within our policy priorities to ensure our advocacy is effectively coordinated with others. In addition we continue to lead the policy work of the [Maine Broadband Coalition](#), which will focus on several key funding and policy bills.

How can you engage? We’ll keep you posted on bills as they are printed and work their way through the legislative session, and invite you to participate as you are comfortable. You can offer written or oral testimony for any bill, and track its progress on the Maine Legislature’s website <http://legislature.maine.gov/>