



Legislative Update: May 7, 2021

Legislative committees are meeting over Zoom, doing the work of conducting public hearings to gain input on bills and then work sessions to take action on those bills. We continue to track about twenty bills of interest with relevance to our mission and where GrowSmart Maine's unique voice can provide meaningful content.

You can read all our testimony [here](#)

Here's an update from this week, including a link to watch committee proceedings:

We support policies, programs and projects that define and protect the value of our unique built and natural places while supporting long term economic opportunity.

The deadline for committees to report out all bills has been extended to May 21st, in recognition of the significant work ahead with some bills not yet printed. The shift from apparent snails' pace to jackrabbit speed is typical for this point in the session and we all adapt to "Legislative Time," but it's always unnerving! Mid-June adjournment is still the plan. The House and Senate convene again on May 13th.

After a few months now of testifying over zoom and watching committee meetings on YouTube, I miss the casual interactions that come from being "under the dome" while also appreciating the efficiency of the virtual process (and testifying in a nice top and yoga pants). It will be interesting to see how much of this is retained to increase public access to the legislative process when it is no longer required to keep us all safe.

I imagine that legislators are in this conundrum too. Efficiency is not always most effective as, especially for new legislators, the challenge in developing relationships with your peers, staff, advocates and lobbyists, is key to doing their work well. I say this from eight years experience in the Legislature and now eleven years as an advocate for GrowSmart Maine..

You too can watch live or recorded committee work as each committee has a dedicated YouTube **channel**. **You can search [here](#) to watch the committee process live or to watch recordings of prior public hearings and work sessions.**

Three Public Hearings This Week:

We testified in support of two climate action bills related to eclectic vehicles and sea level rise, and one on housing related to Tiny Houses.



LD 1530 "An Act To Allow People To Live in Tiny Homes as a Primary or Accessory Dwelling" Sponsored by Representative David McCrea

Bill Summary: This bill establishes standards for municipalities to follow regarding tiny homes, which are structures no larger than 400 square feet constructed on a frame or chassis and designed for use as permanent living quarters. The bill allows municipalities to set rules for tiny homes that are less restrictive than state law, allows tiny homes on undeveloped and developed housing lots, allows municipal inspection of certain features of tiny homes and provides for tiny homes to be assessed for property tax purposes after 180 days in certain circumstances.

In our support for this bill, we noted that Tiny Houses are a unique and creative option that offers affordable housing, encourages diversity and strengthens a community and neighborhood. Much like our support of accessory dwelling units in LD 1312, our enthusiasm for this bill does not negate our respect for local control. This committee and the full Legislature must wrestle with whether the issue of housing choices in Maine has reached the point that this bill and LD 1312 are necessary. We think this bill is part of an overall housing choices strategy, and support the bill as presented."

LD 1572 "Resolve, To Analyze the Impact of Sea Level Rise" (Governor's Bill)

Sponsored by Representative Lydia Blume

Bill Summary: This resolve requires the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Maine Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Department of Marine Resources and the Department of Transportation to review the laws and rules they are charged with administering and submit recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources by January 1, 2022 necessary to incorporate consideration of 1.5 feet of relative sea level rise by 2050 and 3.9 feet by 2100 into administration of those laws and rules and to implement the strategy designated as "Strategy F3" in the 2020 state climate action plan.

GrowSmart Maine supported this bill as a key component of climate action. Sea level rise is one of the most immediate and potentially dangerous climate change risks to Maine's economy, communities and environment.

LD 1579 "An Act To Transition State and Local Motor Vehicle Fleets to 100 Percent Zero-emission Vehicles" Sponsored by Senator Eloise Vitelli

Bill Summary: This bill establishes goals and timetables for the State, counties and municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from light-duty motor vehicles, motor vehicles used for utility services, motor vehicles used for public transportation and motor vehicles used for public school transportation by 75% by 2035 and achieve 100% zero-emission fleets by 2040. It also directs the Governor's Energy Office to convene an interagency working group to develop a plan to achieve the transition to zero-emission fleets and sets out specific duties for that working group.



We supported this bill because it provides goals and timelines for government action in achieving the goals set out in Maine's Climate Action Plan, [Maine Won't Wait](#). A separate action plan lays out the specifics of how government can lead in these efforts, [Lead By Example](#). This report adopts ambitious targets for state government, based on the strategies set forth in Maine Won't Wait.

No further committee action this week

The Legislature did not convene this week so there are no updates on action in the House and Senate.

Looking Ahead to Next Week:

[LD 1312](#), which addresses accessory dwelling units, will be taken up on Monday by the Labor and Housing Committee.

[LD 1964](#) "An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority" has been printed and will be the subject of a public hearing next week or the following week. More on this one next week!

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. Check out the [Broadband Policy Page](#) for testimony, value propositions for each committee, and recordings of the Broadband Caucus!

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/>

You can watch live or recorded committee work as each committee has a dedicated YouTube *channel*. **You can search [here](#) to watch the committee process live or to watch recordings of prior public hearings and work sessions.**

From the Legislature's website, you can find Your Senator on the [here](#) and your State Representative [here](#)



Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy E. Smith
Executive Director