



Alliance for Maine's Future

An Effort to Improve the Economic Opportunities for All Maine People

Employer Toolkit

Maine's Economic Position

Maine is at a crossroads. The state has lost thousands of jobs over the past few years, many of them high-paying manufacturing jobs. Personal incomes continue to lag behind other states, and we are continuing to witness a steady exodus of young people—the very future of this state.

For those who believe these trends will reverse by themselves, one need only look to the national economic expansion of the 1990's. It did not affect these disturbing trends in Maine and it is clear that nothing will, unless something changes.

For almost a decade, Maine has been a leader in the nation for its high tax burden as a percentage of personal income. The reason for this is simple: since 1996, state spending has grown over 50%—almost double the growth in personal income. Over the same period, state spending has increased from about \$1.7 billion per year to over \$2.7 billion.

Introduction

At the same time, Maine continues to be plagued by one of the most negative economic climates in the United States, causing young people to flee for lack of job opportunities. This is due, in great part, to decisions made in Augusta that create barriers to economic success, such as: high workers' compensation and health insurance costs, burdensome state regulations, high taxes, and persistent instability in state government policies.

If state government continues to discourage jobs and investment in Maine's future, the state will never have the economic base needed to support the current wide array of state and local services—unless taxes get even higher.

Over the years, the majority of legislators in Augusta have turned a deaf ear to these problems and concerns. News stories confirm the consequences. State revenue officials are regularly projecting million dollar deficits, but spending increases continue. The Alliance for Maine's Future (AMF) was created to

Alliance for Maine's Future Organization

address Maine's economic position, through changing the composition of the Legislature. AMF is committed to educating and motivating the employers and employees of Maine. We can only succeed in the long run if employers play an active role in the process.

Not only can your company help our cause through participating in our programs, but financial support is needed as well.

Providing voter information to your employees is effective, it's rewarding and it's necessary. Research shows that employees consider their employers one of the most credible sources for political information.

We need employers in Maine to educate their employees about the need for them to vote in every election, issues that affect their jobs, and the legislative candidates who decide the outcome of those issues.

Research shows that employees are receptive to employers sharing information with them on key economic issues and that employers are considered a highly credible source.

AMF provides you the tools that help facilitate communication between employers and employees about a vitally important subject: the policies and political leaders that impact their economic environment. You may choose to do what you want with the AMF toolkit—use it independently to implement our programs or seek assistance from us.

In recent Maine elections, a large percentage of citizens did not vote; (64% in 2000 and 52% in 2002.) That means that a little more than **half** of us decided who will represent **all** of us. In 2000, **six** House of Representative seats were decided by **28** voters or less. And in 2002, 25 seats for the House of Representatives were decided by less than 200 votes.

Democracy truly does work in Maine, and government by the people is the cornerstone of our system. Increased voter participation *CAN* and *WILL* improve how that system performs for all of us.

Maine employers are uniquely positioned to provide voter education to employees, shareholders, retirees and their families—a potentially decisive share of the electorate.

Research tells us that four out of five workers want information from their employers about candidates, issues and elections; in fact, employees cite their employer as the single most trusted source of this information.

Please support our effort by joining AMF, using this toolkit to get your organization and your employees involved and participating in our Promote the Vote Program. If all of Maine's workforce participates on Election Day, we can turn Maine's economy around.



What is appropriate to discuss at the workplace?

DO:

- ★ Set a time for a meeting in a setting that is familiar and non-challenging.
- ★ Let employees know why it is important to talk to them about the elections and voting.
- ★ Inform them of the issues in Maine that affect the company and the viability of their jobs. Use AMF's materials to assist you.
- ★ Explain to them why you are interested in this election and why they should be as well.
- ★ Enlighten them on the poor economic environment in Maine—make it personal:
 1. Maine taxpayers pay among the highest taxes in the country.
 2. Maine companies are failing and relocating to other states.
 3. Maine's young people are emigrating out of state due to lack of quality jobs here.
 4. Maine is not attracting new business because of high taxes, high workers' comp costs, and its large and expensive state government.
 5. Maine's Legislature is unresponsive to business concerns and to creating economic opportunities.
 6. With fewer viable businesses in Maine, the increased tax burden has to be paid by those of us remaining.
 7. Since 1996, Maine's state spending has increased by more than 50%. Each year the Legislature increases spending and still has million dollar deficits.
- ★ Talk about what impacts your business opportunities in Maine.
- ★ Tell them why it is so important to register and vote; that their opinions are not being heard.
- ★ Encourage them to look at the candidates voting records on economic matters. Provide them AMF's candidate information.
- ★ *Urge them to vote on Election Day!*

DON'T:

- ★ Tell them who to vote for.

Company Endorsements

Filing Requirements

Although you should not tell your employees how to vote, that said, it should not deter you from indicating your preference in any given race or even endorsing a particular state legislative candidate. Your employees will respect your views, as long as they know the choice remains theirs.

If you do decide to communicate a specific endorsement to your employees *and* spend more than \$50.00 in doing so (e.g. mailing costs, cost of employee luncheons, etc.), you will be required to file a report with the state. Maine law requires the disclosure of expenditures in support of political candidates. Disclosure reporting is not a burdensome task. Please log on to our website:

www.allianceformaine.org to view a sample form—which has been completed to serve as a guide, should you choose to endorse one or more candidates. It is very simple to complete. If you spend less than \$50.00 for the communication, there are no reporting requirements.

Please utilize the following sections as a guide, which outline the three major activities: Voter Registration, Absentee Ballots, Get Out the Vote.

- ☑ Voter Registration
- ☑ Absentee Ballots
- ☑ Get-Out-The-Vote



Voter Registration

People fail to vote for a lot of reasons—lack of awareness, apathy, confusion, or the belief that “my vote won’t make a difference.” No matter how well we educate and motivate our employees, it’s important to remember that our work won’t count unless people register and vote. It takes inspiration plus registration to increase voter participation. Because thousands of eligible, unregistered voters have jobs, this is an area in which you can have a major impact.

Mobilize your team by first making sure everyone is registered to vote—and that includes members of their families!

Action items:

- Order Voter Registration material from AMF: required state registration cards, posters, Q & A on registering to vote, etc.
- Include a voter registration drive as part of company events: the company picnic, in-house seminars, etc.
- Include voter registration material in employee information packets, and in welcome kits for employees relocating to your area.
- Delegate voter registration duties to your managers—ask them to distribute registration materials at staff meetings, and to help employees who may need assistance.
- Send a broadcast email with a link to the AMF website.

To see *SAMPLE* payroll stuffers, broadcast emails and memo, visit
AMF’s website: www.allianceformaine.org.



Absentee Ballots

The key to making every vote count is to make every vote easy, no matter what the circumstances. Personal or business travel, illness, even transportation problems can prevent people from getting to the polls. Maine law makes it easy to cast an absentee ballot by allowing for 'no reason' absentee ballots. ***You don't have to be out-of-town or have any other reason to take advantage of this easy way to vote at a time that is most convenient to you.***

The easiest ways to get absentee resources is to contact AMF and sign-up for our Absentee Ballot card program, contact either your local town clerk (contact information available on our website) or the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office:

Elections Division, #101 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 624-7650, www.state.me.us/sos/cec/

Action items:

- Contact AMF and sign up for our company Absentee Ballot Card Program, designed with a personalized message from your company to your employees.
- Contact the Secretary of State's Office and request Absentee Voting Guides from their office to hand out to employees.
- Remind everyone registering to vote that absentee ballots are available **now**, if needed.
- Send a reminder to anyone traveling on or near Election Day.
- Attach a message to your organization's travel and expense account forms. Include voter information in your company travel policy.
- Send a broadcast email with a link to the Secretary of State's website.
- Add a link to your company website.

To see *SAMPLE* payroll stuffers, broadcast emails and memo, visit AMF's website:
www.allianceformaine.org.



Get-Out-The-Vote

Even if you have done everything in your power to prepare people to vote, there's no guarantee everyone will make it to the polls on Election Day. You will have to help provide the motivation to your employees to vote. In the recent past elections dozens of seats to the House of Representatives and Senate were by just a handful of votes.

Once again, even the simplest actions yield great results. Basic information—a reminder to your employees on Election Day that says where to go and when the polls close—has proven in other states to have a strong impact on voter turnout.

Action items:

- Send a reminder to your employees on the Monday before Election-Day.
- Announce a company raffle for all employees that vote. AMF will provide you assistance on holding a raffle.
- Distribute information through payroll stuffers. *(Please see Sample Payroll Stuffers on our website or contact us and we will send them to you).*
- Mobilize team members to knock on office doors or stop by cubicles.
- Leave flyers on desks.
- Hang posters in lunchrooms and other public areas.
- Post a reminder on the front page of your company Intranet.
- Send out a broadcast email with a reminder and voting information.

To see *SAMPLE* payroll stuffers, broadcast emails and memo, visit AMF's website: www.allianceformaine.org.



Lack of knowledge leads to lack of voting. But where do we get good information? How do we sort through the deluge of information from candidates, parties, news organizations and others? Who do we trust for an expert opinion? Because the research tells us that four out of five employees want information from their employers regarding candidates, issues and elections; it is essential that you communicate with them to help inform them about the issues and the candidates' positions. Employers are the most trusted source for this information—that makes the workplace an ideal setting for voter education.

It is helpful to provide employees with voting records of incumbents. Being fully informed means knowing how an elected official votes—as well as how that voting record affects business interests. AMF utilizes the objective, non-partisan research and analysis provided by the Maine Economic Research Institute (MERI) for this purpose. MERI compiles the voting records of Maine lawmakers on key economic legislation, as well as personal data for new candidates. Link to this valuable information through the AMF website or visit the MERI website at www.fixmaine.org.



Alliance for Maine's Future

45 Melville Street, Suite #1

Augusta, ME 04330

Phone: (207) 620-7060

Fax: (207) 620-7062

Email: info@allianceformaine.org

Website: www.allianceformaine.org