

MECEP Matters

April 2017



Position Announcement

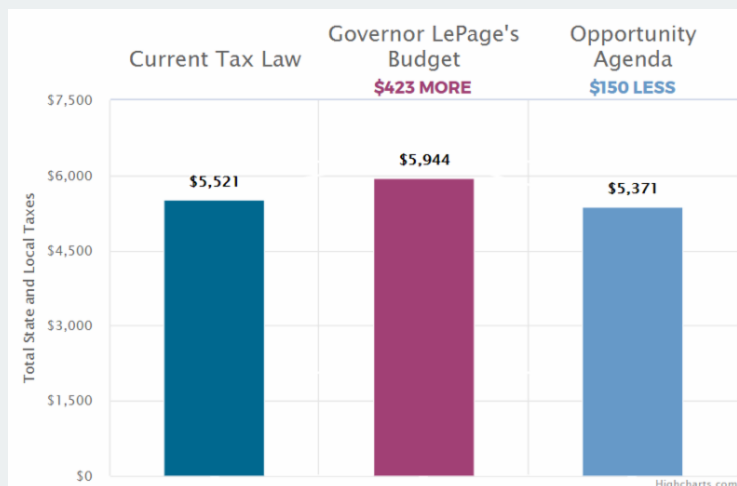
MECEP seeks a campaign and digital communications coordinator to help expand our reach and impact. Position is open until filled but candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. [Click for more information.](#)



MECEP Tax Calculator Shows How You Would Fare under Competing Tax Plans

As the state budget fight continues, two budget proposals would impact the state and local taxes paid by Maine families. Under Governor LePage's proposal the typical family of four would see their taxes increase \$423. Under the Democrats'

Opportunity Agenda, this family would pay \$150 less. You can use MECEP's tax calculator to enter your family's information to see how the plans stack up.



The tax calculator reflects MECEP's ongoing effort to help people understand how decisions made in Augusta impact them. It provides insight on the tax parts of the state budget. We also continue to advocate on other aspects of the budget, like ensuring adequate resources for schools and communities.

[Go to Tax Calculator](#)



Opportunity Agenda Invests in Maine Kids, Families, and Communities



The Democratic [Opportunity Agenda](#) rejects the governor’s request for more tax cuts for the wealthy while increasing taxes for everyone else. It targets available resources to key priorities like getting treatment for those suffering from addiction, providing job training for careers that will support a family, and expanding access to critical early childhood education programs.

[Link to our Analysis](#)



Introducing MECEP's Newest Board Member

Lucy Van Hook joined the MECEP board of directors this month. Lucy is the community development manager of the Our Katahdin economic development group in the Millinocket region. Lucy says, “I look forward to serving on the MECEP board to bring a perspective from a transitioning, redeveloping rural town and economy, and being able to bring a larger statewide focus of economic policy to local conversations around community and economic development in the Katahdin region.”



Over the past 10 years, Lucy has worked with inland and coastal communities throughout Maine on groundfish fisheries management, climate change, and community-based solutions for energy. She has also spent many hours in a kitchen catering weddings. Lucy holds a B.A. from Bowdoin College, where she majored in biology and environmental studies, and a M.S. in climate science and policy from Bard Environmental Policy Center. Lucy lives in Millinocket with her fiancé and her dog, Benson.



Predatory Lenders Run Amok; MECEP Weighs In

MECEP is playing an increasing role to protect Mainers from being cheated by predatory lenders. Just this month, we helped defeat [a measure](#) in the state legislature that would have created a new long-term loan product in Maine with rates well in excess of 200% APR on loans as large as \$2,000.



We are supporting [a bill](#) that would enact state protections for student loan borrowers where few exist at the federal level. This month, we also urged legislators to adopt stronger protections against abusive [debt buyers](#) and [for-profit colleges](#).

We're also fighting for consumer protections at the federal level as the U.S. House Republicans are pushing to [repeal and replace](#) the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau

(CFPB) that has been working to get banks and lenders to treat people fairly. MECEP recently hosted Seth Frotman, CFPB Student Loan Ombudsman, for a conversation with state leaders on student loan predatory lending and continues to engage Maine's Congressional Delegation on this issue.



You Can Still Weigh in on Bills to Alter the Minimum Wage Law Passed by Voters in November 2016

The legislative committee debating Maine's minimum wage asked MECEP to provide [expert testimony](#) at their hearing on April 5. The committee heard 13 hours of testimony on nine bills that seek to overturn parts of the minimum wage law that voters passed in November.

It is not too late to make your voice heard. [Call or email your legislator](#) and tell them to reject proposals to undo any piece of the minimum wage increase. Let them know they should say no to shortchanging Maine's workers.

Link to MECEP's testimony on [minimum wage](#) and [tipped minimum wage](#)



Read MECEP's Blog

Featured Blog Post

James Myall's April 3 blog post talks about why the newly enacted minimum wage is important to tipped workers who are subjected to discrimination, sexual harassment, and wage theft.

[The Tipped Minimum Wage is Unfair and Discriminatory](#)



MECEP's Analysis of Income Tax Surcharge

Facts and Figures

\$22,665 – [average tax cut for the top 1% of Mainers whose income is above \\$384,000 under LePage budget proposal](#)

\$150 – [average tax cut for the top 1% of Mainers under the Democrats' Opportunity Agenda](#)

\$421 – [average tax increase for the typical Maine family earning \\$56,000 a year under LePage budget proposal](#)

\$150 – [average tax cut for the typical Maine family under the Democrats' Opportunity Agenda](#)



More than \$150 million – [additional funding provided annually for education and local services in the Democrats' Opportunity Agenda compared to the LePage budget](#)

0 – [number of tax increases required by the Democrats' Opportunity Agenda to reduce property taxes and increase funding for schools and local services compared to current law](#)

42 – [number of tax increases required by LePage budget proposal to reduce taxes on average for households with income above \\$92,000 while raising taxes on average for households with income below \\$92,000, cutting access to health care and public health, and continuing to shortchange Maine's schools and communities](#)



MECEP in the News

In case you missed them, MECEP's analyses were used by journalists and bloggers and television and radio news to inform public debate:

[Income tax cuts for the wealthy or property tax cuts for everyone: A tale of two budgets](#)

According to the online calculator put out by the Maine Center for Economic Policy, a Rockland family with two children earning \$56,000 a year and owning a home would end up paying \$547 more in taxes under Governor LePage's plan while they would pay \$516 less in taxes under the Democratic plan. The top 1 percent of Mainers, with income over \$384,000, stands to gain an average tax cut of \$22,665 under the LePage budget.

April 27, 2017 - The Free Press (Rockland)

[Property tax cut keeps money in the right place](#)

According to an analysis by the Maine Center for Economic Policy, LePage's approach would give people who report more than \$384,000 of taxable income a tax break of \$22,665 a year. Meanwhile, everybody who earns less than \$92,000 a year would see a tax hike.

April 24, 2017 - Portland Press Herald

[Republicans base their new Obamacare repeal on a Maine program they call a success. Don't believe them.](#)

"People who were young and healthy certainly benefited," says Garrett Martin, executive director of the Maine Center for Economic Policy. "But small businesses that had older employees or were in rural parts of the state really got hung out to dry."

April 19, 2017 - Chicago Tribune

[LePage administration forfeits almost \\$2 billion in federal aid to Maine](#)

Drew Gattine, chair of the House Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, says that "turning away federal funds doesn't lower your tax burden; it sends your tax dollars to another state. Mainers should be outraged by this report." Amen, I say. And you may say it, too after reading the Maine Center for Economic Policy's quietly damning study.

April 18, 2017 – Portland Press Herald

GOP's new health care rallying cry: Remember the Maine! *"Rather than building as big an insurance pool as possible so the costs got meted out more broadly, what the program did is sequester those people," explained Garrett Martin, the executive director of the Maine Center for Economic Policy. "It provided an opportunity for the insurance companies to underwrite much cheaper policies for younger, healthier people and jack up costs for older, sicker, people."*

April 17, 2017 - TPM DC

Gov. LePage's cruel budget is dead on arrival, now the real conversation begins *Garrett Martin of the Maine Center for Economic Policy joins the Beacon's podcast to talk about Maine's state budget, examining Governor LePage's proposal and the Democrats' Opportunity Agenda.*

April 14, 2017 - The Beacon

[Analyzing the impact of the surtax](#)

Caroline Cornish, WCSH-TV, April 13, 2017, interviews MECEP's Garrett Martin. Martin disputes the governor's Office of Policy and Management's study conclusion that the education tax surcharge approved by voters on income over \$200,000 will cause people to leave the state. "There's just no data to support that level of total outmigration," he says.
April 13, 2017 - WCSH-TV

[LePage proves why relying on tips isn't sound economic policy](#) In Maine, eight of 10 workers who are paid the subminimum wage are women, according to the left-leaning Maine Center for Economic Policy. Tipped workers are twice as likely to live in poverty as other workers and nearly half of tipped workers rely on public assistance, the center's research found. But the poverty rate for these workers is lower in states that require them to be paid the full minimum wage, the Economic Policy Institute reported in 2014.
April 8, 2017 - Bangor Daily News

[Help stop addiction by funding teen mental health care](#) It's a bad time for Maine to forfeit federal funds that allow intervention to take place. However, that's exactly what our state has done, according to a report out recently from the Maine Center for Economic Policy. Last year, when an average of one person a day died of an overdose in Maine, the state Department of Health and Human Services failed to spend \$800,000 in federal funds available to help adolescents struggling to overcome addiction.
April 5, 2017 - Portland Press Herald, Kennebec Journal, and Central Maine Morning Sentinel

[LePage's responsibility is first to Maine people, not to shrinking the federal deficit](#) The Maine Center for Economic Policy last week released a compendium of federal funding opportunities Maine has missed out on over the past six years. The organization estimated the combined value at \$1.9 billion.
March 31, 2017 - Bangor Daily News

[Maine DHHS is failing the children it is supposed to protect](#) Despite this major shortfall in needed programs, a report out last week from the Maine Center for Economic Policy revealed that in 2016, the DHHS failed to spend \$800,000 in federal funds available to help adolescents struggling with substance use disorders. That same year, the DHHS abruptly canceled a program that [helped], forfeiting an additional \$3 million in available federal funds. None of this money required state matching funds, yet Maine left it on the table rather than use it to help children in desperate need of care.
March 31, 2017 - Portland Press Herald



You're invited to join MaineShare

Did you know MECEP is a member of [MaineShare](#), an organization that raises money for progressive nonprofit organizations through workplace giving campaigns? MaineShare donors have contributed over \$4.6 million in charitable contributions to Maine organizations since 1989. All the dollars stay local and support organizations like MECEP working to support thriving Maine communities.

Workplace giving campaigns provide an opportunity for employees and company leadership to work together to inspire charitable community investment. Contact us if your organization would like to offer MaineShare payroll deduction to its employees as an easy and effective way for them to make charitable contributions to over 45 great Maine organizations.



MECEP Matters is a monthly update on MECEP's work. If you know someone who is passionate about economic justice or interested in economic issues, please

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