

William S. Cohen Papers Forum  
October 5, 2005  
University of Maine

Transcript of remarks by John Baldacci  
Governor of Maine

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Thank you very much, thank you very much, thank you very much, thank you very much, thank you very much. President Kennedy, I just want to tell you how much I appreciate your leadership. And seeing the challenges that the University faces and the citizens of our state face and the importance of this flagship campus having you at helm, I think we're going to certainly be with good stewardship. So thank you very much, and I appreciate the introduction, also.

I am a graduate of the University of Maine, very proud of that. Seven out of eight in our family graduated from the University of Maine, and thank goodness that the University is here as a ladder up for opportunity. Not just for my family but for a lot of families throughout the state of Maine. I want to thank Jan Staples, the Cohen Center, all of you that had a hand in the forum, and also the presentations that were made earlier. I know how exciting they were and I'm still hearing people talking about them. So, I think this is a wonderful opportunity for our state, frankly, to showcase what we're doing as a state and some of the issues and challenges that we're facing as a country, and how we need to really do more, much more, in this particular area, and what a huge economic opportunity it is to be able to address this, and I think, frankly, a very exciting time. And I think here at the University it couldn't be at a better place because of the research and development in the components that are here to make sure that we're getting that cutting edge technology here in our state.

I've got a couple of props with me today, and just some of the things that we're doing at the state level. But before I do that I want to also point out the Director of Energy Independence is here, is Beth Nagusky. She does a tremendous job in our office. People want her to...(applause) thank you. People were questioning three years ago when we set up the office as to why we were doing it, and I think they're appreciative of the fact that it's already been set up and doing a tremendous amount of initiatives. I also want to recognize our public advocate Steve Ward, is here. I really appreciate being able to work with you, Steve. (Applause) And I recognize former state senator Chris Hall is here, nice to see you, and where is the state representative, Emily King, where are you? Emily is right over here. Emily, thank you very much--tireless advocate for the University. Thank you very much, and I see so many other friends that are out here that I've served with. I'm in danger of not mentioning them all. But it certainly is a real treat to be here with you.

This issue is a very important issue to me personally, and to us as a state. My family was in business during the early seventies, and I know what a hardship it is when you can't buy gas on Sunday, and what that does to businesses, and the ripple impact of what that energy shortage caused in terms of all of our economies, and the hardships it placed on families and individuals. And at that time I was a member of the Bangor City

Council, and we actually started an Energy Advisory Committee at that time to make sure that we were doing what we needed to do, kind of like the environmental movement, you know, you act locally and think globally and we tried to make sure weatherization, we tried to make sure energy efficiency, we tried to reach out and have public-private partnerships and collaborations to try to reduce our energy use and to kind of set an example about what could be done by citizens and homeowners and businesses. And I use that same practice as governor. Because it was important when I was elected governor to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I felt that we needed to do that, and we needed to set an example and send a message to Washington. And we undertook efforts at the state level to reduce our energy use and to show people that it wasn't an economic hardship and actually stretched dollars.

And I was just reviewing some of the results of that and what we've been able to see is that in Maine we've been able to burn biodiesel to heat state office buildings. We've purchased thirty to forty percent of our electricity from renewable power. All of our new and renovated state office buildings and institutions of higher learning will incorporate green building standards. We have improved the fuel economy of state vehicle fleet by downsizing vehicles and by tripling the number of hybrid vehicles. We've also reduced state business travel and rely more on video and audio conferencing, and we've expanded the state vanpool program and installed preferential parking in state offices for car pools, vanpools and hybrids. And we've installed energy efficient lighting in state buildings. Amongst many others, as just an example, Maine State Housing Authority has already approved the construction of their 25 million dollars that they have in Maine State Housing, that they have to meet the green building standards in order to utilize that 25 million dollars that Maine State Housing makes available. And recognizing that what we're doing is using less energy and we're also improving the environment because we've been able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our state by 8%. We've been able to reduce our motor fuel usage by 550,000 gallons, or 4%, and we've recognized that we have to do more. In this past session of the legislature, we actually have 25% rebates on the installation of solar electric and solar thermal installations. We have natural gas utility conservation programs that were just recently approved by the Public Utilities Commission. We have a biofuel production tax credit, model residential energy building code, and as I mentioned our green house gas reductions in our goals.

But there is more that we can do, and we must do. We're working on a new bill to make Maine more energy efficient and secure. And at a minimum it's going to include incentives to conserve energy and to use energy more efficiently and to expand our reliance on clean, renewable energy that's made in Maine. Maine has had a long and proud history of depending on its own renewable power resources, especially its wood and water. Bill Cohen recognized this tremendous energy potential that lay in Maine forests nearly thirty years ago. And I'm happy to say that we're now realizing a good deal of that potential today. He also recognized that Maine has had other affordable and environmentally sound energy resources.

In 1978 Maine's wind power resource was virtually untouched. But now we recognize that our state has vast wind energy resources. Four wind power projects totally nearly one thousand megawatts are under active consideration today, and one has been permitted. One energy source that's long been talked about but in Maine is tidal energy.

We are currently studying, and the early research has been very positive, that Maine's tidal power resource, and it appears also to be quite large as well, is very promising, especially in down east Maine. The technology for harnessing the tides has changed a lot since the first time we talked about tidal power in Maine, so it's not your same old tidal power. There's new ways of doing these things, and that's where the research and development and the technologies that are created help us in terms of addressing these issues.

You know, it's truly unfortunate that it took two hurricanes and untold destruction and misery in the Gulf Coast to wake this nation up to the fact that we lack a sound energy policy, a policy that protects us against disruptions to our gas and oil supplies. A policy that protects us against prices that we're rising even before the two hurricanes. Bill Cohen recognized the power and promise of energy independence, and he also recognized that cheap oil causes our memories and will power to fade.

Part of the discussion this morning was what we were doing as far as a region, and I want you to know as the chair of the Coalition of Northeastern Governors, we are making renewable energy in this region a priority. We have a biofuels initiative. Our commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection is working with nine other states in the region and developing greenhouse gas emissions standards called RGGI, where we're going to be able to reduce our carbon and improve our environment, and we feel very strongly as a coalition that we're going to be able to send a message to Washington that they really do need to deal with these issues. And I think in a way it really is coming from the ground up, from what we're doing in our state, what we're doing as part of a coalition, a bipartisan coalition of governors, and what we want to send a message to Washington they need to do. We're doing what we need to do as being part of the problem, but we're also demonstrating that we can be part of the solution.

This is an important area, and I feel very strongly about it, because our foreign policy shouldn't be dependent on foreign resources for energy. We should have the decision making in our own country for our country's own national security and it's economic security. We should have it, and we should have it in terms of renewable energy in conservation efficiency and renewable energy, because I believe that there are huge economic development opportunities while we're addressing our energy and our environmental issues.

And I think especially in our state of Maine, because when you say Maine you think quality, you think about pride, you think about quality workmanship and integrity, and you think about leadership in these issues around the environment and around energy, and I think it's our state's responsibility to stand up higher and speak louder on these particular issues, because it really does need to be done, and I actually think it will actually help our national economy. And I think very, that there are very many citizens in our state that feel very strongly about these issues. We should learn from this particular predicament that we never want to be in this situation again. And I think the difference from seventies and eighties, nineties and today is frankly we cannot repeat history again in the future. We need to start having national initiatives around what it is that we're trying to do as a state or as a region. And that's why I felt it was important for our state to undertake these efforts to demonstrate results to people, and I've just scratched the surface because there's an efficiency Maine program that gives rebates to businesses and individuals, energy efficient light bulbs and also different techniques in

terms of being able to use energy more wisely that are out there. There's a lot more that our state is doing, and I think that these are things that we ought to be undertaking and we're going to be introducing more legislation around that when the session comes forward.

I want to, you know, also recognize that as friends of mine have told me, "Governor, it's not going to happen over night." But I think part of my responsibility, as a leader is to start making those changes now so that the future, future administrations, future families, future businesses, will recognize the importance of doing these efforts in our state. That's the importance of what we're doing. We live in the best place in the world. I'm going to Old Town later, it's one of the top 100 cities. It's being recognized in terms of being able to raise and protect families and children. We have two sites in the state of Maine. No other state has that many. Some states don't have any. But our state recognizes that. It's a wonderful quality of life. It's the wonderful economic opportunities that are in our state. Also, our initiatives on broadband and cellular are going to allow people to connect anywhere in Maine to go anywhere in the world.

And that's what we're setting the stage for in terms of as you look at the 21st Century, is that Maine will be the jumping point. It will be where people will want to come. They will want to be able to raise their families, they will want to be able to start their businesses, because we have the best, most talented people on the face of the earth. Because they're making us do what we're doing in the energy area, the efficiency area, the renewable area. And they're also recognizing why we need to address healthcare, why we need to promote higher education of more people in our state, invest in research and development, and protect our natural resources. It comes from the people of this state, and it's reflective in the leadership, in the vision that we're trying to promote.

I'm often reminded though, Billy's father, Ruby, who was a very close friend of our family, because they used to bring the rolls over. I try to explain to people in Washington how small Maine is because Ruby and Billy used to bring the Rolls over to the restaurant, and we were doing bipartisan dinners a long time before it was popular. And Ruby, let me tell you, was a very wise man, very self taught, hard worker. And I remember we went through the energy crisis of the seventies and, you know, as we were watching the prices escalate, and he was the one that came up with slogan, "It goes up by telegraph and it comes down by pony express." I said to somebody today, "I think they actually shot the horse this time, you know." But this is a huge opportunity. And I think in my service as governor we have had to address a lot of challenges. From paper companies closing and bankruptcies, and challenges with Irving Tanning or Pride Manufacturing, and the challenges of trying to address healthcare, trying to address a budget shortfall. My mother used to always say, "It builds character." I'm developing a lot of character in these circumstances, and I'm not complaining about it because I ran for it, but the point about addressing these challenges is that there are opportunities in these challenges. And I think this energy area has some huge opportunities for us as a state.

I mean we're doing windmills in Aroostook County, because not just to generate renewable energy but we want to create a manufacturing opportunity to build the component parts of those windmills. We're trying to initiate solar energy because we think very strongly about solar in terms of taking advantage of that in terms of being renewable, clean, and everything else but also because of the solar panels that are being in short supply, and maybe research here at the University can lead to a new type of

technology to help those solar panels and then we can manufacture that. We've got a business in Bangor that says that they're going to develop 900 employees to build energy efficient heat pumps. So we're going to be solving the energy issue, protecting our environment and actually building our economy. And as business people tell me, it's much better when you say your products are made in Maine. It sells well. Maine's brand name sells very well, and it represents that quality, pride, integrity and hard work and earnestness goes with saying you're from Maine. How many times have you heard somebody in Florida say, "You know, I go down there, I'm from Maine, and they hire you like that." That's all you have to say. If you say you're from Aroostook County you get double snaps, okay?

People in Aroostook County are terrific people, you know? I went up there campaigning one time, when I was running for Congress, and I locked my car, unfortunately at my own, at my own fault there, because when the administrator for the hospital came out and we're fumbling around for the keys, and he looked at me, grimaced, and he said, "If you want votes here, you can't lock your car." And I said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" And he says, he said to me, "Listen," he says, "If you lock your car, people up in Aroostook County think that one, you're from away definitely, and two, you've got something to hide." Okay? So, they want to know why. That's the way it is in the county. Great people. Over the years we ran the restaurant, and they'd come down for the basketball tournaments, they used to take the B&A Train during basketball tournaments, come in for a spaghetti feed and go to the basketball tournament, so I ran into a lot of nice people, and as a matter of fact, I had two offices in Aroostook County, and it still wasn't enough. Because if people think there are two Maines, there's more than two Maines. I went to Aroostook County, I put one in Presque Isle, and I had one in the St. John Valley, and I got the complaints from central Aroostook saying what about them? They only allowed me four offices for my entire district, but it is a great state and it's a great opportunity to be here at the University of Maine and we're very proud of the University of Maine and its importance to our state.

The state of Maine has a huge opportunity in front of it to work on these issues. Our country needs to address these issues, but that shouldn't stop us to be that kind of example. You know, the light house out there amongst the clouds to say, "Well what are they doing in Maine?" and what we're working on maybe will help to send a message about maybe trying to do these kinds of things and working regionally. Trying to send the message. I just said to folks, we've been down this road enough to know that history repeating itself is not speaking very well of all of us.

So I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today, to share in that, and just as a sober reminder, we were informed earlier today about ISO New England, they came out with a press release today indicating that there is some risk, **some** risk of shortages. And we've been paying particularly close attention to this and working with the electricity and natural gas and fuel oil markets. And I want to underline **some** risk. So it's important that we work together on these issues, and Beth is heading up an energy task force that's working on the possibility of these issues occurring so we've done the planning to make sure that when it does happen, like a hurricane, we're prepared. Even though we hope for the best. And she's been doing a great job in pulling together state agencies and private parties to help us through this. And it's going to be a long winter. We're already planning to do our Operation Keep Maine Warm program, where we've

doubled the number of elderly households that we're going to go around and we're going to do some insulation and weatherization. And these kits, last time they were fifty dollars, last year, this year they're sixty dollars, but Beth tells me that they've actually doubled the amount of dollar savings of energy generation because of the higher cost. So we're going to be doing that. You'll actually see me when I'm going to take a hammer and actually do something, rather than break something, but I'm going to get out and about and we're going to end up doing that. I encourage all of you, if you're interested in volunteering, to log on to our website. We're trying to promote volunteerism. We're trying to promote the fact that government can't do it all by itself. Trying to promote the fact that we need business leaders, we need non-profit and community leaders, you know? It's going to require the state's citizens to sort of galvanize. I'm determined that nobody's going to freeze this winter on my watch, so we've already been working with the different city agencies, the CAP agencies. I've talked to Bishop Malone to work with the churches. And I encourage all of you to feed into that network because we just want to watch out for each other. It's our responsibility to each other in addressing these challenges that lie before us.

So also in Aroostook County, by the way, you may have heard it before, you know, the remark, by the way, the University does a great job, when the University of Maine was recognized as the New England School of Composting, Bob, it was a big day in Maine. And I happened to be the featured speaker at that ceremony. But the University would have been very proud of them, one of their alums, at that time only a lowly member of Congress. They gave me yellow boots to wear and they filled the stage with compost. Because they wanted it to be the right picture, you know, and I was the straight man. But the University had bucket loaders next to the stage, and each of the speakers had a plaque on a bucket loader with their name on it, okay. But I just want to assure you, when I finished my remarks, they dumped a load of compost right next to the stage. And I said, "I've never had my remarks measured quite that way before." But it was a full load! You would have been proud. And the other thing is, I want you to know, in Aroostook County, this is sort of intermission after your lunch. You folks are getting a little bit of humor with this. But when I have been in politics long enough to have been around the full cycle from city council to state senate to congress and now governor. So I can laugh at myself and I think it's good, a little bit of humor, but I was campaigning up north in Aroostook, and I had a farmer take me aside and tell me that if I wanted his vote I had to behave differently, and I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, the last guy that was here, he was standing out in the field with me, and he promised he was going to reduce the trade barriers, increase the price of potatoes and I wasn't going to have to work as much." Well, I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well, I looked at him and I looked down and he was standing in a cow pie. And I began to smile and he asked me why I was smiling and I told him it appears like he was beginning to melt." Don't laugh too hard!

But listen, thank you for being here. Thank you for having me here. It is a big deal; it's a big opportunity, and no better place than right here at the University of Maine to start solving the problems for the state of Maine and for the country. So I just appreciate what you're doing, and thank you very much for having me here today. Thank you very much.