

STATEMENT OF HORACE HILDRETH

During the campaign there was a lot of talk by the Governor about how Maine's environmental laws are damaging the economy, discouraging business from coming to Maine, and stifling employment.

Like the old false choice that was foisted on us 40 years ago, a choice between pickerels or payrolls, these cries of alarm are hogwash – utter foolishness. In fact, the opposite is true. Angus King put it best when he pointed out that these laws have protected the one single advantage that Maine has over other states in the northeast in attracting people and business, namely, our environment and quality of life.

These laws don't damage the economy, they enhance it. To repeal them, or water them down wholesale, would wreck it.

The 63 so-called "reform" proposals, which were written by lobbyists for big out-of-state corporations, would do just that.

Although a few of these proposals are entirely sensible, when taken as a whole they would lead to a disaster. Take the one which says simply: "Conform Maine statutory and regulatory standards to federally required standards". This sounds reassuring, but it isn't. Any lawyer can tell you that without exception, any change in Maine's standards to conform to the Feds would in fact be a weakening, in some cases a drastic one.

All Federal standards are a lowest common denominator, imposed to make sure that even the most environmentally backward states conform to some kind of minimum standard.

What the administration and the Legislature should be concentrating on are not the laws themselves, but those regulations which are demonstrably unnecessary or unreasonable ---emphasis on the word demonstrably. Nobody wants foolish regs. They want good practical ones that protect and enhance the environment.

We should concentrate on implementation issues – most of which probably don't even need legislative action. We all want our rules and regulations to be implemented in an efficient, predictable, and fair manner, but we don't want or need rollbacks. I endorse this set of guiding principles being announced today. They should be kept in mind while assessing the merits of the present regulations.