

State News Updates

Bi-partisan Bill Seeks to Restore Tip Credit

LD 673, "An Act To Restore the Tip Credit to Maine's Minimum Wage Law," seeks to reverse a provision that was included in Question 4 on last November's ballot. The law passed by Question 4 is threefold - it will incrementally raise the minimum wage by 60 percent until it reaches \$12.00 per hour in 2020, it raises the wage that tipped employees receive each year until it reaches the full minimum wage, effectively eliminating the tip credit and it indexes the minimum wage to inflation.

If passed, LD 673 would reinstate the tip credit portion of this minimum wage law.

"Of all the things going on in Augusta, the tip credit is one of the issues that I've heard the most about from constituents and restaurant owners in my district," said Sen. Katz, sponsor of the bill. "That's because this new law fundamentally changed the server-customer dynamic in restaurants all across Maine and is already causing some significant misunderstandings. Proponents of this provision sold it to the voters as a way to increase wages for these individuals, but it has actually decreased wages in many cases as customers have begun to tip less, resulting in a much lower hourly wage.

"The elimination of the tip credit is also detrimental to restaurant owners, who already operate on razor thin margins. It is already forcing them to raise prices, reduce hours, eliminate benefits, reduce pay for back-of-the-house staff, switch to a computerized business model, eliminate positions or take a significant hit.

"Many Mainers have earned a very decent wage working in restaurants and bars for tips which are often times significantly higher than the minimum wage. But this new policy threatens that, hurts our businesses and will result in higher menu prices and a lower quality in service for the consumer."

AccessAble Home Tax Credit

Beginning on January 1, 2017, a new tax credit, called the AccessAble Home Tax Credit, became available for Mainers who earn less than \$55,000 and have to pay for home modifications to accommodate for a person with a physical disability or hardship who lives at the residence. Some examples of necessary modifications to make your home more accessible include the instillation of grab bars or ramps, widening doorways, etc. For more information, visit www.mainehousing.org.

Maine State Archives, Library Seek to Make Maine's Historical Documents More Accessible

The Maine State Archives and Maine State Library have launched a project to make Maine's historical documents more accessible by digitizing items from all over the state, and they've invited the public to help. The project, called the Digital Maine Transcription Project, gives users the ability to type the contents of these historic documents, making them text-searchable and therefore easier for researchers to use.

"It's a different and new way for people to engage with the collections," said Archivist II Heather Moran. "Transcription is a time-consuming process, but one that comes with great benefits."

"Spreading the work out to the public means that several people can each transcribe only a handful of pages and they will complete the work it would have taken our staffs maybe years to finish," said Kate Herbert, project manager and employee of both MSA and MSL.

According to a release, "Currently available for transcription on the Digital Maine site are: Civil War hospital records, slavery and African-American history documents, militia records from the Revolutionary War and War of 1812; correspondence from the library's Dahlov Ipcar collection (American painter, illustrator, and author), and town records."

For more information, visit www.digitalmaine.net/projects.

MDOL Reports More than 195 Veterans Hired through Hire-A-Vet Campaign

According to the Maine Department of Labor, 197 veterans were hired by employers participating in the 2016 Maine Hire-A-Vet Campaign during the 100-day initiative. According to a release, "146 employers participated in the campaign, with an average placement wage of \$22.23 per hour reported. Employers and veteran-hires came from all 16 Maine counties.

A list of the 2016 Maine Hire-A-Vet employers can be found at:
www.mainecareercenter.gov/hireavet.shtml.
