

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

January 9, 2009

Dear Citizens of Gardiner:

In 2008, Mainers entrusted me to serve another term in the U.S. Senate. I am deeply honored and pledge to continue to work with my colleagues, both old and new, and with President Obama to forge bipartisan solutions to the economic crisis and the many other challenges facing our nation. I appreciate this opportunity to report on some highlights of my recent work in the U.S. Senate.

The number one priority continues to be to strengthen our struggling economy. We must look at additional ways to get our economy back on track. Last summer, I introduced an economic recovery bill, which included a proposal for \$50 billion in infrastructure funding to create jobs and improve our nation's aging transportation infrastructure. Anyone who drives in Maine recognizes the deteriorating state of many of our roads and bridges. Investing in our infrastructure not only creates jobs but also leaves communities with lasting and needed assets. My proposal also includes \$1 billion in additional funding for the Workforce Investment Act and tax incentives to help small businesses and to encourage energy conservation.

One of the energy provisions of the legislation was signed into law last year. It provides a \$300 tax credit to help individuals purchase clean-burning wood pellet stoves in order to provide an affordable alternative for heating their homes.

Soaring energy prices throughout much of 2008 highlight the critical need for our nation to achieve energy independence. As a nation, we should set a goal of energy independence by the year 2020—an ambitious goal that will require a multi-faceted approach, but one that can be achieved through resolve and commitment. I joined a bipartisan group of 20 Senators that has developed a comprehensive bill to expand production of American energy, promote conservation, and spur the development of alternative sources of energy. To immediately mitigate the effects of high prices, I fought to increase funding for programs that help our seniors and low-income families such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Weatherization Assistance Program.

As the Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, I am committed to ensuring that our nation is as safe as possible and that government is prepared to respond to disasters. Maine certainly has had its share of natural disasters during the past year. This year, my homeland security priorities include renewing a port security law that I coauthored and strengthening security at labs containing dangerous pathogens.

Other priorities include supporting the vital work being done at Bath Iron Works, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and other defense-related businesses throughout Maine – all of which are making significant contributions to our national security. We must also continue to improve and expand access to affordable health care – particularly in our rural communities – expand aid for education, protect our environment.

While this is just a brief summary of my recent work in Washington over the past several months, please know that I will continue to work as hard as possible representing Maine in the U.S. Senate. I am grateful for many blessings, including the opportunity to continue representing Gardiner and Maine in the United States Senate.

If ever I can be of assistance to you, please contact my Augusta office at 207-622-8414, or visit my website at <http://collins.senate.gov>.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator