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COMMITTEES:
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
RANKING MEMBER
ARMED SERVICES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING

January 14, 2010

The Honorable Andrew MacLean
Mayor
City of Gardiner
6 Church Street
Gardiner, ME 04345

Dear Citizens of Gardiner:

In 2009, I began my third term in the United States Senate. I remain deeply honored by the trust the people of Maine have placed in me, and I appreciate this opportunity to report on some highlights of my recent work in the U.S. Senate.

A significant accomplishment came in December when the President signed transportation legislation that includes a provision I authored to create a one-year pilot project to allow trucks weighing up to 100,000 pounds to use federal highways in Maine. This is moving heavy trucks off Maine's secondary roads and out of our downtowns and onto our modern, multi-lane, controlled access highways for one year, during which time a study of the impact on safety, commerce and road wear-and-tear would be conducted. In addition, this change helps to level the economic playing field, as neighboring states already have this exemption.

My appointment in early 2009 to the powerful Appropriations Committee has allowed me to have greater influence on the funding of priorities that are important to Mainers, such as shipbuilding, health care, education, and transportation, while also giving me the ability to continue pressing for the elimination of wasteful spending that exacerbates our federal deficit.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I continue to be an advocate for Bath Iron Works, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the Maine Military Authority in Limestone, and the many other defense contractors and institutions in Maine that contribute so much to our national security. In August, I traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan and had the opportunity to meet with many service men and women from Maine. My conversations with them were the most important aspect of my trip to the region. Our troops are brave, dedicated, compassionate, and highly skilled. I will continue to work hard to ensure that they have the support their difficult missions require.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing our nation continues to be the struggling economy, and among my highest priorities are getting our people back to work and our economy back on track. That is why in early 2009 I joined a bipartisan effort to pass the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The bill contains robust infrastructure spending, significant funding for state aid and education, and tax relief for low- and middle-income families and for small businesses. As a result of this bill, Maine is receiving approximately \$133 million for highway investments, more than \$50 million combined for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, and \$70.5 million for weatherization and energy efficiency projects.

Energy policy remains another great challenge: America's reliance on foreign oil harms our economy, our security, and our environment. Meeting the challenge of developing energy alternatives will provide great opportunities for Maine to build an economy for the future, with new industries and thousands of good jobs. This endeavor received a significant boost last October when the U.S. Department of Energy announced an \$8 million grant for deepwater offshore wind research at the University of Maine, and Congress also approved \$5 million I sponsored for the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative at UMaine. This January, the U.S. Department of

Commerce announced a \$12.4 million laboratory construction grant for the University of Maine. I strongly advocated for these projects because, with some of the strongest winds in the nation off our coast and some of the best engineers in the field, Maine has great potential as an ideal location for offshore wind projects and can take the lead in the development of clean, renewable, and affordable energy for America. Estimates are that development of five gigawatts of offshore wind in Maine – enough to power more than 1 million homes for a year – could attract \$20 billion of investment to our state and create more than 15,000 green energy jobs that would be sustained over 30 years.

Of course, this past year brought not just successes. A disappointment was the failure of Congress to produce bipartisan health care reform legislation that would contain soaring costs and provide more choices for struggling families and small businesses. I am deeply concerned about the nearly \$500 billion in Medicare cuts included in the bill.

It is fiscally irresponsible to raid Medicare – a program which already has long-term financing problems – to pay for a new entitlement program, particularly at a time when the number of Medicare beneficiaries is on the rise. The bill would saddle Maine's hospitals with some \$800 million in Medicare cuts over the next ten years, and could push one in five hospitals, nursing homes, and home health providers into the red. Ultimately, such cuts could jeopardize access to care for millions of our nation's seniors.

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 better prepared to respond to disasters. The Christmas Day terrorist attempt to detonate explosives on an aircraft reminds us of the dangers we continue to confront. My homeland security priorities include further strengthening our defenses against terrorism and providing our first responders with the resources they need.

On March 19, 2009, I reached a personal milestone when I cast my 4,000th consecutive roll call vote, continuing a record of participating in every single roll call vote since I first came to the Senate in 1997. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve 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>. May 2010 be a good year for your family, your community, and our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Collins". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator