

Maine's fiscal year ends with \$111 million surplus

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According to Gov. Paul LePage and his administration, the state of Maine has finished the fiscal year, ending on June 30, with a \$111 million surplus. The announcement came just days after the Portland Press Herald scolded the governor for making Maine taxpayers foot the bill for a mere \$35,000 spent on several trips to Washington DC, where LePage met with members of President Trump's cabinet and other lawmakers to discuss healthcare reforms.

The administration plans on sending \$36.8 million of that total to the Budget Stabilization Fund, formerly known as the Rainy Day Fund, and \$9.4 million will be put in a fund to reduce the income tax burden on Mainers.

The income tax fund was created during past budget negotiations. During his tenure, LePage has fought to lower Maine's top rate from 8.95 percent to 7.15. In his final biennial budget proposal, LePage offered to transition the state to a flat income tax rate of 5.75 percent by 2020, however the reforms never materialized.

In recent years, LePage has helped grow Maine's Budget Stabilization Fund to \$122 million after it fell below \$200,000 in 2008. At this time last year, Maine ended the 2015 fiscal year with a \$93 million surplus. Additionally, the Cato Institute, a national public policy research organization, released a report in November 2016 that named LePage the most fiscally responsible governor in the nation, finishing well above his New England peers.

"It is vital for the State of Maine to continue growing the balance of our Budget Stabilization Fund," LePage said in a prepared statement. "The Maine Legislature has historically chosen to spend 99 percent of all General Fund revenue received by the State. It is encouraging to see that my calls for fiscal responsibility are beginning to resonate with members of the legislature."