**Policy/Advocacy Update – October 2015**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

* Congress was on break for the month of August. There will likely be a flurry of activity this fall, and then no activity the following year due to the Presidential election. The THUD Appropriations Committee in the House and Senate had vastly different proposals. The Senate THUD bill kept fairly adequate funding for many programs but wiped out an entire program, the HOME program. The House bill cut many programs and diverts funding for the National Housing Trust Fund into the HOME fund, while still providing a heavy cut to the program. The disparity was designed to blow things up to force the issue of raising the overall budget caps. HUD funds are part of the very small amount of discretionary funding. Two years ago sequestration put a cap on everything in discretionary finding, for both non-defense discretionary funding and defense discretionary funding. With this everything was capped at an artificially low rate. Due to this 500 Section 8 vouchers are lost in Maine unless sequestration is cured. The Senate bill particularly forces the issue of raising the caps to solve that. Senator Collins played a key role in creating the THUD budget very strategically. This work would have to happen this fall.
* Democrats and Republicans in Congress negotiated and passed a continuing resolution (CR) on 9/30, avoiding a government shutdown. The CR funds the government at approximate FY 15 levels through 12/11. Congressional leaders and the White House have started broader talks to work on a longer-term budget deal. But infighting among congressional Republicans after House Speaker John Boehner's abrupt resignation will make efforts to craft any package extremely difficult.
* Before the CR runs out Congress will need to address increasing the debt ceiling, which has to be done by November 3rd (when the US will hit the debt limit).

**State Legislation Update:**

* **Bill status updates:** 
  + Lewiston Mayor MacDonald publicly announced as part of his reelection campaign that he wishes to seek a bill that would publish the names, addresses, benefit amounts, and length of time on the program(s) for all welfare recipients. His remarks made national headlines. Many opponents of this stated that this would jeopardize the safety of victims of domestic violence, allowing their abusers to easily locate them. As of the end of September, Mayor MacDonald has been unable to find a legislative sponsor for his bill; without a sponsor this initiative is dead.
  + The Senior Affordable housing bond, which passed the legislature during the last session at a reduced amount versus the initial legislation, will be on the November 2nd statewide ballot (question #2).