

MAINE BEHIND THE NUMBERS

The facts on the economic track record of Maine governors Paul LePage and Janet Mills



EDUCATION

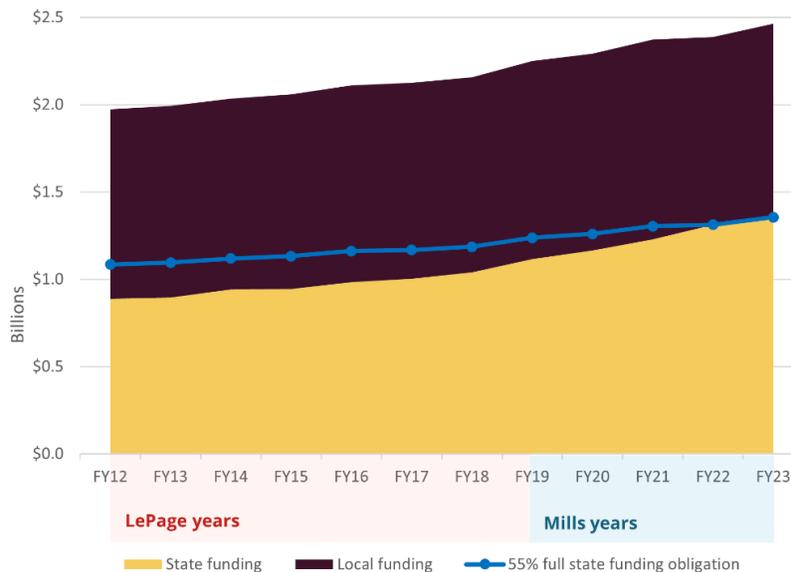
LePage

- Defying voter-approved mandates, never fully funded schools
- Prioritized tax breaks for the rich at the expense of public schools
- Shortchanged schools by more than \$1.3 billion, leaving towns to make up the difference
- Blocked school meal expansion while Maine kids were among hungriest in the nation
- Vetoed Student Loan Bill of Rights that would have protected Maine students

Mills

- Fulfilled the state's commitment to cover 55% of the cost of K-12 education for the first time
- Increased base pay and fast-tracked certification for teachers
- Provided free community college for pandemic-impacted graduates
- Made school meals free for all Maine children
- Signed Student Loan Bill of Rights to combat predatory lending

As Governor, LePage shortchanged schools by \$1.4B from FY12-FY19



Learn more: bit.ly/educationMBTN
Source: MECEP Action analysis of Maine Department of Education data and Legislative budget data

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Paul LePage photo by Gage Skidmore



Shortchanging schools to provide tax breaks for the rich

In 2004, [Maine voters](#) directed the state to pay 55 percent of the cost of public K-12 education. LePage denied the mandate every year he was in office. Instead of meeting the state's obligations, LePage redistributed [\\$631 million](#) in revenue to the wealthiest Mainers through tax breaks, leaving local communities on the hook for the balance.¹ The budgets passed during LePage's terms shortchanged Maine schools by [more than \\$1.4 billion](#) and Maine towns were left to cover the shortfall through [property tax increases](#) or program cuts. Even when voters returned to the polls in 2016 to demand the state meet its funding obligation with a 3 percent surcharge on income over \$200,000, LePage [refused its implementation](#). Instead, he tried to siphon even more state funding away from public education and into [private and religious schools](#).



Harming vulnerable students

LePage's cut and gut approach hit families with low income especially hard. In addition to state funding [shortfalls](#) that resulted in many communities raising property tax rates or cutting services, LePage simultaneously worked to [disqualify Mainers](#) from food assistance programs. During his tenure, Maine households were ranked [among the hungriest](#) in the country. Although [research shows](#) hunger negatively impacts educational outcomes, LePage railed against [stagnating test scores](#) while simultaneously blocking efforts to feed food insecure students. LePage not only [bungled](#) the implementation of a federal program to expand access to school meals, he [vetoed legislation](#) encouraging school districts to utilize federal funding to feed hungry kids in summer. LePage also vetoed a [Student Loan Bill of Rights](#) that would have protected Maine students as [complaints](#) against predatory lending practices soared.



Honoring commitments and expanding access

Fulfilling the state's commitment to cover 55 percent of the cost of K-12 education was achieved for the first time in Maine's history under the Mills administration. Reached without increasing taxes, the goal was met as a part of [bipartisan budget agreements](#) that also included increased school infrastructure funding, base pay raises for teachers, and free school meals for all Maine kids. Mills also [leveraged federal pandemic relief funds](#) to expand broadband access for rural students, upgrade health and safety infrastructure to allow schools to reopen promptly, increase funding for public pre-K programs, and fast track certification for new teachers. In addition to signing the [Student Loan Bill of Rights](#) to combat predatory lending, Mills boosted funding for workforce training equipment at Career and Technical Education schools. Additionally, recent high school graduates are eligible for two years of [free community college](#) in Maine, which has resulted in a [12 percent enrollment increase](#) this year.

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