

Mainers stand to lose if professional licensing laws soften

A recent Sun-Journal column, [Occupational licensing reform shouldn't be a partisan issue](#), highlights the bipartisan support for changing some of Maine's licensing laws.

The author is right to note that unnecessary barriers to entry exist for many occupations, particularly for those that do not require an advanced degree. At a time of intense political polarization in Maine and the United States, it is refreshing to read about even one area of public policy where liberals and conservatives might be able to come together.

However, for all of the valid concerns and good faith, the recent push to overhaul state licensing laws risks a host of unintended consequences that reformers may not fully appreciate.

Namely, broad-brush proposals intended to relax licensing requirements for some jobs can also weaken the standards for unrelated professions if the legislative language is not carefully written. Such proposals can also make it more difficult for licensed professionals to serve customers across state lines.

For professions like engineering and surveying, professional licensing must remain rigorous to ensure the public's health, safety, and welfare are protected.

Maine's current professional licensing laws for engineers and surveyors strike the right balance between safeguarding the public and allowing these professionals the flexibility to relocate to the Pine Tree State with the least amount of fuss possible.

[According to a survey](#) conducted by the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES), the process time for a comity license for Maine is just five days if the engineer is already registered with NCEES.

Mainers can take comfort and pride in the fact that engineers are regulated and held accountable by the nonpartisan, independent experts who serve on the Maine State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers. The last thing we need are unnecessary layers of bureaucracy that could undermine a system that is serving the public very well.

In the spirit of New Year's resolutions, we hope that Governor Mills, Senate President Singleton, and House Speaker Gideon resolve to protect professional licensing for engineers and the autonomy of our licensing board in the 2020 legislative season.