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Remarks of State Treasurer Bruce Poliquin at January 6, 2011 Swearing-in Ceremony

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Office of the Maine State Treasurer

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STATE TREASURER SWEARING-IN SPEECH

January 6, 2011

Thank you Speaker Nutting and President Raye for this opportunity to address the good People of Maine.

Thank you, Governor LePage, for the honor extended to me in this historic Chamber.

Thank you, dedicated Legislators and hard-working Maine taxpayers, for the trust you have placed in me.

And, a special thank you to our new Secretary of State and soon-to-be new Attorney General for their service to our country. Because of their sacrifice, and that of their families, we're able to assemble here, in peace, and choose how we govern ourselves. Thank you, Charlie. Thank you, Bill

Unfortunately, neither my wonderful son, Sam, nor my loving Parents are able to be with us today. I know they're watching somewhere from cyberspace - I can feel their presence.

I do thank my other family members and close friends who are with us now, including my special friends, Hayley and Hilary McKinnon.

Our Great State has many serious problems. Most are fiscal in nature. I'm certain that we can solve them. We need only to have the courage to address them.

There will be passionate debate on these issues. That's good! That's how our representative republic is supposed to work.

After every voice has been heard, it will be time to make difficult and painful decisions. When that time comes, let's remember that we're all Mainers. We're all in this together. We all win only when Maine wins.

As Treasurer, I'm concerned with the overall level of debt carried by our state, and our quasi-independent agencies. This total is approx \$12b. Much of this debt has not been approved by the voters.

Reasonable amounts of borrowing are, of course, necessary to finance our programs and infrastructure. But, unfettered growth is dangerous. Large interest payments on bonds rob us of being able to invest in our roads, our schools, and our citizens. High debt levels impair the overall economic health of a state. Just look at CA, or IL, or NJ.

Included in our \$12b of total debt is a \$4.4b unfunded pension liability for state employees. This growing structural problem must be solved, or our state gov't will continue to lurch from budget crisis to budget crisis.

As Treasurer, I plan to be actively involved in the better oversight and management of our state's debt. For those agencies and departments wanting to issue bonds, I will ask why the money is needed, and why now? And, then we will proceed accordingly.

The good People of Maine have sent us here to do their work. They expect results - not kick the fiscal can down the street.

I'm often asked "How are we going to fix our problems? They're too big, too difficult?"

Your new team of leaders has a secret weapon: We're not looking at the next job, or the next election. We will do what is right for the People of Maine, so help us God!

Our success will be determined, in great part, by your involvement. There will be many ways to help. Please stay tuned.

I know this period before us is a little scary. But, this is also a rare opportunity to get it right.

And when we do, a fiscally prudent Maine will build a stronger private sector economy. One with more and better jobs, and with fatter paychecks. Then, we'll be better able to keep our kids here.

This is a bright new day for Maine! I'm humbled to join this competent, clear-headed team of new leaders.

I'm also honored to stand before you today. I commit to serve you as State Treasurer with candor, integrity, and hard work. I wish all of us Godspeed in our journey together.

Thank you very much, and God Bless Maine.