

## **For Immediate Release**

### Contacts:

Attorney Valerie Z. Wicks of Johnson, Webbert & Young, LLP: Augusta and Portland, ME  
207-623-5110 office  
908-337-7612 cell

Attorney Jack Comart of Maine Equal Justice Partners, Augusta, ME  
207-626-7058, Ext. 202

### **Injunction Sought In Federal Court To Ensure Payment Of Benefits To Elderly, Poor, And Disabled In Event Of Shutdown**

Given the uncertainty over the state budget, advocates for the elderly, disabled, children and others who receive help from the MaineCare, Food Supplement and TANF programs filed suit today in federal court seeking a Temporary Restraining Order. The lawsuit, brought against Governor LePage and Acting DHHS Commissioner Ricker Hamilton asks the federal court to order that the DHHS continue to receive applications, process applications and maintain the issuance of benefits and services during any state shut down. While Governor LePage has stated that “emergency” employees will continue to operate certain state programs and functions, he has not been clear about which programs will stay open.

Valerie Wicks, an attorney with the firm of Johnson, Webbert and Young, who is co-counseling the federal court case with Jack Comart of Maine Equal Justice Partners, stated that “until the budget impasse is resolved or until the Governor commits to ensuring that these important programs continue to operate, as required by federal law, the court case will go forward.”

The next step in this fight is for either the Governor to order that these programs continue or the Court to order it. The parties hope to have an answer by Friday, one way or another. Jack Comart remarked that “the Governor has repeatedly stated that he will do “no harm” to Maine’s elderly and disabled. If the Governor can protect state parks from vandalism during a state shut down, we hope that he will also protect Maine’s most vulnerable.”