

UNITED STATES CONGRESS

CHELLIE PINGREE, CONGRESSWOMAN

Dear Friend,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. It is an honor to represent you in Congress and a pleasure to update you on the work I am doing in Maine and Washington.

You are probably aware that Washington is a very challenging place to get anything done these days. The partisan climate has kept many important issues from being addressed and even led to a shutdown of the federal government. Worst of all, it has created uncertainty for Maine families and the economy. It's the last thing we need. Over the next year, I will continue pressing Congressional leaders to bring the focus back to helping people rather than advancing ideologies.

As difficult as it's been, though, there are areas where I have been able to make progress on needed policy reforms. One has been support for local food producers. For decades now, federal agriculture policy has only benefited huge farms and commodity crops, not the kind of the diverse family farms we have in Maine. It's time for that to change. With small federal changes, we can capitalize on the huge economic potential of the local food movement. I've introduced the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act to make some of those changes, and have been pleased to see many of these reforms gain bipartisan support.

Another issue is helping veterans who were sexually assaulted during their service. I've introduced the Ruth

Moore Act—named after a Maine veteran who struggled for 23 years to get disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs after she was sexually assaulted while in the military. The bill would help veterans like Ruth get the assistance they need to recover from the debilitating trauma they suffered while serving the country. The bill passed the House and now awaits consideration in the Senate.

While policy in Washington is important, so is the work my staff and I do here in Maine. My office keeps close connections to Maine communities and their leaders to make sure we're doing all we can to help them succeed. This work might include providing letters of support for federal grant applications, getting answers from federal agencies, or bringing national officials to our state to raise awareness about the good things being done here.

We also work with hundreds of constituents who have issues with federal agencies and programs. Not everyone knows that you can call your Member of Congress for this kind of thing, but it's an essential part of my responsibilities and my commitment to the people I serve. Members of my staff are experts on issues ranging from veterans benefits and IRS questions to Social Security problems and passport inquiries. They can help you navigate the process, communicate with federal agencies, and, in certain circumstances, facilitate the expediting of claims. If there is an area where you need assistance, I encourage you to call my Portland office at (207) 774-5019 or go to my website, www.pingree.house.gov.

Again, it's a privilege to serve you in Congress. Please stay in touch.

