

The gentleman behind the infamous “Hostage Taking” at the [March 2016 BACTS meeting](#) - Jonathan Nass - was rejected by the JSC Transportation from being named as the Chairman of the Turnpike Board.

BDN POLITICS

[Lawmakers reject former LePage aide for turnpike board position](#)



Courtesy of CBS 13

Cars travel on the Maine Turnpike

By [Michael Shepherd](#), BDN Staff • September 5, 2018 12:39 pm

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AUGUSTA, Maine — A legislative panel on Wednesday opposed Gov. Paul LePage’s nomination of one of his former advisers to the board of the Maine Turnpike Authority, the quasi-state agency that the Republican governor has suggested eliminating.

Six Democrats and a Republican — Sen. Kim Rosen, R-Bucksport — on the Legislature’s Transportation Committee opposed the nomination of Jonathan Nass, who is the deputy commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation

and will become CEO of the quasi-state Maine Port Authority later this month. Two Republicans on the panel backed Nass.

LePage nominated Nass, a former senior policy adviser to the governor, to replace the turnpike board's current chairman, Maine Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Daniel Wathen. There was confusion in a Wednesday hearing about whether Wathen had re-applied for his position.

Andrew Bracy, an adviser to the governor, said he was unsure if Wathen re-applied. But Maine Turnpike Authority Executive Director Peter Mills said Wathen told him that he re-applied in January and never heard back. Wathen declined comment on that before the hearing.

During the hearing, Democrats on the committee aggressively questioned Nass, a former senior policy adviser to LePage, on Wednesday about whether he agreed with the governor on [merging the turnpike authority](#) with the transportation department.

Nass never directly answered those questions, saying it's up to the Legislature to decide. But he said the turnpike's ability to collect tolls provides a funding mechanism more stable than the transportation department's [more varied revenue stream](#). That has been the main argument of opponents of merging the authority with the department.

"What I will tell you is that I will serve on that board and seek the best interests of that authority," he told the committee. "I think that's the responsibility of a board member on any board."

Nass declined comment immediately after the hearing. Spokespeople for LePage and Rep. Andrew McLean, D-Gorham, the committee's co-chair, didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Nass was one of two LePage nominees to be opposed by the committee in 7-2 votes on Wednesday. Six Democrats and Sen. Ronald Collins, R-York, the committee's co-chair, voted against former state Sen. Doug Thomas, R-Ripley, who was nominated for a position on the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority.

The Maine Senate will still have to consider both nominations, but Wednesday's committee vote virtually sinks them. The upper chamber will need a two-thirds vote to override the panel's rejections and it's split 18-17 between Republicans and Democrats.