

## A LESSON IN MAINE POLITICS



We live in a democratic society. Instead of one person making all the rules, we elect people to represent our views in government. Because *everyone's* view is important, the political process can be very complicated. There are many official definitions of the word "politics." They can get pretty confusing, so we put together our own definition of "politics" for the purposes of this guide:

*Politics is the art of winning support for, or influencing others to support, your ideas and goals. Politicians succeed by getting others to see their point of view by persuading and negotiating to move issues forward. Politics involves several groups of opposing forces that push and pull and battle it out until a candidate is elected or legislation is passed.*

You've probably heard people say that it takes forever for government to get anything done. Well, they are right - almost. When there are many individual citizens, political parties, and specific groups of people involved in an issue, it takes a lot of compromise and a long time for change to occur. Let's see how this works in the Maine State government.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE MAINE STATE GOVERNMENT

Maine's government system is modeled on the federal Government structure with three equal branches - the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The three branches have different functions, known as the **separation of powers**. The separation of powers provides for a system of **checks and balances**, which means that each branch has a means to invalidate (overturn) the actions of other branches. This is to make sure that *one* person or *one* branch doesn't get too powerful.

The ***Executive Branch*** is made up of the Governor and the 16 departments of the Maine State government. According to the Maine Constitution, the Governor can serve for a total of eight years, or two 4-year terms.

The Governor serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the Maine State Army and Navy; appoints all judicial officers; recommends legislation and signs it into law or vetoes it so that it doesn't become law; and, ensures that the laws passed by the Legislative Branch are enforced.

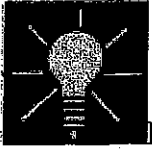
The ***Legislative Branch***, also known as the Maine Legislature, is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. This branch is responsible for enacting legislation (making laws). The State is divided into both Senatorial districts and districts for the House of Representatives – districts are like a map that determines which neighborhoods are represented by which legislator.

- The House has 151 members who are elected every two years. There are 151 House districts, all with an equal population. This means that each representative represents an equal number of people (8,443). The House also includes two nonvoting members representing the Penobscot Nation and the Passamaquoddy Tribe.
- The Senate has 35 members who are elected every two years. Since there are only 35 Senatorial districts, each Senator represents a larger number of people than do the Representatives (36,425 in each Senate district).

The ***Judicial Branch*** is responsible for interpreting the laws (deciding if a law has been broken or not) and is headed by the Supreme Judicial Court. All judicial officers are appointed by the Governor and serve a term of seven years. The Supreme Court Chief Justice is the Honorable Leigh I. Saufley.

Now that you understand the roles of each branch of the Maine State government, let's see how they work when a law is created.

## MAINE'S PATH OF LEGISLATION



### **IDEA DEVELOPED**

A legislator decides to sponsor a bill, sometimes at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official or the Governor. The legislator may ask other legislators in either chamber to join as co-sponsors.



### **BILL DRAFTED**

At the legislator's direction, the Revisor's Office, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis, and Office of Fiscal and Program Review staff provides research and drafting assistance and prepares the bill in proper technical form.



### **BILL INTRODUCED**

The legislator gives the bill to the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate. The bill is numbered, a suggested committee recommendation is made, and the bill is printed. The bill is placed on the respective body's calendar.



### **COMMITTEE REFERENCE**

The bill is referred to one of the Joint Standing or Joint Select committees in the originating branch and then sent to the other body for concurrence.



### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

When scheduled by the chairs, the committee conducts a public hearing where it accepts testimony supporting and opposing the proposed legislation from any interested party. Notices of public hearings are printed in newspapers with statewide distribution.



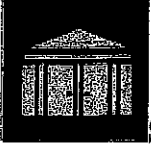
### **GENERAL ORDER**

When the bill is reported to the floor, it receives its first reading and any committee amendments are adopted at this time. The committee reports the bill to the originating body as is, with amendment, with a divided report, or with a unanimous recommendation of Ought Not to Pass.



## **SECOND READING**

The next legislative day, the bill is given its second reading and floor amendments may be offered. When one chamber has passed the bill to be engrossed, it is sent to the other body for its consideration. The House has a consent calendar for unanimous Ought to Pass or Ought to Pass as amended bills which takes the place of First and Second readings.



## **SECOND CHAMBER**

The bill goes through a similar process. If the second chamber amends the bill, it is returned to the first chamber for a vote on the changes. It may then be sent to a conference committee to work out a compromise agreeable to both chambers. A bill receives final legislative approval when it passes both chambers in identical form.



## **GOVERNOR**

After final passage (enactment), the bill is sent to the Governor. The Governor has ten days in which to sign or veto the bill. If the Governor does not sign the bill and the Legislature is still in session, the bill, after ten days, becomes law as if the Governor signed it. If the Legislature has adjourned for the year, the bill does not become law. This is called a "pocket veto." If the Legislature comes back into special session, the Governor, on the 4th day, must deliver a veto message to the chamber of origin or the bill becomes law.



## **LAW**

A bill becomes law 90 days after the end of the legislative session in which it was passed. A bill can become law immediately if the Legislature, by a 2/3 vote in each chamber, declares that an emergency exists. An emergency law takes effect on the date the Governor signs it unless otherwise specified in its text. If a bill is vetoed, it will become law if the Legislature overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote of those members present and voting in both chambers.

### **Reporting Bills from Committee**

Committee reports shall include one of the following recommendations:

- Ought to Pass
- Ought to Pass as Amended
- Ought to Pass in New Draft
- Ought Not to Pass
- Refer to Another Committee
- Unanimous Ought Not to Pass

With the exception of Unanimous Ought Not to Pass, a plurality of the committee may vote to make one of the other recommendations. When this occurs, a minority report or reports are required.

## **“MAPPING” A LEGISLATOR**

What is Mapping and Why would we do it?

“Mapping” is really just a term for finding out as much as you can about a legislator from public sources as a base from which to build your individual relationship. The more you know about a Rep. or Sen. the more chances you have to connect on an individual level, in a personal way with authentic connection. They will remember you and you will be able to put your best arguments forward, through the lens that matters most *to them*. This is the way we will win any issue – one legislator at a time.

Some things we want to find out:

- \*Personal story- (family, town, why they are in the legislature)
- \*Are they new – or re-elected (#of years in the legislature)
- \*On a Key Committee or in leadership?
- \*Their legislative “friend” network – and those connections to committees and leadership
- \*What bills have they sponsored? What are their interests?
- \*Who are their supporters? Election Donors? PAC contributors?
- \*What are their community connections? Civic Involvement?
- \*Business/Employment profile, history



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## **Resources to Help with "Mapping"**

### **Find your Legislators:**

[http://www.maine.gov/portal/government/edemocracy/lookup\\_voter\\_info](http://www.maine.gov/portal/government/edemocracy/lookup_voter_info)

Maine House of Representative Website: <http://www.maine.gov/legis/house/>

Maine Senate Website: <http://legisweb1.mainelegislature.org/wp/senate/>

### **Committee Information:**

<http://legisweb1.mainelegislature.org/wp/senate/legislative-committees/>

Maine State Legislature Website (where you can find everything):

<http://legislature.maine.gov/>

## **Who are your Legislators? – Getting Beyond the Profile**

Try some of these

~ Google them

~ Look for a Campaign or Personal Website, Facebook? LinkedIn?

~ <http://legislature.maine.gov>

~ Find out who their donors and supporters are

<https://secure.maine campaignfinance.com/PublicSite/SearchPages/CandidateList.aspx>

## **Resources and Other Sources Information**

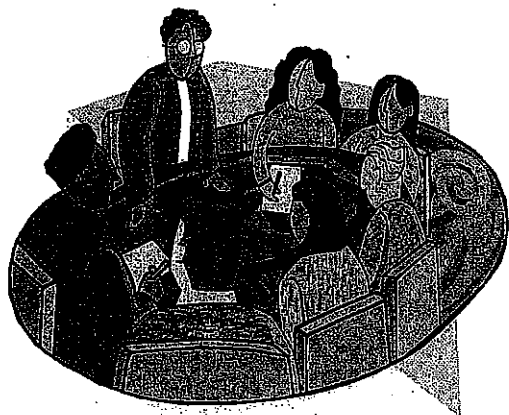
\* Maine State Legislature Website: <http://legislature.maine.gov/>

\* Maine Women's Lobby: [www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)

\* A Citizens Guide to the Maine Legislature, Maine People's Resource Center (available May-June) [www.mainepeoplesalliance.org](http://www.mainepeoplesalliance.org)

\*"2015 Senate & House Register" (March-April): Clerk of the House:  
207-287-1400

## Tips for meeting with your legislator:



- *Be prepared* – know your legislator’s voting record on the issue that you’re coming to discuss or find articles about them online;
- *Stick together* – bring a group of 2-4 people with you to talk with the legislator;
- *Know what you’re going to say* – prepare some talking points about the issue and know what you’re going to ask the legislator;
- *Know who’s going to say what* – figure out who will be addressing what points before you get there so that your meeting runs smoothly and clearly; and,
- *Bring info with you* – while you’ll only have a brief time with your legislator or their assistant, you can leave information with them. It’s also a good idea to bring photographs or other visual displays to help make your point.

Here are some ideas on how to structure your visit:

- Introduce yourself, and the club or organization that you’re representing.
- Explain what issue you’re there to discuss and find out if the legislator is familiar with the issue and where your legislator stands on the issue.
- Tell where you stand and why. Be prepared with examples/facts to support your view.
- Be sure to *share a personal story or experience* to better illustrate your point of view. For example, if you are there to talk about increasing after-school funding, share a story about how the program you participate in has made a difference in your life.
- Relay what you’re hoping the legislator will do after your meeting (co-sponsor legislation, support/oppose it).
- Ask your legislator directly if he/she will support your cause or policy. Thank them.
- Restate your position and discuss next steps and when you will contact them again to follow-up on progress.

- Get the contact person's card so you have their direct phone number or e-mail address.
- Write down the notes from your meeting as soon as possible so that you have a good account of what happened.
- Send a thank you note that includes a reminder of what took place and any action steps that you agreed upon.
- Share your progress with your friends and supporters and even the press!

*Adapted in part from "Talking to your Elected Representatives (Lobbying)" from [www.campusactivism.org](http://www.campusactivism.org)*

## **Telephone Calls to Your Legislators**

- Ask to speak directly with your legislator or his/her aide that deals with the issue that you are concerned about.
- State your name and where you are from.
- State the reason for your call.
- Ask where your legislator stands on the issue (if you don't already know).
- Always express your thanks if the legislator supports your view.
- Politely and briefly explain your view. Support your case with statistics or a compelling personal story.
- If your legislator doesn't agree with you or is undecided, ask why.
- End your conversation by thanking your legislator for considering your position, even if the call didn't go as well as you expected.



## **Toll-free answering service at the Maine State House**

Senators – 1-800-423-6900

Representatives – 1-800-423-2900

This is an easy way for everyone to communicate with state legislators – even those too shy to actually talk with them. When calling, state your name and town & the name of your representative/senator. Give your phone number and the best time for them to call if you want a call back. Leave a simple, direct message.



## **Communicating with Your Legislator by E-mail**

Public officials are beginning to see that the Internet is a great tool for reaching their constituents. Many have home pages online for communicating the latest information on legislation and for displaying personal and contact information about themselves. If you are going to share your views by e-mailing your legislator, follow the same guidelines as writing a letter.

You can also use your computer to become more politically active by accessing websites with important information. When researching information on the Internet, make sure the information you're getting is objective (gives only the facts). Read carefully to decide whether it is biased toward a certain point of view (doesn't provide all the facts but still makes a strong claim one way or the other).

### **To find your state legislators and U.S. Congress members:**

- Go to [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org) to find your state and federal elected officials,
- Click on their name. This will take you to their website.

**NOTE:** Letters sent to Washington DC will take as much as a month to get to your Congress members. It's best to email, fax, call their offices or send a letter to their offices in Maine. Look in your phone book or on their websites for mailing addresses and phone numbers.

## **Writing letters to your state legislators.**

### **Address your letters like this:**

#### **For Your State Representative:**

Dear Representative (Last Name):  
The Honorable (First & Last Name)  
Maine House of Representatives  
2 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0002

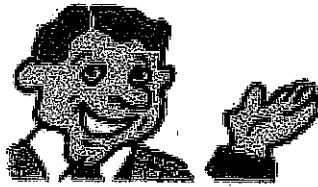
#### **For Your State Senator:**

Dear Senator (Last Name):  
The Honorable (First & Last Name)  
Maine State Senate  
3 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0003

## Some Letter/Email Writing Tips

1. Remember to put your **name and mailing address in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope**. Many offices don't open mail that doesn't include a return address.
2. Be sure to **include your name, address, and phone number in the letter**. This will ensure that the legislator can get back to you, even if the envelope is lost.
3. Give your legislator **as much information about the bill as possible** (the number and title of the bill and where it is in the legislative process if you know).
4. **State the intent of your letter immediately**. Clearly and briefly (one page is best) state your reason for supporting or opposing the bill. Include any statistics or facts you know on how the legislation will affect you or others.
5. **Identify yourself as a constituent and give a little background about yourself**. Explain why the bill is important to *you* and how it will affect you and others like you.
6. **End by thanking them for considering your views**.
7. **Follow up with a thank you note or telephone call** if they provide the requested support.
8. **If you do not receive acknowledgement** of your letter within a week, write or call again until you do.

**Send a "Quick Hit" post card as a final reminder.** If you know when the bill is scheduled for a vote on the floor of the Legislature, send a quick post card as a final reminder of your support (or opposition) to the bill. Again, state your position and the L.D. number and the title, if possible. This will let your legislator know her/his vote is still important to you.



*"Public hearings are held early in the session so that legislative committees can collect public comment on the bills they are considering. These public hearings are an important opportunity for people to speak directly to the committee about issues that are important to them. When you take the time to testify, legislators really pay attention –so these tips should help you testify with confidence."*

## **Maine State Legislature: How to Give Testimony**

### **How do I know the schedule?**

Hearings are listed on the web

at: <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/lto/phSched.asp> for each L.D. (legislative document) that the committee will be considering that day. The date, time and location will also be printed in daily Maine newspapers, and the schedule will also be posted outside the committee room. It's wise to get there early so you can find your way around.

### **What should I do in advance of the hearing?**

Try to let your Senator or Representative know ahead of time that you intend to testify – that way, he or she can try to meet you there. Also, you can introduce yourself to the committee clerk, especially if you have any questions or special needs. The members of the committee will be glad to meet you too, so introduce yourself to them before the hearing begins if there's time.

Prepare written copies of your testimony. Generally, committees request 20 copies, but if you don't have that many, the clerk can make copies for the committee members after you testify.

### **What happens when the hearing begins?**

Each committee may run its hearings differently, but in every case, once the committee chairs call the public hearing to order, they will ask the sponsor or sponsors of the bill to present it to the committee and the members will have a chance to ask them questions. After that, other public officials and agency representatives can offer their views and then the public is invited to speak.

### **What do I do exactly?**

Approach the podium, sign in on the sheet provided and courteously address the Chairs of the committee and the committee members; you will not be sworn

in. Then tell the committee your name and the community where you live. It will probably sound like this:

"Senator Smith, Representative Roberts and members of the committee, I am Dale Jones from Augusta and I am here to support/oppose L.D. ----."

Then read your testimony.

### **What should I do if some of the members are not in their seats?**

Once the Chair has recognized you, you can proceed. Committee members may be going in and out of the hearing while you and others speak – but that is because they have other responsibilities at the same time as the hearing.

### **What should I remember when I speak to the committee?**

Effective testimony has several key ingredients:

- Speak from your own experience. The committee wants to know how the bill will affect you and your school or community.
- Be accurate. Facts and other evidence are always convincing.
- Keep your testimony short and to the point and try not to repeat what other speakers have said. The committee's time is important.
- Stay calm. Don't rush, and don't be afraid to stop and think for a moment if you feel nervous.
- Be polite and respectful – even if someone speaks against your position.
- Thank the committee for its attention and wait to see if they have questions for you.
- Answer any questions briefly and accurately to the best of your ability; if you don't know an answer, just say so.

### **What happens after I testify?**

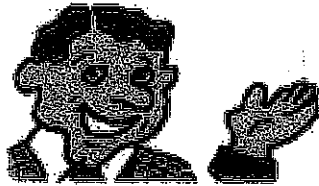
If you have time during a recess or after the hearing, talk personally with committee members. Even if they don't seem to agree with your position, they will appreciate your interest. Sometimes citizens follow up their testimony with a letter to the committee thanking them for their time and attention and answering any additional questions.

You can stay and watch the rest of the proceedings or you can leave the committee room after you testify. The committee will schedule a work session on the bill, and during that time they will debate the issues, offer amendments if necessary, and finally vote on the bill and send it to the House or Senate for action.

Sometimes legislators even refer to testimony they heard in committee when

they debate a bill on the floor of the House or the Senate. If that happens, that testimony becomes part of the permanent public record of the legislature.

### **Contact Your State Senator or Representative**



*"Do you want to contact the State House? Well, there are lots of ways to do it. And lawmakers really like to hear from you. So, just download this information and keep it handy. Or better yet, plan a trip to Augusta and visit your legislator in person."*



Maine Senate, 2 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0002  
Maine House of Representatives, 3 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0003



Website: <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/>  
Senate

Members: <http://www.maine.gov/legis/senate/senators/email/maillst.htm>  
House Members: [http://janus.state.me.us/house/e\\_mail.htm](http://janus.state.me.us/house/e_mail.htm)



Senate: 207-287-1540    Senate Message Center: 1-800-423-6900  
House: 207-287-1400    House Message Center: 1-800-423-2900

**Source:** <http://www.maine.gov/sos/path/exploring/testify.html>

# **THE TEN INFORMAL RULES OF LOBBYING or.....**

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lobbying but Never Thought to Ask

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1. **Consider yourself an information source.** Legislators have limited time, staff, and interest on any one issue. They can't be as informed as they might like on all issues—or the ones that concern you. **YOU** can fill the information gap.
2. **Tell the truth.** There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to a legislator.
3. **Know who is on your side.** It is helpful for a legislator to know what other groups, individuals, state agencies and/or legislators are working with you on an issue.
4. **Know the opposition.** Anticipate who the opposition will be—organized or individual. Tell the legislator what their arguments are likely to be and provide them with answers and rebuttals.
5. **Make the legislator aware of any personal connection you may have.** No matter how insignificant you may feel it is, if you have any friends, relatives, and/or other colleagues in common, let them know! Our legislative process is very informal. While a personal connection may make no difference in your effectiveness—It may make the difference.
6. **Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something.** If a legislator wants information you don't have or asks something you don't know, acknowledge that and then offer to get the information they are looking for.
7. **Be specific about what you are looking for.** If you want a vote, information, answers to a question—whatever it is—make sure you ask for it directly and get an answer.
8. **Follow up.** Find out if your legislator did what she/he said they would. Then, thank them or ask for an explanation as to why they did not vote as they said they would.
9. **Don't burn any bridges.** It is very easy to get emotional over issues you feel very strongly about. However, be sure that no matter what a legislator's decision on an issue, you end the conversation on good enough terms that you can go back to them. Remember that your strongest opponent on one issue may be your strongest ally on another.
10. **REMEMBER YOU ARE THE BOSS!** Your tax money pays legislators' salaries, pays for the paper they write on, the phone they call you on. **YOU** are the employer and they are the employees. You should be courteous, but don't be intimidated. They are responsible to you and nine out of ten, legislators are grateful for your input.

## **Maine State and National Legislative Websites**

### **Maine State Legislative Site**

<http://legislature.maine.gov/>

### **Where to Find Your Senators**

<http://legisweb1.mainelegislature.org/wp/senate/senator-information/find-your-senator/>

### **Where to Find Your Representatives**

<http://legislature.maine.gov/house/rep.htm>

### **More Legislative Information Sites**

<https://legiscan.com>

<https://legiscan.com/ME>

<http://ballotpedia.org/>

[https://ballotpedia.org/Maine\\_State\\_Senate\\_elections,\\_2016](https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_State_Senate_elections,_2016)

[https://ballotpedia.org/Maine\\_House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_elections,\\_2016](https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_House_of_Representatives_elections,_2016)

[http://ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page](http://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page)

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/114/s1945>

<https://www.govtrack.us/>

### **Maine's Path of Legislation**

<http://www.state.me.us/legis/path/path1.htm>

<http://legislature.maine.gov/general/path-of-legislation-in-maine-detailed/9285>

### **State of Maine Glossary of Legislative Terms**

[https://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/glossary\\_of\\_terms.asp](https://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/glossary_of_terms.asp)

<http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/glossary.htm>

