

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1640

S.P. 648

In Senate, April 15, 2025

**An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Gagetown
Harmful Chemical Study Commission and to Reestablish the
Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission**

(EMERGENCY)

Received by the Secretary of the Senate on April 11, 2025. Referred to the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D M Grant".

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator HICKMAN of Kennebec.
Cosponsored by Representative BABIN of Fort Fairfield and
Senators: BERNARD of Aroostook, FARRIN of Somerset, GROHOSKI of Hancock,
STEWART of Aroostook, Representatives: FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor, FREDETTE
of Newport, RIELLY of Westbrook, SUPICA of Bangor.

1 **Emergency preamble.** Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** many individuals affected by exposure to harmful chemicals at the
4 Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick are suffering from illnesses
5 that shorten life expectancy, and others are already deceased; and

6 **Whereas,** there have been numerous previous attempts to gather reliable data and to
7 secure the recognition and help these individuals deserve, and these attempts have failed;
8 and

9 **Whereas,** expedient action is necessary to help those most immediately affected and
10 to ensure that the necessary recognition and supports are in place for those who have been
11 exposed to harmful chemicals at the base but who are not yet aware of the effects of that
12 exposure on their health; and

13 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
14 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
15 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
16 therefore,

17 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

18 **Sec. 1. 37-B MRSA §518** is enacted to read:

19 **§518. Base Gagetown Training Registry**

20 **1. Registry.** The bureau shall establish the Base Gagetown Training Registry, referred
21 to in this section as "the registry," to collect and maintain data related to military service
22 and health conditions from individuals who voluntarily provide such data and who trained
23 at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, referred to
24 in this section as "Base Gagetown," as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a
25 member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of
26 the National Guard of any state and who are residents of this State or were residents of this
27 State at the time of training.

28 The bureau shall use the registry to support education and outreach efforts as described in
29 subsection 3 for issues directly related to the individuals described in this subsection and
30 may use the data collected and maintained pursuant to this subsection to conduct, either
31 within the bureau or through a contract with a public or private entity, research related to
32 the effects of chemical exposure on human health.

33 **2. Data collection.** To the extent possible, the bureau shall include in the registry the
34 following types of data for individuals described in subsection 1:

35 A. Complete name used while in military service;

36 B. Date of birth;

37 C. Dates of military service;

38 D. Branch of service and all unit assignments;

39 E. Military occupational specialty;

40 F. Dates during military service when the individual trained at Base Gagetown;

1 G. Self-reported health conditions or diagnoses;

2 H. Cause of death, if applicable; and

3 I. Any additional information as determined by the bureau to support the goals of the
4 registry.

5 In the event that an individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin may provide the data
6 for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also include any information in any existing
7 data source created within the bureau related to Base Gagetown in the registry and in
8 conducting education and outreach as described in subsection 3.

9 **3. Education and outreach.** The bureau shall make all reasonable efforts to identify
10 eligible individuals for inclusion in the registry. These efforts must include the bureau's
11 contacting any individual who previously provided information to the bureau related to the
12 individual's military training at Base Gagetown regarding the registry under subsection 1
13 and offering the individual the opportunity to provide new or additional information to the
14 bureau for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also work with existing veterans'
15 service organizations, local medical centers operated by the United States Department of
16 Veterans Affairs, the Maine Veterans' Homes and other veterans' programs or organizations
17 in the State in order to increase awareness of the registry and the bureau's work, including
18 information on how to submit data for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also work
19 with the Maine National Guard in order to identify and share information regarding the
20 registry with individuals who are current members of the Maine National Guard and who
21 may have trained at or will train in the future at Base Gagetown.

22 The bureau may also contact another state's bureau of veterans' services or National Guard
23 in order to identify other National Guard units that may have members who are affected by
24 exposure to chemicals at Base Gagetown.

25 **4. Confidentiality.** All data within the registry under this section is confidential.
26 Disclosure of the data may be made only with the written consent of the individual who is
27 the subject of the data, or if that individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin and only
28 to a public or private entity, including the bureau, engaged in research related to the effects
29 of chemical exposure on human health.

30 **5. Report.** The director shall submit annually by February 15th to the joint standing
31 committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs a report regarding
32 the status of the registry and information related to education and outreach efforts pursuant
33 to subsection 3, including outreach efforts with other states; any obstacles to data collection
34 or data verification; and any recommended next steps regarding the registry or the use of
35 data collected as a part of the registry. The joint standing committee of the Legislature
36 having jurisdiction over veterans affairs may report out a bill related to the report during
37 the legislative session in which the report is received.

38 **Sec. 2. Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission reestablished.** The
39 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission, referred to in this section as "the study
40 commission," is established.

41 1. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the study commission consists of 12 members
42 appointed as follows:

1 A. Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including
2 members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the
3 Legislature;

4 B. Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the
5 House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of
6 seats in the Legislature;

7 C. Two members who represent veterans' advocacy organizations, one appointed by
8 the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House;

9 D. One member who is a family member of a veteran who served at the Canadian
10 military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, appointed by the
11 President of the Senate;

12 E. One member with expertise processing veterans' claims for benefits related to
13 military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals, appointed by the Speaker of
14 the House;

15 F. Two members who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New
16 Brunswick, Canada and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military
17 service, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker
18 of the House; and

19 G. Two members with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science or
20 human health and who have experience in those fields related to the effects of
21 hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health, one appointed by the
22 President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House.

23 2. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of
24 Representatives member is the House chair of the study commission.

25 3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date
26 of this Act. To the extent possible, members appointed to the study commission must be
27 the same as members appointed to the study commission pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter
28 95. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative
29 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,
30 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the study commission. If 30 days or
31 more after the effective date of this Act a majority of but not all appointments have been
32 made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for
33 the study commission to meet and conduct its business.

34 4. The study commission shall study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on
35 individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New
36 Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the
37 reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National
38 Guard of any state.

39 5. The study commission shall request information it determines necessary to complete
40 the study under subsection 4 from the United States Department of Defense and other
41 federal agencies. The study commission shall provide medical testing to individuals
42 identified through information received pursuant to this subsection related to the effects of
43 exposure to harmful chemicals for purposes of completing the study.

6. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the study commission, except that Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

7. No later than December 3, 2025, the study commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs. The committee may report out a bill based on the recommendations to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Base Gagetown Training Registry within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services to collect and maintain data related to military service and health conditions from individuals who voluntarily provide such data and who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick.

The bill also reestablishes the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission and requires the study commission to request certain information it determines necessary from the United States Department of Defense and other federal agencies to provide medical testing for individuals identified through information received pursuant to the requests as necessary to complete its study.