

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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289 AN ACT TO INCLUDE POVERTY  
TAX ABATEMENTS IN NET  
GENERAL ASSISTANCE COSTS

Rep. Baker

MAJ-ONTP  
MIN-OTP-A  
HSE-ACCP TONTP  
SEN-INDEF. PP

SUMMARY: The bill would have made property tax abatements granted by municipalities to persons unable to pay because of poverty a reimburseable cost under the General Assistance program. The state reimbursement would not be automatic; it would only help those communities that were eligible for reimbursement because their General Assistance costs were above .003 of their 1981 property tax evaluation.

The Committee Amendment (H-242) required that the guidelines for granting property tax abatements be formally adopted by the municipality.

Many felt the bill was a form of tax reform; others felt it would help only the larger towns.

349 AN ACT TO PREVENT CONTAMINA-  
TION OF MILK THROUGH THE  
USE OF FORMALDEHYDE

Rep. McCollister

LV/WD  
HSE-ACCP LV/WD  
SEN-ACCP LV/WD

SUMMARY: The bill would have made it illegal to sell milk or milk products produced or stored in places having urea-formaldehyde insulation.

Testimony from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources indicated that the Department was not aware of any farm buildings with this type of insulation, nor any studies showing the use of this type of insulation to be a problem.

The bill was withdrawn, and a letter was sent to the Commissioner asking that the Department publicize concerns about this problem to dairy farmers and milk processors.

478 AN ACT TO PROTECT THE HEALTH  
OF CHILDREN BY PROHIBITING THE  
FREE DISTRIBUTION OF CIGARETTES

Rep. Ketover

MAJ-OTP  
MIN-ONTP  
HSE-ENACT.  
SEN-ENACT.  
GOV-SIGNED  
PL 83, c. 239

SUMMARY: The bill prohibited the distribution of cigarettes or other tobacco products in public areas (including in or near schools and parks) or in common areas of private buildings, shopping centers or malls. A fine of between \$20 and \$50 would result for each hour of violating the law.

The intent of the bill was to enlarge the prohibition against distributing cigarettes to children by making sure cigarettes distributed to adults would not be discarded in areas where children might gain access to them.

The bill was amended in the Senate (S-67) and the language changed to prohibit distribution of cigarettes or tobacco to children under 18. The current criminal code makes distribution to children under 16 a Class D crime, with requirement of proof beyond a reasonable doubt; under this amendment, there is a lesser standard of proof and a lesser fine.

548 AN ACT TO REINSTATE THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIVISION OF EYE CARE TO CARRY OUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF ITS PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS PROGRAM Sen. Hichens OTP-ND LD 1123

SUMMARY: The bill re-established the Medical Eye Care Program in the Division of Eye Care; it had been removed from that division of the Department of Human Services by action of the Audit and Program Review Committee in 1981. Both educational and medical programs would have been in one place.

The Department agreed that the Medical Eye Care Program could be run equally well in either the Bureau of Rehabilitation or the Bureau of Health. In addition, they suggested a change in the visual acuity standards for receipt of medical eye services.

549 AN ACT TO PROVIDE ITEMIZED HOSPITAL BILLS TO MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES AND MEDICAID RECIPIENTS Sen. Najarian OTP-ND LD 1391

SUMMARY: The bill forbade the Department of Human Services from making payments to hospitals which did not provide itemized bills to Medicare and Medicaid patients. A similar bill before the Business Legislation Committee (LD 239) required hospitals to provide itemized bills to all patients.

After considerable discussion of the degree of itemization, costs incurred in providing these bills, the length of time after being in the hospital that a patient could request the itemized bill, the possibility of including the costs of nursing services, and when the patient should be informed of his or her rights to receive an itemized bill, the Committee decided on a new draft. (LD 239 was withdrawn.)

554 AN ACT TO REVISE THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE LAWS Sen. Carpenter OTP-ND LD 1764

SUMMARY: The bill was the product of discussions among the Maine Municipal Association, welfare directors, the Department of Human Services and other interested parties. It established new provisions, deleted old ones, and reorganized the statutes for greater clarity. Among the major provisions were new standards for denial of assistance after the first application, going beyond the previous sole criterion of need; allowing several towns to share a district office; lengthening the time before a hearing; requiring employers to release wage information; tightening "workfare" requirements.