

STATE OF MAINE 116TH LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

BILL SUMMARIES JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES

MAY 1994

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ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE SECOND REGULAR SESSION

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE BILL SUMMARIES

MAY 1994

This document is a compilation of the bill summaries prepared by this office for the Joint Standing Committees and Joint Select Committees of the Maine Legislature. The volume is organized alphabetically by committee; within each committee, the summaries are arranged by LD number. A subject index is provided at the beginning of each committee's summaries.

The committee report or reports, the prime sponsor for each bill and the lead co-sponsor in each house if one has been designated are listed below each bill title. All adopted amendments are listed, by paper number, together with the sponsor for floor amendments. Final action on each bill is listed to the right of the title. Various types of final action are abbreviated as follows:

PUBLIC XXX	Chapter # of enacted Public Law
P&S XXX	Chapter # of enacted Private & Special Law
RESOLVE XXX	Chapter # of enacted Resolve
CON RES XXX	Chapter # of Constitutional Resolution passed by both Houses
EMERGENCY	Enacted law takes effect sooner than 90 days
ONTP	Ought Not to Pass report accepted
INDEF PP	Bill Indefinitely Postponed
FAILED ENACTMENT	Bill failed to get majority vote
FAILED EMERGENCY ENACTMENT	Emergency bill failed to get 2/3 vote
FAILED MANDATE ENACTMENT	Bill imposing local mandate failed to get 2/3 vote
DIED BETWEEN BODIES	House & Senate disagree; bill died
CONF CMTE UNABLE TO AGREE	Committee of Conference unable to agree; bill died
VETO SUSTAINED	Legislature failed to override Governor's Veto
UNSIGNED	Not signed by Governor within 10 days
DIED ON ADJOURNMENT	Action incomplete when session ended; bill died

These summaries were prepared by the analyst or analysts assigned to the committee. If you have any suggestions or comments on the summaries, please let us know.

5581LHS

LD 1580 An Act Concerning Municipal Appointments

ONTP

SPONSOR(S)	COMMITTEE REPORT	AMENDMENTS ADOPTED
TARDY	ONTP	

SUMMARY

This bill proposed to require that persons appointed by municipal officials to fill vacancies on utility district boards be ratepayers within that district.

LD 1595 An Act to Improve the Efficiency of Rate Processing by PUBLIC 512 Consumer-owned Electric Utilities

SPONSOR(S)	COMMITTEE REPORT	AMENDMENTS ADOPTED
LUDWIG	OTP-AM	S-414

SUMMARY

Current law (35-A MRSA §3502) permits consumer-owned electric utilities to increase rates up to a certain amount without formal rate proceedings at the PUC. The bill proposed to permit these utilities to lower rates a certain amount pursuant to these provisions. The bill maintains the bar against more than one rate increase in a year, but allows a utility to withdraw and file a corrected rate change without waiting a year. It abolishes the authority for electric cooperatives to capitalize contingency reserve funds through rates and establishes, instead, authority to collect in rates a larger amount to fund equity reserves. Finally, the bill provides that the limits on the purposes for which the consumer-owned utility may set its own rates are not binding on the Public Utilities Commission, which may exercise its full discretion as otherwise authorized by law.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-414) provides that a consumer-owned electric utility that proposes to reduce its rates by any amount may elect to set those rates pursuant to the rate-setting procedures of 35-A MRSA §3502.

The amendment further clarifies the provision of the bill permitting rural electric cooperatives to collect in rates a certain amount to provide an equity reserve for debt service coverage: under the amendment, the limit on the total amount of equity accumulated is 40% of the cooperative's total assets minus reserves.

The amendment also makes necessary technical drafting changes and adds a fiscal note to the bill.

LD 1598An Act to Protect Cable Television Consumers from ExcessivePUBLIC 513Late FeesPUBLIC 513

SPONSOR(S)	COMMITTEE REPORT	AMENDMENTS ADOPTED
ESTY	OTP-AM	S-398

SUMMARY

This bill amends a 1991 law which establishes a limit on late fees on bills for basic service cable television. The bill limits the late fee that may be charged on any services, including basic and premium services, to the maximum allowed under the Maine Consumer Credit Code. In addition, the bill specifies that a payment is not considered "late" for purposes of imposing a late fee until at least 30 days have passed from the time the consumer receives the services.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-398) clarifies that the limitation on late fees associated with cable television services is 1.5% per month (the maximum amount permitted under the Consumer Credit Code). The amendment also adds a fiscal note to the bill.

This bill was chaptered as Public Law 513 prior to the end of the session. A Senate amendment was attached to L.D. 1483 amending this law. The amendment made no substantive changes. (See L.D. 1483.)

LD 1601 An Act to Ensure That State Water Utility Rules Are PUBLIC 514 Consistent with Federal Requirements

SPONSOR(S)	COMMITTEE REPORT	AMENDMENTS ADOPTED
VOSE	OTP-AM	S-407

SUMMARY

This bill proposed to prohibit the Commissioner of Human Services from adopting rules regarding safe drinking water that are more stringent than federal law or regulations unless specifically authorized by law.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-407) provides that the Commissioner of the Human Services is proscribed from imposing on a water utility any standard, method or procedure concerning safe drinking water that is more stringent than required under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act or federal regulations adopted pursuant to that Act.

LD 1606 An Act	to Amend the	Charter of the	Portland Water	District	P& \$ 58
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EMERGENCY

SPONSOR(S)	COMMITTEE REPORT	AMENDMENTS ADOPTED
TAYLOR	OTP-AM	H_715

SUMMARY

This bill amends the charter of the Portland Water District to clarify the dates on which the election of trustees occur. The bill also provides that the district share in the costs of an election in proportion to the number of offices and referenda being voted upon at the election. Finally, the bill defines the term "person holding municipal office" for purposes of determining eligibility to serve as a trustee.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (H-715) adds a municipal mandate preamble, makes technical corrections and adds a fiscal note to the bill.

LD 1616	An Act to Make Changes to the Public Utilities Commission	PUBLIC 589
	Laws	

SPONSOR(S)	COMMITTEE REPORT	AMENDMENTS ADOPTED
VOSE	OTP-AM	S-465

SUMMARY

Currently, consumer-owned water and electric utilities may change rates on an expedited basis. Current law allows the utility's ratepayers to petition the Public Utilities Commission to suspend and investigate the proposed rate change. This bill requires petitions to include the signature, printed name and address of the signer and, under certain circumstances, allows the petitioners 7 days to provide the necessary information that is missing from the original petition. The purpose of this change is to facilitate the determination of the validity of the signatures.

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