

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SEVENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

SENATE

NO. 372

In Senate, March 21, 1917.

Referred to Committee on Legal Affairs and five hundred copies ordered printed. Sent down for concurrence.

W. E. LAWRY, Secretary.

Presented by Mr. Butler of Knox.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND NINE
HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN

AN ACT providing for the use of school buildings for the purpose of holding meetings of a social center or committee forum.

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

Section 1. That, upon the receipt of written application so
2 to do, signed by not less than five qualified voters residing
3 in the portion of any town which formerly constituted a
4 school district, the superintending school committee for the
5 town, in charge of the school building situated in what for-
6 merly constituted the school district in which the said voters

7 reside, shall cause to be announced the date and hour and
8 shall fix and determine the same, when a meeting, which
9 shall be open to all the adult residents of said town and
10 shall be held by said committee, at their usual meeting place
11 and be a special meeting of said committee, called as their
12 special meetings are required to be called, but which shall
13 be not less than one week nor more than three weeks after
14 the filing of the said application. That the purpose of said
15 meeting, which shall be stated in any written or printed no-
16 tice thereof that may be given, shall be for said committee
17 to determine whether or not said school building may be
18 used by the residents of said portion of said town, which
19 formerly constituted the school district in which said build-
20 ing is situated, after organization of said residents therefor,
21 for the purpose of holding meetings of a social center or
22 community forum.

Sect. 2. That, if the proposal to use a school building as a
2 social center or community forum is approved at the meet-
3 ing provided for in section one of this act and authorized by
4 said committee, the adult persons, by residence in that por-
5 tion of said town which formerly constituted the school
6 district in which said building is situated, qualified so to do,
7 may proceed to organize and elect necessary officers, includ-
8 ing an executive secretary and prescribe and adopt by-laws
9 and regulations for the conduct of the meetings of said
10 social center or community forum. The by-laws and regu-
11 lations as adopted shall show: (1) That the primary object

12 of the organization is public education and dispensation of
13 knowledge of current events and topics of the day through
14 the open presentation and orderly free discussion of public
15 questions with a view to a more intelligent discharge of
16 the duties of adult citizenship, including the duties of par-
17 ents in the training of their children, and the management
18 and making of suitable homes; (2) that the membership and
19 equal right of attendance and participation in all meetings
20 of the organization includes all adult residents of the said
21 town.

Sect. 3. That when an organization of adult persons shall
2 have been formed and by-laws and regulations adopted, as
3 provided in the preceding sections of this act, it shall be
4 the duty of the superintending school committee to provide
5 light, heat, comfortable seating facilities, janitor service
6 where necessary, and suitable compensation for the organ-
7 izing and clerical service of the executive secretary, and to
8 make provision for such incidental office equipment and ex-
9 penses of said executive secretary as said committee may
10 deem proper, and to make all other arrangements and pro-
11 visions that may be necessary to enable the weekly, monthly,
12 or special meetings of the organization at such times as the
13 organization may designate for its meetings. Amendments
14 to the by-laws and regulations not in conflict with the pro-
15 visions of this act may be made from time to time as the
16 organization may deem necessary. No public school room
17 shall be used under the provisions of this act during such

18 hours as it is in use for the instruction of pupils, and the
19 superintending school committee may make such other
20 regulations as it may deem necessary to protect the physical
21 property.

Sect. 4. That it shall be the duty of the executive secre-
2 tary provided for in the preceding sections of this act, in
3 addition to serving as clerk at all meetings of the organiza-
4 tion provided for in this act, to arrange, publish, and an-
5 nounce such a program for each meeting of the organiza-
6 tion as the organization may direct, to communicate with
7 and notify such candidates for public office or other speakers
8 as the organization may wish to hear, to carry on such cor-
9 respondence as may be necessary to secure suggestive ma-
10 terial or information upon such public questions as the
11 organization may desire to consider, and to act as the agent
12 of the members of the organization in transmitting com-
13 munications to State or local governmental agencies, and as
14 the agent of the State and local governmental agencies in
15 transmitting official communications to the citizens of the
16 said town or city.

Sect. 5. That it shall be the duty of state, county, city,
2 town, and district superintendents of schools to cooperate
3 with and assist public school principals or other persons
4 chosen to serve as executive secretaries under the provisions
5 of this act in discharge of the functions of the office of
6 executive secretary, and it shall be the duty of the State

7 superintendent of schools to enforce the terms of this sec-
8 tion.

Sect. 6. That until such time as executive secretarial ser-
2 vice may be recognized and required as a part of the regular
3 work of the public school principal and provided for in the
4 principal's salary the executive secretary authorized by
5 this act for each public school building established and used
6 as a community forum under the provisions of this act shall
7 be entitled to compensation at the rate of \$5.00 for executive
8 secretarial service rendered at and in connection with each
9 meeting of such social center or community forum.

Sect. 7. That one-half the compensation of the executive
2 secretary provided for in section six of this act shall be paid
3 by the town out of funds legally appropriated therefor or
4 out of the contingent fund, if any, in the same manner and
5 at the same time as the teachers' salaries within the town
6 are paid. The remaining one-half of the compensation of
7 the executive secretary for services rendered at and in con-
8 nection with social center or community forum meetings in
9 accordance with the provisions of this act shall be paid from
10 the treasury of the state. Application therefor shall be
11 made by the local superintendent of schools to the State
12 Superintendent and shall set forth in detail the number and
13 dates of meetings served by the executive secretary, the
14 number in attendance, names of principal speakers, and top-
15 ics of each meeting, or as, if required by the said State su-
16 perintendent. Such application shall be accompanied by a

17 statement by the executive secretary attested by oath or af-
18 fidavit setting forth the number of meetings served by him
19 and for which he claims compensation under the provisions
20 of this act. Upon receipt of such application the State su-
21 perintendent shall certify to the state auditor the amount due
22 such executive secretary, whereupon the said auditor shall
23 draw his warrant upon the State treasurer in favor of such
24 executive secretary for the amount so certified.

Sect. 8. There is hereby appropriated, out of any moneys
2 in the general fund not otherwise expended, the sum of or
3 so much thereof as may be necessary, to carry out the pro-
4 visions of section seven of this act.

Sect. 9. This act shall apply to cities and plantations, as
2 well as to towns, but, in order for advantage to be taken
3 of the provisions hereof, each social center or community
4 forum must hold at least six meetings during the school
5 year, annually, and include among its speakers for each
6 year at least six speakers, from outside of the county,
7 in which said social center or community forum is located,
8 who shall speak on current events and topics, one of said
9 "outside" speakers to be scheduled to speak at each meeting
10 of the six above provided for and so to speak, unless un-
11 avoidably prevented. All meetings shall be free to the pub-
12 lic, high school student educational features shall be re-
13 quired and the maximum number of meetings shall be fif-
14 teen in each year. The executive secretary shall prepare
15 programs in advance and cause the same to be announced,

16 through the local press and in public places in the vicinity,
17 giving dates of meetings and topics.

Sect. 10. All laws and parts of laws in conflict with the
2 provisions of this act are hereby repealed.