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ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES AND ENERGY

February 15, 2006

The Honorable Beth Edmonds, President of the Senate
The Honorable John Richardson, Speaker of the House
122nd Legislature
State House
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Madam President and Mr. Speaker:

Pursuant to Title 3 Maine Revised Statutes, chapter 35, we are pleased to submit the findings of the Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy from its review and evaluation of the Office of the Public Advocate under the Government Evaluation Act. The committee found that the Office of the Public Advocate is operating within its statutory authority.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Senator Philip L. Bartlett II.

Senator Philip L. Bartlett II
Senate Chair

Handwritten signature of Representative Lawrence Bliss.

Representative Lawrence Bliss
House Chair

cc: Steven Ward, Public Advocate
Patrick Norton, Director, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis

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ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES AND ENERGY

February 15, 2006

TO: The Honorable John Richardson, Chair
The Honorable Beth Edmonds, Vice-Chair
Legislative Council

FROM: Senator Philip L. Bartlett II, Senate Chair
Representative Lawrence Bliss, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy

SUBJECT: GEA Review of the Office of the Public Advocate

This is inform you that the Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy has submitted to the Legislature its findings and recommendations from its review and evaluation of the Office of the Public Advocate under the Government Evaluation Act pursuant to Title 3 Maine Revised Statutes, chapter 35. The committee finds that the Office of the Public Advocate is operating within its statutory authority.

cc: Steven Ward, Public Advocate
David Boulter, Executive Director, Legislative Council

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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
UTILITIES AND ENERGY**

**Review of Office of the Public Advocate
under the Government Evaluation Act
15 February 2006**

The Government Evaluation Act

The Government Evaluation Act (“Act”) provides for a system of periodic review of the efficacy and performance of state government agencies. (3 MRSA § 951 et seq.) The keystone of the Act is the agency program evaluation report that consists of a number of components required by the statute. Essentially, the report is an agency self-assessment, which the committee of jurisdiction uses as a starting point for its evaluation of the agency’s effectiveness, efficiency and performance.

Review Process

On April 28, 2005, the chairs of the Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy, on behalf of the committee, sent notice to the Public Advocate of the committee’s intent to review the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) pursuant to 3 MRSA §955(1) during the Second Regular Session of the 122nd Legislature.

On November 8, 2005, the OPA submitted its GEA report in compliance with 3 MRSA §956 and on January 24, 2006, Steve Ward, the Public Advocate, presented the GEA report to the committee.

On February 2, 2006, the committee held a work session on the report and discussed various matters, including the OPA budget, performance objectives, the measurement of the OPA’s effectiveness and the scope of the role of the OPA. The committee requested further information and scheduled a 2nd work session.

The committee held a 2nd work session on February 28, 2006 during which it further discussed certain matters related to the OPA, including a request by Public Advocate that the committee consider increasing certain salaries within the office.

Findings and Recommendations

The duties and responsibilities of the Public Advocate are to represent the using and consuming public in matters within the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission. The Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy finds that the Office of the Public Advocate is operating within its statutory authority and that it is doing so efficiently and effectively.