

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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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*

*P&S XXX*

*RESOLVE XXX*

*CON RES XXX*

*EMERGENCY*

*ONTP*

*INDEF PP*

*FAILED ENACTMENT*

*FAILED EMERGENCY ENACTMENT*

*FAILED MANDATE ENACTMENT*

*DIED BETWEEN BODIES*

*CONF CMTE UNABLE TO AGREE*

*VETO SUSTAINED*

*UNSIGNED*

*DIED ON ADJOURNMENT*

*Chapter # of enacted Public Law*

*Chapter # of enacted Private & Special Law*

*Chapter # of enacted Resolve*

*Chapter # of Constitutional Resolution passed by both Houses*

*Enacted law takes effect sooner than 90 days*

*Ought Not to Pass report accepted*

*Bill Indefinitely Postponed*

*Bill failed to get majority vote*

*Emergency bill failed to get 2/3 vote*

*Bill imposing local mandate failed to get 2/3 vote*

*House & Senate disagree; bill died*

*Committee of Conference unable to agree; bill died*

*Legislature failed to override Governor's Veto*

*Not signed by Governor within 10 days*

*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)**  
TARDY

**COMMITTEE REPORT**  
ONTP

**AMENDMENTS ADOPTED**

**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 Consumer-owned Electric Utilities**

PUBLIC 512

**SPONSOR(S)**  
LUDWIG

**COMMITTEE REPORT**  
OTP-AM

**AMENDMENTS ADOPTED**  
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 1598**      **An Act to Protect Cable Television Consumers from Excessive Late Fees**

PUBLIC 513

**SPONSOR(S)**  
ESTY

**COMMITTEE REPORT**  
OTP-AM

**AMENDMENTS ADOPTED**  
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.