

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE
124TH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION



Summaries of bills, adopted amendments and laws enacted or finally passed during the First Regular Session of the 124th Maine Legislature coming from the

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES AND
ENERGY**

July 2009

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STATE OF MAINE

124TH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION



LEGISLATIVE DIGEST OF BILL SUMMARIES AND ENACTED LAWS

This *Legislative Digest of Bill Summaries and Enacted Laws* summarizes all bills and adopted amendments and all laws enacted or finally passed during the First Regular Session of the 124th Maine Legislature.

The *Digest* is arranged alphabetically by committee, and within each committee by LD number. The committee report(s), prime sponsor and lead co-sponsor(s), if designated, are listed below each bill title. All adopted amendments are summarized and listed by paper number. A subject index is included with each committee. The appendices include a summary of relevant session statistics, an index of all bills by LD number and an index of enacted laws by law type and chapter number.

Final action on each bill is noted to the right of the bill title. The abbreviations used for various categories of final action are as follows:

CARRIED OVER.....	Carried over to a subsequent session of the Legislature
CON RES XXX.....	Chapter # of Constitutional Resolution passed by both Houses
CONF CMTE UNABLE TO AGREE.....	Committee of Conference unable to agree; bill died
DIED BETWEEN BODIES.....	House & Senate disagree; bill died
DIED IN CONCURRENCE.....	One body accepts ONTP report; the other indefinitely postpones the bill
DIED ON ADJOURNMENT.....	Action incomplete when session ended; bill died
EMERGENCY.....	Enacted law takes effect sooner than 90 days
FAILED EMERGENCY ENACTMENT/FINAL PASSAGE.....	Emergency bill failed to get 2/3 vote
FAILED ENACTMENT/FINAL PASSAGE.....	Bill failed to get majority vote
FAILED MANDATE ENACTMENT.....	Bill imposing local mandate failed to get 2/3 vote
NOT PROPERLY BEFORE THE BODY.....	Ruled out of order by the presiding officers; bill died
INDEF PP.....	Bill Indefinitely Postponed; bill died
ONTP (or Accepted ONTP report).....	Ought Not To Pass report accepted; bill died
P&S XXX.....	Chapter # of enacted Private & Special Law
PUBLIC XXX.....	Chapter # of enacted Public Law
RESOLVE XXX.....	Chapter # of finally passed Resolve
UNSIGNED.....	Bill held by Governor
VETO SUSTAINED.....	Legislature failed to override Governor's Veto

The effective date for non-emergency legislation enacted in the First Regular Session of the 124th Legislature is September 12, 2009. The effective date for legislation enacted as an emergency measure is specified in the enacted law summary for those bills.

Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy

regulation adopted by a municipality or political subdivision on or after September 30, 2009 that directly regulates the installation or use of solar energy devices may not unnecessarily prohibit or restrict an owner of residential property from installing or using a solar energy device on the owner's property, subject to reasonable restrictions. Reasonable restrictions are permitted as necessary to protect public health and safety, buildings, shorelands and historic or aesthetic values, to comply with state regulations and to ensure safe access to buildings.

Enacted Law Summary

Public Law 2009, chapter 273 specifies that a legal instrument adopted or created after September 30, 2009 that defines or limits the rights or privileges of property owners or renters with respect to the use of residential property may not prohibit a person from installing or using solar energy devices, including solar collectors and solar clothes-drying devices, on residential property owned by that person or from installing using a solar clothes-drying devices on residential property leased or rented by that person. Under this law, "legal instrument" includes municipal ordinances, bylaws or regulations and rules, bylaws or regulations of an association of property owners as well as deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and other similar binding agreements. The law specifies that a legal instrument may prohibit the installation and use of solar energy devices on residential property in common ownership with third parties or common elements of a condominium. It also permits certain reasonable restrictions on the installation and use of a solar energy device that protect public health and safety, shorelands, buildings and historic or aesthetic values.

LD 120

An Act Regarding Assistance to Low-income Customers of Gas Utilities

PUBLIC 35

Sponsor(s)

HOBBINS

Committee Report

OTP-AM

Amendments Adopted

S-23

This bill clarifies that criteria other than eligibility for federal or state fuel assistance may be used as eligibility criteria to qualify low-income customers of natural gas utilities for assistance. The bill also allows the Public Utilities Commission to approve recovery of the costs of this low-income assistance for natural gas customers through base distribution rates or through the cost-of-gas adjustment rate.

Committee Amendment "A" (S-23)

This amendment replaces the bill. The amendment requires gas utilities in the State that serve 5,000 or more residential customers to offer low-income assistance programs for residential customers. It requires the gas utilities, in the adoption and implementation of low-income assistance programs, to encourage conservation in the use of gas. The bill provides for the recovery of costs through rates. It authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules to implement these provisions and requires the commission to report on low-income assistance programs in the commission's annual report.

Enacted Law Summary

Public Law 2009, chapter 35 requires gas utilities in the State that serve 5,000 or more residential customers to offer low-income assistance programs for residential customers. It requires the gas utilities, in the adoption and implementation of low-income assistance programs, to encourage conservation in the use of gas, and it provides for the recovery of costs through rates. It authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules to implement these provisions and requires the commission to report on low-income assistance programs in the commission's annual report.