

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**STATE OF MAINE**  
127<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE  
FIRST REGULAR SESSION



Summaries of bills, adopted amendments and laws enacted or finally passed

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES  
AND TECHNOLOGY**

August 2015

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# STATE OF MAINE

127<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE

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## LEGISLATIVE DIGEST OF BILL SUMMARIES AND ENACTED LAWS

This *Legislative Digest of Bill Summaries and Enacted Laws* contains summaries of all LDs and adopted amendments and all laws enacted or finally passed during the First Regular Session of the 127<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature.

The *Digest* is arranged alphabetically by committee and within each committee by Legislative Document (LD) number. The committee report(s), prime sponsor and lead co-sponsor(s), if designated, are listed below each LD title. All adopted amendments are summarized and listed by paper number. A subject index is included with each committee. An appendix provides a summary of relevant session statistics.

Final action on each LD is noted to the right of the LD title. The following describes the various final actions.

<i>CARRIED OVER</i> .....	<i>carried over to a subsequent session of the Legislature</i>
<i>CON RES XXX</i> .....	<i>chapter # of constitutional resolution passed by both houses</i>
<i>CONF CMTE UNABLE TO AGREE</i> .....	<i>Committee of Conference unable to agree; legislation died</i>
<i>DIED BETWEEN HOUSES</i> .....	<i>House &amp; Senate disagreed; legislation died</i>
<i>DIED IN CONCURRENCE</i> .....	<i>defeated in each house, but on different motions; legislation died</i>
<i>DIED ON ADJOURNMENT</i> .....	<i>action incomplete when session ended; legislation died</i>
<i>EMERGENCY</i> .....	<i>enacted law takes effect sooner than 90 days after session adjournment</i>
<i>FAILED, EMERGENCY ENACTMENT or FINAL PASSAGE</i> .....	<i>emergency failed to receive required 2/3 vote</i>
<i>FAILED, ENACTMENT or FINAL PASSAGE</i> .....	<i>failed to receive final majority vote</i>
<i>FAILED, MANDATE ENACTMENT</i> .....	<i>legislation proposing local mandate failed required 2/3 vote</i>
<i>HELD BY GOVERNOR</i> .....	<i>Governor has not signed; final disposition to be determined at subsequent session</i>
<i>LEAVE TO WITHDRAW</i> .....	<i>sponsor's request to withdraw legislation granted</i>
<i>NOT PROPERLY BEFORE THE BODY</i> .....	<i>ruled out of order by the presiding officer; legislation died</i>
<i>INDEF PP</i> .....	<i>indefinitely postponed; legislation died</i>
<i>ONTP, ACCEPTED, MAJORITY, MINORITY or REPORT X</i> ....	<i>ought-not-to-pass report accepted; legislation died</i>
<i>P&amp;S XXX</i> .....	<i>chapter # of enacted private &amp; special law</i>
<i>PUBLIC XXX</i> .....	<i>chapter # of enacted public law</i>
<i>RESOLVE XXX</i> .....	<i>chapter # of finally passed resolve</i>
<i>VETO SUSTAINED</i> .....	<i>Legislature failed to override Governor's veto</i>

The effective date for non-emergency legislation enacted in the First Regular Session of the 127<sup>th</sup> Legislature is October 15, 2015. The effective date for legislation enacted as an emergency measure may be found in the enacted law summary for that legislation.

***Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

This bill authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to issue permits for the operation of a thorium refinery or a liquid fluoride thorium reactor in this State and provides that energy produced by a liquid thorium reactor qualifies as a renewable resource and as a renewable capacity resource under the renewable portfolio requirements.

**LD 1124**

**An Act To Manage Risks Associated with the Installation of Natural Gas Pipelines**

**PUBLIC 216**

<u>Sponsor(s)</u>	<u>Committee Report</u>	<u>Amendments Adopted</u>
DUNPHY L WOODSOME	OTP-AM	H-406

This bill enacts construction requirements in statute for the construction of natural gas pipelines and establishes these requirements for gas utilities. The requirements govern clearance between underground facilities, crossings of other facilities and consultation with owners of proximate underground facilities. The bill also requires that the application process include providing evidence of notice to owners of facilities in the applicable public way.

**Committee Amendment "A" (H-406)**

This amendment retains sections of the bill that address the application process and objection process relating to the regulation of facilities in the public way. This amendment defines "underground location standards" and specifies that a local licensing authority may adopt underground location standards for utility facilities within its jurisdiction, except along state or state-aid highways within compact areas of urban compact municipalities, in which case the location standards adopted by the Department of Transportation serve as the minimum standard. The amendment specifies that if a local licensing authority has not adopted underground location standards for utility facilities within its jurisdiction, the standards adopted by the Department of Transportation govern. This amendment allows a local licensing authority that has not adopted standards to grant an exception to the standards adopted by the Department of Transportation if it finds that applying the standards would present an exceptional hardship or unreasonable cost under the circumstances and alternative standards will adequately ensure public safety; all affected parties, as determined by the local licensing authority, have agreed to alternative underground location standards that will adequately ensure public safety; a unique situation exists that requires an adjustment of the standards in a manner that ensures public safety; or the underground location standards exceed the limits of the available space within the right-of-way. Lastly, this amendment requires coordination among underground utility facility owners.

**Enacted Law Summary**

Public Law 2015, chapter 216 requires that the application process for a location permit include providing evidence of notice to owners of facilities in the applicable public way and allows an owner of a facility in the public way to object to an application for a location permit.

The law defines "underground location standards" and specifies that a local licensing authority may adopt underground location standards for utility facilities within its jurisdiction, except along state or state-aid highways within compact areas of urban compact municipalities, in which case the location standards adopted by the Department of Transportation serve as the minimum standard. The law specifies that if a local licensing authority has not adopted underground location standards for utility facilities within its jurisdiction, the standards adopted by the Department of Transportation govern. The law allows a local licensing authority that has not adopted standards to grant an exception to the standards adopted by the Department of Transportation if it finds that applying the standards would present an exceptional hardship or unreasonable cost under the circumstances and alternative standards will adequately ensure public safety; all affected parties, as determined by the local licensing authority, have agreed to alternative underground location standards that will adequately ensure public safety; a unique situation exists that requires an adjustment of the standards in a manner that ensures public safety; or the underground location standards exceed the limits of the available space within the right-of-way. Lastly, the law requires coordination among underground utility facility owners to promote ease of access to and maintenance of

**Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology**

those facilities, while ensuring public safety.

**LD 1167 An Act To Modernize Maine's Broadband Standards**

**ONTP**

<u>Sponsor(s)</u>	<u>Committee Report</u>	<u>Amendments Adopted</u>
JOHNSON	ONTP	

This bill requires the ConnectME Authority to review its definition of broadband service on an annual basis and consider how broadband service is defined by the Federal Communications Commission. This bill also requires the ConnectME Authority to consider other indicators of nationally competitive broadband performance expectations when defining broadband service. This bill requires that if the ConnectME Authority amends its definition of broadband service, it must strengthen the definition to ensure it contributes to the State's nationally competitive economic development status. This bill also requires that the ConnectME Authority enhance broadband service in Maine to achieve actual speeds for downloads and uploads that are at least equal to or greater than the average of all the New England states' actual speeds.

**LD 1185 An Act To Establish the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund**

**PUBLIC 323**

<u>Sponsor(s)</u>	<u>Committee Report</u>	<u>Amendments Adopted</u>
HIGGINS	OTP-AM	H-288
WOODSOME	OTP-AM	S-257 WOODSOME

This bill establishes the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund within the Department of Economic and Community Development to increase access across the State to ultra high-speed broadband infrastructure that will enhance the State's competitiveness in national and international economies. The bill establishes funding for the department to award planning and implementation grants to communities and municipalities in order to support public-private partnerships that will establish a municipal gigabit fiber-optic broadband network in their regions.

**Committee Amendment "A" (H-288)**

This amendment is the majority report of the committee. This amendment does the following.

1. It changes the entity in charge of administering the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund from the Department of Economic and Community Development to the ConnectME Authority.
2. It reduces the minimum number of implementation grants to be awarded from 50 to 25.
3. It removes the provision requiring a minimum number of implementation grants to be awarded to economically disadvantaged communities.
4. It reduces the maximum number of planning grants to be awarded from 50 to 25.
5. It includes submission requirements for those awarded planning grants.
6. It removes those sections of the bill that require the ConnectME Authority to review laws, rules and regulations related to high-speed broadband access and that direct the Public Utilities Commission to eliminate barriers regarding ultra high-speed broadband infrastructure.
7. It reduces the overall amount to be allocated from the General Fund from approximately \$12,000,000 to