

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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



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

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL  
AFFAIRS**

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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 Second 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.

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

The effective date for non-emergency legislation enacted in the First Regular Session of the 127<sup>th</sup> Legislature is July 29, 2016. 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 Veterans and Legal Affairs*

**LD 1612**

**An Act To Improve the Delivery of Services and Benefits to Maine's Veterans and Provide Tuition Assistance to Members of the Maine National Guard**

**PUBLIC 465**

<u>Sponsor(s)</u>	<u>Committee Report</u>	<u>Amendments Adopted</u>
	OTP-AM	H-584 H-626 KINNEY J

This bill was reported by the committee pursuant to Resolve 2015, chapter 48 and then referred back to the committee for processing in the normal course.

This bill implements certain recommendations of the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans. The bill requires the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management to include marketing and outreach objectives as a core function of the bureau. The marketing and outreach objectives are intended to identify residents in the State who are veterans and also to maximize awareness of benefits and services available to veterans and family members of veterans. The bill also directs the bureau to acquire and implement an electronic records management system to create efficiencies and improve customer service to veterans seeking assistance from the bureau. The bill clarifies that the bureau's purpose includes serving as the primary source of information for veterans regarding the services, benefits and honors provided to veterans. The bill requires a veterans' service organization that receives funds from the Coordinated Veterans Assistance Fund to provide the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services with data demonstrating that the funds are being used to assist veterans in filing claims with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Committee Amendment "A" (H-584)**

This amendment specifies the agencies with which the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management is authorized to enter into memoranda of understanding to help achieve the marketing and outreach program objectives outlined in the bill. The amendment specifies that the records management system is intended to help the bureau meet certain outcomes. The bill states that the system itself must be capable of meeting those outcomes. It also removes the requirement that the records management system be capable of identifying burial locations on maps of the Maine Veterans' Memorial Cemetery System. The amendment strikes the provision in the bill that requires a veterans' service organization that receives funds from the Coordinated Veterans Assistance Fund to provide the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services with data demonstrating that the funds are being used to assist veterans in filing claims with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. It also strikes the provision in the bill that requires the director to regularly conduct an assessment of the number and geographic distribution of veteran service officers employed by the bureau. Finally, the amendment adds an appropriations and allocations section that provides for funding for the records management system required by the bill, two additional veterans service officers to be employed by the bureau and funding to make permanent the position of Veterans Outreach Specialist, which is currently a two year contracted position.

**House Amendment "C" To Committee Amendment "A" (H-626)**

Like the bill, this amendment implements recommendations of the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans. This amendment also combines proposals from five bills LDs: 1343, 1590, 1611, 1612 and 1625, which improve the delivery of services and benefits to Maine veterans and provide tuition assistance to members of the Maine National Guard.

Part A requires the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management to include marketing and outreach objectives as a core function of the bureau. The marketing and outreach objectives are intended to identify residents in the State who are veterans and also to

## *Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs*

maximize awareness of benefits and services available to veterans and family members of veterans. Part A also directs the bureau to acquire and implement an electronic records management system to create efficiencies and provide timely and effective customer service to veterans seeking assistance from the bureau. The bureau is required to serve as the primary source of information for veterans regarding the services, benefits and honors provided to veterans. Part A requires the director to employ two additional veteran service officers who are not assigned to a particular region but who will be directed to where the service needs of veterans are greatest and makes a current temporary position of outreach coordinator permanent.

Part B proposes changes to current law to address homelessness among veterans by requiring coordination of agencies that provide services to veterans to maximize resources available to support stable, permanent housing for veterans at risk of homelessness. Part B requires that the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management be appointed to an existing entity, the Statewide Homeless Council. Part B requires the Statewide Homeless Council to develop a strategic plan to maximize existing services, enhance communication among providers and improve access to services that support permanent and stable housing for veterans. The director is required to report annually to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs regarding the implementation of the plan and its effect on homelessness among veterans. Part B authorizes the director to employ a veteran service officer whose duties include working on tasks relative to homelessness among veterans.

Part C provides a sales tax exemption to all federally chartered veterans' service organizations, beginning August 1, 2016.

Part D establishes the Maine National Guard Postsecondary Fund to provide for a 100% tuition waiver at any state postsecondary education institution for qualified members of the Maine National Guard. Part D also transfers funds to the new fund for the costs of the tuition waiver program.

Part E directs the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to identify the needs of student-veterans on their campuses, including needs related to admission, degree completion, transitioning to civilian life and meeting personal and financial obligations, and directs the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to identify existing services that meet the needs identified, assess the effectiveness of those services, determine what services are not being offered that, if offered, would meet those needs and propose services and solutions that fulfill those needs across campuses that are based upon best practices.

Part F provides for allocations to fund the initiatives proposed in this amendment including deappropriating debt service funds from the University of Maine in order to fund the tuition waiver for qualified members of the Maine National Guard and transferring funds from the Gambling Control Board necessary to offset the costs of the other initiatives.

### **Enacted Law Summary**

Public Law 2015, chapter 465 implements recommendations of the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans and incorporates proposals included in various bills regarding veterans and members of the Maine National Guard. It combines proposals from five LDs: 1343, 1590, 1611, 1612 and 1625, which improve the delivery of services and benefits to Maine veterans and provide tuition assistance to members of the Maine National Guard.

Chapter 465 makes several changes to the law with regard to the Bureau of Veterans Services. It requires the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services to include marketing and outreach objectives as a core function of the bureau. The marketing and outreach objectives are intended to identify residents in the State who are veterans and also to maximize awareness of benefits and services available to veterans and family members of veterans. Chapter 465 also directs the bureau to acquire and implement an electronic records management system to create efficiencies and provide timely and effective customer service to veterans seeking assistance from the bureau. The bureau is required to serve as the primary source of information for veterans regarding the services, benefits

## *Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs*

and honors provided to veterans. Under this law, the director is required to employ two additional veteran service officers who are not assigned to a particular region but who will be directed to where the service needs of veterans are greatest and makes a current temporary position of outreach coordinator permanent.

Public Law 2015, chapter 48 includes changes to current law to address homelessness among veterans by requiring coordination of agencies that provide services to veterans to maximize resources available to support stable, permanent housing for veterans at risk of homelessness. Under this law, the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services is appointed to an existing entity, the Statewide Homeless Council. Chapter 465 requires the Statewide Homeless Council to develop a strategic plan to maximize existing services, enhance communication among providers and improve access to services that support permanent and stable housing for veterans. The director is required to report annually to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs regarding the implementation of the plan and its effect on homelessness among veterans. Additionally, the law authorizes the director to employ a veteran service officer whose duties include working on tasks relative to homelessness among veterans.

Chapter 465 provides a sales tax exemption to all federally-chartered veterans' service organizations, beginning August 1, 2016.

This law establishes the Maine National Guard Postsecondary Fund to provide for a 100% tuition waiver at any state postsecondary education institution for qualified members of the Maine National Guard. It also transfers funds to the new fund for the costs of the tuition waiver program.

Part of chapter 465 directs the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to identify the needs of student-veterans on their campuses, including needs related to admission, degree completion, transitioning to civilian life and meeting personal and financial obligations, and directs the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to identify existing services that meet the needs identified, assess the effectiveness of those services, determine what services are not being offered that, if offered, would meet those needs and propose services and solutions that fulfill those needs across campuses that are based upon best practices.

Finally, this law provides for allocations to fund the initiatives proposed in this amendment including deappropriating debt service funds from the University of Maine in order to fund the tuition waiver for qualified members of the Maine National Guard and transferring funds from the Gambling Control Board necessary to offset the costs of the other initiatives.

**LD 1666      **Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 3: Maine Clean Election Act and Related Provisions, a Late-filed Major Substantive Rule of the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices**      **INDEF PP****

<u>Sponsor(s)</u>	<u>Committee Report</u>	<u>Amendments Adopted</u>
	OTP-AM	H-633

This resolve provides for legislative review of portions of Chapter 3: Maine Clean Election Act and Related Provisions, a major substantive rule of the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices that was filed outside the legislative rule acceptance period.

### **Committee Amendment "A" (H-633)**

This amendment authorizes final adoption of portions of Chapter 3: Maine Clean Election Act and Related Provisions, a provisionally adopted major substantive rule of the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices filed after the deadline, as long as certain changes are made. The amendment requires the rules to be