

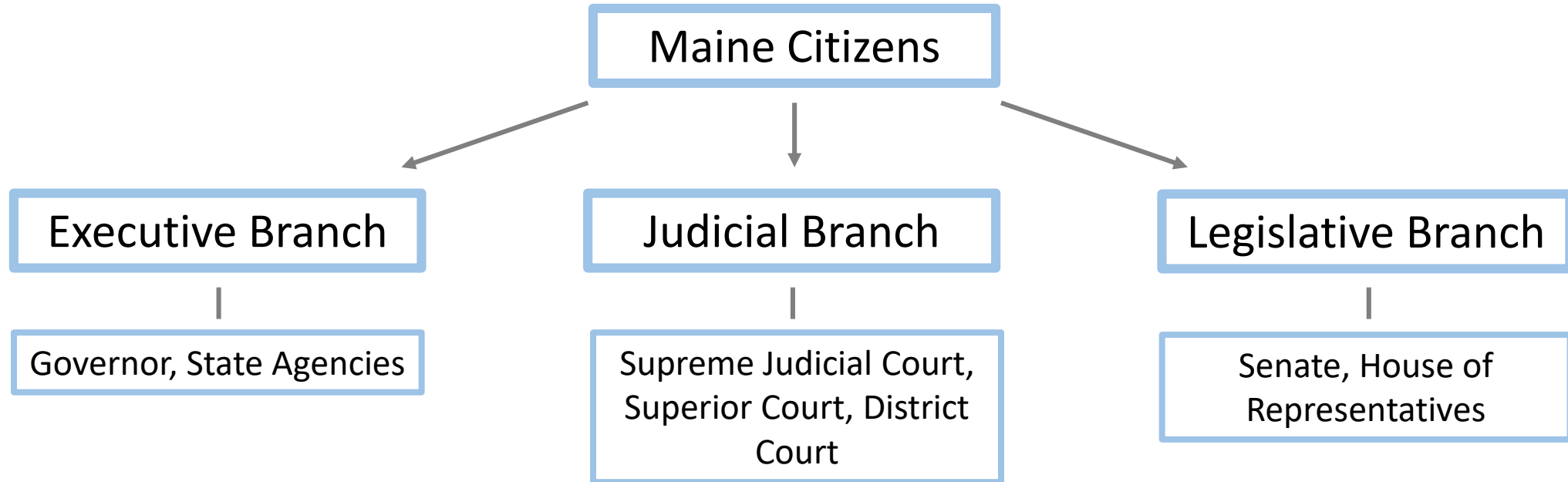


# ACCESSIBLE ADVOCACY

*Understanding Maine's State Legislature  
and Making Your Voice Heard*

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# Maine's Government Structure



**Constitutional Officers:** Secretary of State, State Treasurer, and State Attorney General

**Statutory Officer:** State Auditor



# Governor

- ▶ Elected by the people to serve a 4-year term, with a limit of 2 consecutive terms
- ▶ Head of the Executive Branch

## **Powers include:**

- ▶ Appoint civil, military, and judicial officers (excluding probate judges/justices of the peace). Appointees are subject to confirmation by the Legislature
- ▶ Nominate state agency commissioners. Nominees are legally selected by the Maine State Legislature
- ▶ Grant pardons, reprieves, and commutations.



# Senate

- ▶ Upper house of the Legislature
- ▶ 35 voting members
- ▶ Serve 2-year terms, with a limit of 4 consecutive terms
- ▶ Each voting member represents about 38,000 citizens
- ▶ Part-time position

## **Leadership Structure:**

- **Senate President:** Presides over the Senate Chamber. First in line of gubernatorial succession
- **Secretary of the Senate:** Elected by the Senate to serve a 2-year term at the start of Legislative Session. Serves as the chief executive and administrative official
- **Majority & Minority Leaders:** Elected by respective party caucuses. Majority and minority are determined by the number of seats taken by each party



# House of Representatives

- ▶ Lower house of the legislature
- ▶ 151 voting members
- ▶ Serve 2-year terms with a limit of 4 consecutive terms
- ▶ Each voting member represents about 8,800 Maine citizens
- ▶ Part-time position

## **Leadership Structure:**

- **Speaker of the House:** Presides over the House Chamber
- **Clerk of the House:** Elected by the House to serve a 2-year term at the start of Legislative Session
- **Majority & Minority Leaders:** Elected by respective party caucuses. Majority and minority are determined by number of seats taken by each party

A black and white photograph of the Maine State Capitol building, featuring a prominent dome and classical architectural elements, set against a clear sky. The building is partially framed by trees in the foreground.

# Legislative Calendar

Both houses of the Maine State Legislature meet for two separate sessions each cycle:

- ▶ **First Session:** Begins the first Wednesday in December following the general election and continues into the following year
- ▶ **Second Session:** Begins the first Tuesday in January of the next year, the same year as the next general election.
  - ▶ Shorter in length
  - ▶ Bills accepted are limited to a specific criteria

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Idea Developed*



- ▶ A legislator sponsors a bill, often at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, or public official
- ▶ The Governor can submit bills to be accepted into the legislative session
- ▶ The process by which an idea becomes a law is designed to prevent hasty or uninformed decisions on matters that can affect the lives of every Maine citizen

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Bill Drafted*



- ▶ During the first session, there are no formal limitations on the type or number of bills that may be submitted before the start of session
- ▶ The second session is limited by the Constitution of Maine to:
  - ▶ Budgetary matters
  - ▶ Governor's legislation
  - ▶ Legislation submitted pursuant to authorized studies
  - ▶ Legislation of an emergency nature approved by the Legislative Council
  - ▶ Legislation submitted by direct initiative petition of the electors.



# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Bill Drafted, continued*



- ▶ The Office of the Revisor of Statutes, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis, and Office of Fiscal and Program Review provide expertise, research, and bill drafting assistance
  - ▶ Reviews all proposed bills and either drafts them or edits any initial drafts to ensure proper formatting
- ▶ When a request for a bill is filed, it is assigned a Legislative Request (L.R.) number that is used to track the request until it is printed as a Legislative Document (L.D.)

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Bill Introduced*



- ▶ The Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House suggest which committee each bill should be referred to based on the subject of the bill
- ▶ They assign the bill a Senate Paper (S.P.) or House Paper (H.P.) number, as well as a Legislative Document (L.D.) number

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Committee Reference*



- ▶ The bill is referred to one of the Joint Standing or Joint Select committees
- ▶ Maine's committees include:

Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF)	Appropriations and Financial Affairs (AFA)	Criminal Justice and Public Safety (CJPS)	Education and Cultural Affairs (EDU)
Energy, Utilities, and Technology (EUT)	Environment and Natural Resources (ENR)	Government Oversight	Health and Human Services (HHS)
Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW)	Insurance and Financial Services	Judiciary (JUD)	Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development (LCRED)
Legislative Budget Subcommittee	Legislative Council	Marine Resources (MAR)	Rules
State and Local Government (SLG)	Taxation (TAX)	Transportation (TRA)	Veterans and Legal Affairs (VLA)

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Committee Action*



## Committee Structure:

- ▶ Maine's Joint Standing Committees members are appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House
- ▶ Committees are made up of three Senators and ten Representatives
- ▶ Each committee has two chairs: one chair is a Senator and the other chair is a Representative
  - ▶ The chairs are responsible for setting dates and times for public hearings and work sessions for the committee's bills

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Committee Action, continued*



## Public Hearings:

- ▶ Public Hearings are open to all members of the public and are used as a way for legislators to gain more information about each bill from various perspectives
- ▶ The sponsor of the bill will testify in front of the committee to explain the purpose of the bill
- ▶ Members of the public, state officials, and lobbyists are all encouraged to come forward and testify in support or opposition to any bill on the committee's agenda
- ▶ After an individual has testified, the committee is allowed to ask that person questions for further clarification

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Committee Action, continued*



## Work Sessions:

- ▶ The purpose of work sessions is to allow committee members to discuss bills thoroughly
- ▶ The committee works with its legislative analyst to draft amendments or review amendments proposed by others
- ▶ Amendments are suggested changes to the bill, that may clarify, restrict, expand or correct the language of the bill
- ▶ Work sessions are open to the public at the discretion of the committee

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Report of Committee*



## Committee Reports:

- ▶ The committee report is the result of how the committee votes on the bill
  - ▶ There are three ways committee members can vote on a bill:
    - ▶ Ought to Pass (OTP)
    - ▶ Ought Not to Pass (ONTP)
      - ▶ A bill dies in committee if there is a unanimous "ought not to pass" vote
    - ▶ Ought to Pass as Amended (OTP-AM)
- ▶ The committee may vote unanimously on a bill, however, when this does not happen it is called a divided report.
  - ▶ A divided report will have a majority report and a minority report of the committee's decision

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *House and Senate Action*



- ▶ After a committee report has been sent out, the bill returns to the House or Senate
- ▶ Here, the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate place the bill and its committee report on the Legislative Calendar
- ▶ For a bill to be enacted once it has made it to the Chambers, it has to pass through at least four steps on the floor of the House and Senate
  - ▶ First Reading
  - ▶ Second Reading
  - ▶ Engrossment
  - ▶ Enactment



# Maine's Path to Legislation: *House and Senate Action, continued*



- ▶ When the bill is placed on the calendar the members of the House or Senate vote to *accept* or *reject* the committee report, or one of the divided reports
- ▶ If an “ought to pass” report is accepted in either chamber, the bill then receives its first reading by the Secretary or Clerk
- ▶ The House has a Consent Calendar for bills unanimously accepted as Ought to Pass or Ought to Pass as Amended, which replaces the first and second readings

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Second Reading*



- ▶ When a bill is given its second reading, floor amendments may be offered
  - ▶ Floor amendments must be filed with the Revisor's Office prior to being introduced to the chamber
- ▶ At any point, a legislator or the presiding officer may call for a vote on the current motion on the bill

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Second Chamber*



- ▶ When a bill reaches the second chamber, it goes through a similar process as the first chamber
- ▶ If the second chamber amends the bill, it is returned to the first chamber for a vote on the changes
  - ▶ The bill has to be accepted in both the House and Senate in identical form
- ▶ After the debating and amending processes are completed, a vote is taken in both chambers to pass the measure to be engrossed
  - ▶ “Engrossing” means printing the bill, and all adopted amendments, together in an integrated document for enactment
- ▶ The necessary vote for enactment is usually a simple majority, with a few exceptions

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Sent to Governor*



- ▶ After final passage, the bill is sent to the Governor.
- ▶ The Governor has 10 days to sign or veto the bill
- ▶ If the Governor does not respond within 10 days, and the Legislature is still in session, the bill becomes law
- ▶ If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes law 90 days after session has ended
- ▶ If the Governor vetoes the bill, it is returned to either the House or Senate, where a 2/3 majority is needed to override the veto

# Maine's Path to Legislation: *Becomes Law*



- ▶ A bill becomes law 90 days after the Legislative session has ended
- ▶ A bill can become law immediately if the Legislature, votes for it to be declared an emergency exists.
- ▶ Once session has ended, all public laws, private and special laws, resolves, and constitutional resolutions passed in that year are published by the Office of the Revisor of Statutes in the Laws of the State of Maine



# Get Involved:

## *Attend NAMI Smarts*

- ▶ NAMI Smarts is a hands-on advocacy training program
- ▶ It is designed to help people living with mental health challenges and their friends and family transform their passion and lived experience into skillful, grassroots advocacy
- ▶ The program is structured as a series of three workshops, 1-2 hours in length

### **What skills will I learn at NAMI Smarts?**

- ▶ How to tell a compelling story that is inspiring and makes an impact
- ▶ How to write an effective email, create an elevator speech and make impactful phone calls
- ▶ How to orchestrate setting up a successful meeting with an elected official



# Get Involved: *Testify*

## What happens when the hearing begins?

- ▶ Once the committee chairs call the public hearing to order, they will ask the sponsor(s) of the bill to present the bill to the committee and the members will have a chance to ask them questions
- ▶ After that, other individuals and the public are invited to speak

## What should I do in advance of the hearing?

- ▶ Practice delivering your message
- ▶ Prepare written copies of your testimony
  - ▶ *Generally, committees request that people bring 25 copies of their testimony*



# Get Involved: *Testify*

## What do I do exactly?

- ▶ Approach the podium and sign in on the sheet provided
- ▶ Address the Chairs of the committee and the committee members
- ▶ Tell the committee your name and the community where you live
  - ▶ *“Senator Smith, Representative Roberts and members of the committee, I am \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ and I am here to support/oppose L.D. ----.”*





# Get Involved: *Testify*

## What should I remember when I speak to the committee?

- ▶ Speak from your own experience. The committee wants to know how the bill will affect you or community.
- ▶ Keep your testimony short and to the point and try not to repeat what other speakers have said.
- ▶ Be respectful – even if someone speaks against your position.
- ▶ Thank the committee for its attention. Wait to see if they have questions for you.
- ▶ Answer any questions briefly and accurately to the best of your ability; *if you don't know an answer, just say so.*

# Contact NAMI Maine today to get involved!

## Online:

[www.namimaine.org](http://www.namimaine.org)

*Find us on social media!*

## By Phone:

(800) 464-5767

## By Email:

[info@namimaine.org](mailto:info@namimaine.org)

*Become a NAMI Maine member to  
receive advocacy alerts during the  
Legislative session:*

[www.namimaine.org/join](http://www.namimaine.org/join)

*(Information utilized in this presentation has been adapted from the Maine State Legislature's website.  
To find out more about the legislative process, or to contact your elected leaders, visit:  
[www.mainelegislature.org](http://www.mainelegislature.org))*