



SEN. BETH EDMONDS
CHAIR

REP. GLENN A. CUMMINGS
VICE-CHAIR

123RD MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SEN. ELIZABETH H. MITCHELL
SEN. CAROL WESTON
SEN. JOHN L. MARTIN
SEN. RICHARD W. ROSEN
REP. HANNAH M. PINGREE
REP. JOSHUA A. TARDY
REP. SEAN FAIRCLOTH
REP. ROBERT H. CROSTHWAITE

Legislative Council Policy on Legislative Use of Maine Legislature and Maine.gov Websites

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Maine Legislative Council to provide information through legislative websites and the Maine.gov website to assist with and promote education about governmental services and operations, public access to governmental information, and public service to citizens and businesses, and to provide current and accurate information to website visitors about the Maine Legislature and its activities. Posting of information relating to commercial or private interests is prohibited.

In doing so, the Legislative Council provides information directly on its website about legislative and other governmental activities and may establish hypertext links to external websites and pages containing information created and maintained by public and private organizations other than the Legislature or Maine.gov. These hypertext links may be created by the Legislative Council if it determines that establishing those external links are for informational purposes consistent with this policy or where the linked external websites are required by law.

Furthermore, it is the policy of the Legislative Council that the Legislature and its various offices and representatives comply with the Program Guidelines for all .gov domains as established by the U.S. General Accountability Office (GAO) for all .gov domains, including the prohibition on using the .gov domain for political, political party or campaigning activities. As such, it is the policy of the Legislative Council to prohibit use of the legislature's websites or the Maine.gov website for a campaign. For the purposes of this policy, the term "campaign" has the meaning given to it in 21-A MRSA §1052, sub-§1.

Use of Governmental Websites

The Legislature shall maintain a legislative website including a homepage that provides one or more hypertext links to the Maine House of Representatives, Maine Senate and to each office of the Legislature. Active links shall be maintained between and among each of the offices and the legislature's home page. The home page for each legislative office must identify it as the official website for that office, and must include a hypertext link that allows email communication to the website administrator.

The Legislature shall maintain websites for individual legislator profiles on the legislative website. These websites may not be linked directly to any legislator website that is not within the .gov domain.

No legislator, legislative employee or office may place information on its website or any website of the legislature or Maine.gov in violation of 5 MRSA, section 7056-A or 3 MRSA, sections 170 & 170-A. The Legislative Council shall direct the immediate removal of information determined by the Legislative Council to be in violation upon such determination of violation. Violations of 5 MRSA, section 7056-A and 3 MRSA, sections 170 & 170-A are subject to prosecution as provided by law.

No legislator, legislative employee or legislative office may post news releases, statements, text or images on the Maine.gov online news service or on the legislature's homepage. All partisan or political information from any source must be confined to the official websites of the following offices: Senate majority and minority offices, House majority and minority offices, Office of the Senate President and Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Legislative offices shall make reasonable efforts to inform website visitors when they leave legislative-authorized websites by notice or other appropriate disclaimer.

Authorized Software for Website Development and Postings

After having giving notice to the presiding officer for that office and within available resources, each partisan office is authorized to purchase, install and maintain web development software such as Adobe Dreamweaver, to design, develop and maintain standards-based websites and related applications. Such software must be compatible with other legislative software and the Office of Information Services is charged with assuring compatibility. The Office of Information Services shall maintain legislatively purchased software with software updates and patches as they become available. No legislative employee or office may circumvent virus detection software or other security controls used on legislative systems. Furthermore, unlicensed or pirated software or software in violation of copyright protections may not be installed on legislative equipment.

Linking Policy

The Legislature's websites and Maine.gov may provide hypertext links to many websites that are not controlled, maintained, or regulated by the Maine Legislature, Maine.gov, or any organization affiliated with Maine.gov, and as such is not responsible for the content of those websites. Use of information obtained from those external websites is discretionary to the user, and reliance on that information should be undertaken only after an independent review of its accuracy. References at those websites to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, point of view, or otherwise do not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the Maine Legislature.

External website hypertext links may be created by the Legislature if it determines that establishing the external links will be consistent with assisting or furthering the purpose of the web portal, which is to significantly and diligently promote public service to citizens and businesses by:

- Expanding business and citizen access to government services and government information
- Offering an easy and convenient process for citizens and businesses to conduct transactions with State government online

- Accelerating the development and delivery of an increased volume of high quality online government services
- Improving the level of customer service from State government
- Extending electronic government services to municipalities and county government
- Providing current and reliable information about the Maine Legislature

No legislative website may provide a hypertext link to any political party, campaign website or office.

No legislative website may provide a hypertext link to any website that otherwise meets the purpose of this web portal but is generally regarded as partisan unless the link is only to the official website of one or more of the following: Senate majority and minority offices, House majority and minority offices, Office of the Senate President and Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Law and Legislative Reference Library if relevant to its online research services.

The Maine Legislative Council, in its sole discretion, will determine whether the external website meets the purpose of this web portal or for the specified informational purposes. Hypertext links to external websites and pages may be removed or replaced at the sole discretion of the Legislative Council at any time and without notice.

Effective Date

This policy takes effect immediately upon approval by the Legislative Council.

Adopted by the Legislative Council at its meeting on April 26, 2007.

BY: David E. Boutilier