

§1011. Statement of purpose

The Maine Legislature enjoys a high reputation for progressive accomplishment. The vast majority of its members are public officers of integrity and dedication, seeking at all times to maintain high standards of ethical conduct. [PL 1975, c. 621, §1 (NEW).]

The public interest is best served by attracting and retaining in the Legislature individuals of high caliber and attainment. The public interest will suffer if unduly stringent requirements deprive government "of the services of all but princes and paupers." [RR 2023, c. 1, Pt. C, §19 (COR).]

Membership in the Legislature is not a full-time occupation and is not compensated on that basis; moreover, it is measured in 2-year terms, requiring each member to recognize and contemplate that the election of that member will not provide that member with any career tenure. [RR 2023, c. 1, Pt. C, §20 (COR).]

Most Legislators must look to income from private sources, not their public salaries, for their sustenance and support for their families; moreover, they must plan for the day when they must return to private employment, business or their professions. [PL 1975, c. 621, §1 (NEW).]

The increasing complexity of government at all levels, with broader intervention into private affairs, makes conflicts of interest almost inevitable for all part-time public officials, and particularly for Legislators who must cast their votes on measures affecting the lives of almost every citizen or resident of the State. The adoption of broader standards of ethics for Legislators does not impugn either their integrity or their dedication; rather it recognizes the increasing complexity of government and private life and will provide them with helpful advice and guidance when confronted with unprecedented or difficult problems in that gray area involving action which is neither clearly right nor clearly wrong. [PL 1975, c. 621, §1 (NEW).]

If public confidence in government is to be maintained and enhanced, it is not enough that public officers avoid acts of misconduct. They must also scrupulously avoid acts which may create an appearance of misconduct. [PL 1975, c. 621, §1 (NEW).]

The Legislature cannot legislate morals and the resolution of ethical problems must indeed rest largely in the individual conscience. The Legislature may and should, however, define ethical standards, as most professions have done, to chart the areas of real or apparent impropriety. [PL 1975, c. 621, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1975, c. 621, §1 (NEW). RR 2023, c. 1, Pt. C, §§19, 20 (COR).

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