



Library Briefs

March 2011

From the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library, an office of the Maine Legislature

About us

A Note about the Law Library and this Newsletter

The Law and Legislative Reference Library is a nonpartisan office of the Maine State Legislature, and our principal mission is to make sure that legislators have the resources they need to make informed decisions on the issues before them. *Library Briefs*, an occasional newsletter of the Law and Legislative Reference Library, alerts you to services and resources available to legislators, legislative staff, other agencies, and the citizens of Maine. From time to time we will use this newsletter to let you know about new databases and research tools and to keep you abreast of developments in our rapidly expanding program to make Maine's laws and legislative publications more widely available through electronic access.

Ask a librarian

Research Services

The Law Library has a staff of librarians specially trained with many years of experience in researching legal and legislative information. We will work with you to identify and retrieve resources appropriate for your needs. Although you may choose to have printed materials delivered to your desk, we can generally provide a faster response by email with relevant documents attached.

You may contact a reference librarian whenever the Legislature is in session by:

- ♦ stopping by the Reference Desk,
- ♦ e-mailing us at lawlib.reference@legislature.maine.gov, or
- ♦ phoning us at 287-1600 and asking for the Reference Desk.

What we have

The Law Library's Collection

Our holdings include the most current treatises as well as historical works, materials written for the legal practitioner as well as those designed for the layperson. We have legal encyclopedias and dictionaries, all 50 state codes, the Federal document depository collection, and Law Court cases and briefs. Many of our resources are more conveniently accessed electronically than in print, and the librarians can help you choose and navigate the database options on our patron computer network. Most of our materials are cataloged in the University System's URSUS catalog (<http://ursus.maine.edu>), where our holdings are marked as LEG in the Location field.



If we do not hold a published item in our collection or have electronic access to it, we can often borrow the item from another library. Please contact the Reference Desk to place an interlibrary loan request. Also, please request items to be borrowed well in advance of when they will be needed, since the process generally takes a few days.

*Listen and
commute*

Audio Book Collection

The Maine State Library has deposited a new collection of about 50 audio book titles in the Law Library. These CD titles have proved popular with legislators and staff in the past, particularly those who have long commutes. Please stop by to see the available titles.

*Trace a law's
history*

Legislative and Statutory History

Legislative history reveals changes through bill drafts and amendments, debate, and committee testimony indicating matters brought to the legislators' attention during consideration of the bill. Statutory history traces the changes in a particular statute over time, and the legislative history behind each particular change.

The Law Library has unique resources for investigating legislative *and* statutory history. We have complete collections of the Laws of Maine back to 1820, legislative documents back to 1868 and earlier, floor debate from 1897 forward, and committee testimony as far back as 1983. Furthermore, our extensive collection of newspaper clippings often provides context for legislative developments.

If the history of a bill or statute is not already covered in one of the more than 50 compiled legislative histories that we maintain, the reference librarians can produce a legislative history tailored to your needs. Please contact the Reference Desk if you wish to know more about legislative and statutory histories.