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## **An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Right To Know Advisory Committee Concerning Training for Elected Officials**

**Emergency preamble.** Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

**Whereas,** the training of elected officials pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 1, section 412 must begin July 1, 2008, and that law needs clarification; and

**Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 1 MRSA §411, sub-§6, ¶D,** as enacted by PL 2005, c. 631, §1, is amended to read:

D. Shall serve as a resource to support training and education about the freedom of access laws. Although each agency is responsible for training for the specific records and meetings pertaining to that agency's mission, the advisory committee shall provide core resources for the training, share best practices experiences and support the establishment and maintenance of online training as well as written question-and-answer summaries about specific topics. The advisory committee shall recommend a process for collecting the training completion records required under section 412, subsection 3 and for making that information publicly available;

**Sec. 2. 1 MRSA §412,** as enacted by PL 2007, c. 349, §1, is amended to read:

### **§ 412. Public records and proceedings training for certain elected officials**

**1. Training required.** Beginning July 1, 2008, an elected official subject to this section shall complete a course of training on the requirements of this chapter relating to public records and proceedings. The official shall complete the training not later than the 120th day after the date the elected official takes the oath of office to assume the person's duties as an elected official. For elected officials subject to this section serving in office on July 1, 2008, the training required by this section must be completed by November 1, 2008.

**2. Training course; minimum requirements.** The training course under subsection 1 must be approved by the advisory committee. ~~The training must be~~ designed to be completed by an official in less than 2 hours. At a minimum, the training must include instruction in:

- A. The general legal requirements of this chapter regarding public records and public proceedings;
- B. Procedures and requirements regarding complying with a request for a public record under this chapter; and

C. Penalties and other consequences for failure to comply with this chapter.

An elected official meets the training requirements of this section by conducting a thorough review of all the information made available by the State on a publicly accessible website pursuant to section 411, subsection 6, paragraph C regarding specific guidance on how a member of the public can use the law to be a better informed and active participant in open government. To meet the requirements of this subsection, any other training course must include all of this information and may include additional information.

**3. Certification of completion.** Upon completion of the training course required under subsection 1, the elected official shall ~~send~~make a written or an electronic ~~notification to the advisory committee~~record attesting to the fact that the training has been completed. ~~The advisory committee shall maintain a record of those elected officials who have completed the training required by this section and make that record available to the public in accordance with the requirements of this chapter.~~The record must identify the training completed and the date of completion. The elected official shall keep the record or file it with the public entity to which the official was elected.

**4. Application.** This section applies to the following elected officials:

A. The Governor;

B. The Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer of State and State Auditor;

C. Members of the Legislature elected after November 1, 2008; and

~~D. An elected official of a county, municipality, school district or school board or any regional or other political subdivision who, as part of the duties of the office, exercises executive or legislative powers.~~

E. Commissioners, treasurers, district attorneys, sheriffs, registers of deeds, registers of probate and budget committee members of county governments;

F. Municipal officers, clerks, treasurers, assessors and budget committee members of municipal governments;

G. Officials of school units and school boards; and

H. Officials of a regional or other political subdivision who, as part of the duties of their offices, exercise executive or legislative powers. For the purposes of this paragraph, "regional or other political subdivision" means an administrative entity or instrumentality created pursuant to Title 30-A, chapter 115 or 119 or a quasi-municipal corporation or special purpose district, including, but not limited to, a water district, sanitary district, hospital district, school district of any type, transit district as defined in Title 30-A, section 3501, subsection 1 or regional transportation corporation as defined in Title 30-A, section 3501, subsection 2.

**Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

## **SUMMARY**

This bill amends the law regarding training requirements for elected officials, as enacted by Public Law 2007, chapter 349.

This bill maintains the minimum content requirements for the training programs but provides that an elected official who completes a training program that contains all the information contained under the Frequently Asked Questions heading on the State's Freedom of Access law website meets the minimum requirements. Current law directs the Right To Know Advisory Committee to approve the training programs. This bill eliminates that role.

Current law requires an elected official to send notice of the completion of the required training to the advisory committee. This bill requires the elected official to make a record of the completion of the training and either keep it or file it with the public entity to which that official was elected. The record of completion is a public record. The advisory committee is directed to recommend to the Legislature a process for collecting the completion data and making it available to the public.

This bill addresses the application of the mandatory training requirement to elected officials. Current law applies beginning July 1, 2008. This bill revises the application to Legislators to begin for Legislators elected after November 1, 2008. This avoids training in July 2008 those Legislators who will not be reelected the following November. This bill also specifically spells out the elected officials who are subject to the training and provides a general description of those who, as part of the duties of their offices, exercise executive or legislative powers as elected officials of regional or other political subdivisions.