



# 131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

## SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2024

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Legislative Document

No. 2274

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S.P. 990

In Senate, March 21, 2024

**An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Gagetown  
Harmful Chemical Study Commission and to Reestablish the  
Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission**

(EMERGENCY)

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Reported by Senator HICKMAN of Kennebec for the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 353, subsection 8.

Reference to the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs suggested and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 218.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT  
Secretary of the Senate

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

3           **Whereas,** many individuals affected by exposure to harmful chemicals at the  
4 Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick are suffering from illnesses  
5 that shorten life expectancy, and others are already deceased; and

6           **Whereas,** there have been numerous previous attempts to gather reliable data and to  
7 secure the recognition and help these individuals deserve, and these attempts have failed;  
8 and

9           **Whereas,** expedient action is necessary to help those most immediately affected and  
10 to ensure that the necessary recognition and supports are in place for those who have been  
11 exposed to harmful chemicals at the base but who are not yet aware of the effects of that  
12 exposure on their health; and

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

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

18           **Sec. 1. 37-B MRSA §518** is enacted to read:

19 **§518. Base Gagetown Training Registry**

20           **1. Registry.** The bureau shall establish the Base Gagetown Training Registry, referred  
21 to in this section as "the registry," to collect and maintain data related to military service  
22 and health conditions from individuals who voluntarily provide such data and who trained  
23 at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, referred to  
24 in this section as "Base Gagetown," as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a  
25 member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of  
26 the National Guard of any state and who are residents of this State or were residents of this  
27 State at the time of training.

28 The bureau shall use the registry to support education and outreach efforts as described in  
29 subsection 3 for issues directly related to the individuals described in this subsection and  
30 may use the data collected and maintained pursuant to this subsection to conduct, either  
31 within the bureau or through a contract with a public or private entity, research related to  
32 the effects of chemical exposure on human health.

33           **2. Data collection.** To the extent possible, the bureau shall include in the registry the  
34 following types of data for individuals described in subsection 1:

35           A. Complete name used while in military service;

36           B. Date of birth;

37           C. Dates of military service;

38           D. Branch of service and all unit assignments;

39           E. Military occupational specialty;

40           F. Dates during military service when the individual trained at Base Gagetown;

- 1           G. Self-reported health conditions or diagnoses;
- 2           H. Cause of death, if applicable; and
- 3           I. Any additional information as determined by the bureau to support the goals of the
- 4           registry.

5           In the event that an individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin may provide the data  
6           for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also include any information in any existing  
7           data source created within the bureau related to Base Gagetown in the registry and in  
8           conducting education and outreach as described in subsection 3.

9           **3. Education and outreach.** The bureau shall make all reasonable efforts to identify  
10           eligible individuals for inclusion in the registry. These efforts must include the bureau's  
11           contacting any individual who previously provided information to the bureau related to the  
12           individual's military training at Base Gagetown regarding the registry under subsection 1  
13           and offering the individual the opportunity to provide new or additional information to the  
14           bureau for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also work with existing veterans'  
15           service organizations, local medical centers operated by the United States Department of  
16           Veterans Affairs, the Maine Veterans' Homes and other veterans' programs or organizations  
17           in the State in order to increase awareness of the registry and the bureau's work, including  
18           information on how to submit data for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also work  
19           with the Maine National Guard in order to identify and share information regarding the  
20           registry with individuals who are current members of the Maine National Guard and who  
21           may have trained at or will train in the future at Base Gagetown.

22           The bureau may also contact another state's bureau of veterans' services or National Guard  
23           in order to identify other National Guard units that may have members who are affected by  
24           exposure to chemicals at Base Gagetown.

25           **4. Confidentiality.** All data within the registry under this section is confidential.  
26           Disclosure of the data may be made only with the written consent of the individual who is  
27           the subject of the data, or if that individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin and only  
28           to a public or private entity, including the bureau, engaged in research related to the effects  
29           of chemical exposure on human health.

30           **5. Report.** The director shall submit annually by February 15th to the joint standing  
31           committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs a report regarding  
32           the status of the registry and information related to education and outreach efforts pursuant  
33           to subsection 3, including outreach efforts with other states; any obstacles to data collection  
34           or data verification; and any recommended next steps regarding the registry or the use of  
35           data collected as a part of the registry. The joint standing committee of the Legislature  
36           having jurisdiction over veterans affairs may report out a bill related to the report during  
37           the legislative session in which the report is received.

38           **Sec. 2. Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission reestablished.** The  
39           Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission, referred to in this section as "the study  
40           commission," is established.

41           1. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the study commission consists of 12 members  
42           appointed as follows:

- 1 A. Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including  
2 members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the  
3 Legislature;
- 4 B. Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the  
5 House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of  
6 seats in the Legislature;
- 7 C. Two members who represent veterans' advocacy organizations, one appointed by  
8 the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- 9 D. One member who is a family member of a veteran who served at the Canadian  
10 military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, appointed by the  
11 President of the Senate;
- 12 E. One member with expertise processing veterans' claims for benefits related to  
13 military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals, appointed by the Speaker of  
14 the House;
- 15 F. Two members who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New  
16 Brunswick, Canada and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military  
17 service, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker  
18 of the House; and
- 19 G. Two members with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science or  
20 human health and who have experience in those fields related to the effects of  
21 hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health, one appointed by the  
22 President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House.
- 23 2. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of  
24 Representatives member is the House chair of the study commission.
- 25 3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of  
26 this Act. To the extent possible, members appointed to the study commission must be the  
27 same as members appointed to the study commission pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter  
28 95. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative  
29 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,  
30 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the study commission. If 30 days or  
31 more after the effective date of this Act a majority of but not all appointments have been  
32 made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for  
33 the study commission to meet and conduct its business.
- 34 4. The study commission shall study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on  
35 individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New  
36 Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the  
37 reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National  
38 Guard of any state.
- 39 5. The Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the study  
40 commission, except that Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the  
41 Legislature is in regular or special session.
- 42 6. No later than November 6, 2024, the study commission shall submit a report that  
43 includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for

1 presentation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over  
2 veterans affairs. The committee may report out a bill based on the recommendations to the  
3 132nd Legislature in 2025.

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

6 **SUMMARY**

7 This bill establishes the Base Gagetown Training Registry within the Department of  
8 Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services to  
9 collect and maintain data related to military service and health conditions from individuals  
10 who voluntarily provide such data and who have trained at the Canadian military support  
11 base in Gagetown, New Brunswick.

12 The bill also reestablishes the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission.