

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX

—
S.P. 648 - L.D. 1640

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

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

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

§518. Base Gagetown Training Registry

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

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

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

- A. Complete name used while in military service;
- B. Date of birth;
- C. Dates of military service;
- D. Branch of service and all unit assignments;
- E. Military occupational specialty;
- F. Dates during military service when the individual trained at Base Gagetown;

G. Self-reported health conditions or diagnoses;

H. Cause of death, if applicable; and

I. Any additional information as determined by the bureau to support the goals of the registry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

B. Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

C. Two members who represent veterans' advocacy organizations, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House;

D. One member who is a family member of a veteran who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, appointed by the President of the Senate;

E. One member with expertise processing veterans' claims for benefits related to military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

F. Two members who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military service, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

G. Two members with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science or human health and who have experience in those fields related to the effects of hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House.

2. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the study commission.

3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this Act. To the extent possible, members appointed to the study commission must be the same as members appointed to the study commission pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter 95. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the study commission. If 30 days or more after the effective date of this Act a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the study commission to meet and conduct its business.

4. The study commission shall study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state.

5. The study commission may request information it determines necessary to complete the study under subsection 4 from the United States Department of Defense and other federal agencies.

6. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the study commission, except that Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

7. No later than November 4, 2026, the study commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs. The committee may report out a bill based on the recommendations to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

Sec. 3. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

DEFENSE, VETERANS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF

Veterans Services 0110

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for consulting costs to create the Base Gagetown Training Registry, which will collect and maintain data related to military service and health conditions from individuals who report this data and trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada. The fund does not lapse but must be carried forward to be used for the purpose for which the fund was appropriated.

GENERAL FUND	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$0	\$250,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$0	\$250,000