

How to Read a Bill

Basic components

A bill is a printed proposal for a law. Every printed bill has certain basic components: the assigned House Paper or Senate Paper number and Legislative Document (L.D.) number; the number of the legislative session; the date of introduction; the name of the committee suggested for reference; the sponsor and any cosponsors; the title; the authority for introduction, if any; the text of the bill; and the summary. Once printed, bills are usually identified and referred to throughout the rest of the session by their L.D. numbers.

Format

In the bill text, existing statutory language proposed to be repealed is either shown stricken through or clearly identified as being repealed, and all proposed new statutory language is shown as underlined. When a bill proposes to repeal and replace an existing statute or create an entirely new statute, all of the proposed new statutory language is underlined.

Summary

The summary is a brief, plain language explanation of the content and intent of the bill, which is prepared by nonpartisan staff.

Concept draft

Joint Rule 208 also permits a legislator to submit a bill as a concept draft. A concept draft is simply a summary of what the sponsor intends to accomplish with the bill; it does not contain the actual language of a proposed law and, therefore, cannot be enacted unless and until such language is appropriately substituted for the concept.

Example

On the following page is a copy of a bill from the 129th Legislature with a description of its various technical components.

When bills are printed, they are assigned Legislative Document (LD) numbers in sequential order from the start of the biennium

Legislative Document

No. 110

Bills are assigned paper numbers by the body of bill's sponsor (HP=House Paper, SP=Senate Paper)

H.P. 92

House of Representatives, January 17, 2019

Title of the bill, providing a brief description

An Act Regarding Credit Ratings Related to Overdue Medical Expenses

Suggested legislative committee to review and report recommendations on the bill (suggested by the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate)

Reference to the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Bill's sponsors and cosponsors

Presented by Representative JOHANSEN of Monticello.
Cosponsored by Representatives: COLLINGS of Portland, MORRIS of Turner, ORDWAY of Standish, Senator: GUERIN of Penobscot.

Enacting clause

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

Amending clause and history line, showing title and section of law being amended

Sec. 1. 10 MRSA §1310-H, sub-§3, as enacted by PL 2013, c. 228, §1, is amended to read:

Strikethrough indicates language being repealed and underscoring indicates language being added

3. Nonliability. A person may not be held liable for any violation of this section if the person shows by a preponderance of the evidence that at the time of the alleged violation the person maintained reasonable procedures to ensure compliance with the provisions of subsections 1 ~~and~~, 2 ~~and~~ 4.

Sections of bills affecting a title, section or subsection of the MRSA are arranged in ascending numerical order

Sec. 2. 10 MRSA §1310-H, sub-§4 is enacted to read:

Underscoring indicates language being added

4. Reporting of overdue medical expenses on consumer report.
Notwithstanding any provision of federal law, a consumer reporting agency may not report debt from overdue medical expenses on a consumer's consumer report in a manner that adversely affects the consumer's credit history or credit rating as long as the consumer is making regular, scheduled periodic payments toward the debt.

Explanation of what the bill does

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits a consumer reporting agency from reporting debt from overdue medical expenses on a consumer report in a manner that adversely affects the consumer's credit history or credit rating as long as that consumer is making regular, scheduled periodic payments toward the debt.