

## **NeauSites Statement on L.D. 358 – An Act to Increase Fees Paid to Registers of Deeds**

Good morning, my name is John Veroneau, and I represent NeauSites, a Maine-based company with a principle address at 100 Silver St, Portland, ME 04101. NeauSites is a real estate information system dedicated to improving access to real estate data.

I am speaking neither for, nor against, L.D. 358. I want to raise concerns about fair access to public records.

I've been informed by the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds that First American, a title insurance company, is the only entity with a wholesale data contract for these records. Through its subsidiary, Data Tree, it resells these data—data that I have been unable to access under the same terms. I have twice asked the registry of deeds for a similar data contract and twice been refused.

This past Friday, I asked the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds for 1,000 consecutive images and was told they would need to physically print them at a cost of about \$1 per page, with no option for electronic delivery.

That same day, I requested 1,000 addresses from First American and was informed that I could upload a list of 10,000 addresses and receive a perfectly appended list of all documents associated at a cost of \$50 per address.

Allow me to be clear: I do not oppose private companies packaging and reselling public data if they provide a more efficient means of accessing it. In fact, efficient and secure data retrieval is central to my own business model.

But, if one corporation has exclusive access under terms unavailable to others, the state is granting a monopoly on public records—which is neither fair nor in the public interest.

The best approach is one where manual downloads remain free or low-cost for individuals, while automated access is priced fairly and transparently for companies seeking to use this data.

Maine could generate significant revenue without restricting public access.

I respectfully ask the committee:

1. What exactly does this contract include?
2. What is the pricing structure of this contract?
3. Are other companies allowed to enter into similar agreements and if so, why does only one entity currently have this level of access?
4. How is this data delivered, and at what frequency?

Finally, I urge the committee to ensure:

1. A fair and efficient system for accessing public records.

2. A clear plan for reinvesting fees into improving storage and access.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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