



Testimony in Support of LD 337:

“An Act to Repeal the Sunday Amateur Sports Law, the Law Allowing Municipalities to Permit the Operation of Movie Theaters on Sundays and the Law Imposing a Fine or Imprisonment for Playing Games and Sports with Admission Charges on Memorial Day”

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 337, which seeks to repeal outdated and unnecessary restrictions on certain activities, such as amateur sports and movie theater operations, on Sundays and Memorial Day.

Eliminating Unnecessary Government Restrictions

The existing prohibitions on certain activities on Sundays belong to the category of outdated “blue laws” that arbitrarily restrict business operations on certain days of the week. The original justification for these laws was to instill Christian religious values in the population, which some felt was a noble goal at the time.¹ However, Maine, as I’m sure we’ll agree, is a far more diverse state today than it used to be, ethnically, culturally, and religiously.

Maine’s so-called “blue laws” date back to the colonial era and impose restrictions on economic and recreational activities based on antiquated norms that do not reflect our state’s diverse and modern needs. LD 337 would take a step toward eliminating these arbitrary restrictions, which serve no legitimate public purpose in today’s society and only hinder economic activity and personal freedom.

Restricting commercial and recreational activities on specific days of the week limits opportunities for businesses and workers, particularly in Maine’s tourism-dependent economy. Repealing these laws would allow businesses, such as movie theaters and sports venues, to operate freely without needing municipal approval or worrying about unnecessary fines. Maine should not impose outdated barriers to economic participation, especially when remote work and flexible business operations are increasingly prevalent.

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<https://www.gettips.com/blog/sunday-blue-laws#:~:text=Blue%20laws%20in%20the%20U.S.,work%20and%20limit%20alcohol%20consumption.>



Several states, including New Hampshire, have eliminated most of their blue laws without issue, demonstrating that such regulations are not necessary to maintain fair competition or protect public interests.²

Enhancing Consumer Choice and Convenience

The government should not dictate when people can participate in recreational activities or operate businesses, particularly when such restrictions are rooted in obsolete moral or religious justifications. Individuals should have the freedom to decide how to spend their leisure time and money without undue government interference. Many other states have modernized or eliminated their blue laws, and Maine should follow suit to ensure its residents are not subject to outdated regulations.

Laws that criminalize playing games or charging admission to movie theaters on Memorial Day reflect unnecessary government intrusion into private activities. The enforcement of these laws is inconsistent and arbitrary, creating confusion for business owners and community organizations alike. Local economies and cultural events should not be subject to excessive regulatory hurdles simply because of outdated historical precedents.

Aligning with Free-Market Principles

LD 337 aligns with a broader movement to modernize Maine's regulatory framework and remove unnecessary government-imposed barriers to economic and social activity. Maine Policy Institute supports policies that empower individuals and businesses to make their own decisions free from excessive state intervention. By repealing these outdated restrictions, the Legislature would send a clear message that Maine values personal freedom, economic opportunity, and a regulatory environment that reflects modern realities rather than archaic norms.

Conclusion

We urge the committee to support LD 337 and remove these unnecessary constraints on businesses and individuals. There is no compelling public interest in maintaining these outdated laws, and their repeal would be a positive step toward ensuring Maine remains a state that values economic freedom and individual choice. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<https://www.fosters.com/story/opinion/2010/02/22/blue-laws-have-had-their/51696876007/#:~:text=To%20many%20who%20live%20in,many%20businesses%20shuttered%20on%20Sundays.>