

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Patrick Corey, and I live in Windham. Today, I am speaking in support of LD 732, "An Act to Prohibit Copyrights for Works of State Government."

A couple years ago, I was doing marketing work for a small nonprofit in Maine. We needed to use a table from a document produced by a State agency. Having spent my career in marketing and public relations, I naturally checked copyright considerations, as I do with all communications work. I was completely **shocked** to discover that I had to request permission to use information that was created using taxpayer dollars.

To avoid this bureaucratic hurdle, we initially considered **excluding the information altogether**—a workaround that would have weakened the content. But since the client wanted to include it, they sought permission, which was ultimately granted. However, this **unnecessary process wasted time** for me, my client, and the State agency involved.

This experience led me to a troubling realization:

- **What if a State agency didn't approve of an author's content? Could they deny permission for inclusion?**
- **How many people unknowingly violate these unclear rules or rely on a misunderstanding of fair use?**
- **Can we expect agency employees to fairly and consistently grant permissions when this is not part of their core duties?**

Other States and Federal Precedent

I began researching how other states handle copyright on government documents and found a **patchwork of laws**.

- **Some states, like California and Florida, explicitly place their government documents in the public domain.**
- **Others, including Maine, lack clear policies, leaving users in legal uncertainty.**

I want to recognize the **State Copyright Resource Center at Harvard Library** for compiling valuable information on this issue. Their research highlights that **federal law explicitly prohibits copyright protection for U.S. government works**—ensuring public access to documents from agencies like NOAA, the CDC, and NASA. If it's **good enough for the federal government, it should be good enough for Maine**.

Unleashing Public Benefits and Innovation

The lack of clarity in Maine law discourages even **legitimate** uses of State documents. LD 732 eliminates this barrier and **unleashes public access to materials that taxpayers funded**. The benefits are significant:

- **Businesses, researchers, educators, and nonprofits** will be free to **use State documents to innovate and drive economic growth.**
- **Government transparency and oversight** will improve when public access is unrestricted.
- **In emergency situations, educators and media outlets** will be able to **disseminate critical information immediately**, without legal concerns.

LD 732 is a step toward open government. This bill ensures that **future State government works** belong to the public, aligning Maine with **modern open-government and open-data initiatives.**

I appreciate the committee's time and consideration, and I urge you to **support LD 732 for the benefit of Maine's people.**

Thank you.