

**TESTIMONY OF HAROLD “CHIP” JONES**  
**FISCAL ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNORGANIZED TERRITORY**  
**IN SUPPORT**

**LD 1302, An Act Regarding the Number of Voters of a Municipality Required to Petition for  
Consideration of Deorganization of That Municipality**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Harold “Chip” Jones, and I live in Manchester. I am privileged to serve the State of Maine as the Fiscal Administrator of the Unorganized Territory.

I appreciate Sen. Baldacci’s sponsorship of this legislation and support it to help ensure that every municipality in Maine can exercise the option to become an Unorganized Territory. Currently in the State of Maine there are nine municipalities that I see that might not have the voting population to start the long process of deorganization. According to the US Census Bureau’s Decennial Census of Population and Housing, the nine municipalities I have identified have a population of less than 52. There is a difference between the population and voting resident. So, a residence may have four people living at that location but only one or two registered voters. Even though Maine has seen a 2.6% increase in its population from 2010 to 2020, these nine municipalities have seen a -10% drop in population in the same time frame and we now have one municipality with a population of five. While Maine is growing in the Southern areas and around cities, some smaller rural populations are decreasing, especially in the Northern and Down-eastern parts of the State.

I have attached informational paper and the process of Deorganization to this testimony. The current way Statute 30-A MRSA 7202 is written that you need at least 50% of the residence voters (from the last gubernatorial election) to sign the petition but no less than 10. So, each Municipality needs at least 10 voters in favor to sign the petition or at least 20 voters with 10 in favor. The removal of a minimum of 10 would allow the clerk to approve just a 50% in favor. I would like to make sure you understand that this change in verbiage is not the only step in the process. It is step 1 in a very comprehensive process with 13 total steps or 8 if you have a population of less than 50. The two most important steps being 10 which is Legislative approval and step 11 town voters’ approval. The town must vote in a November election and the vote must be approved by at least 2/3 of the voters approving the deorganization in the general election with the total number of votes cast (for and against) must be at least 50% of the total number of votes cast for Governor in the municipality in the last gubernatorial election.

This minor change in 30-A MRSA 7202 of the deorganization process would ensure all municipalities can start the process based off need not population.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and I am happy to answer any questions of the committee at this time at the pleasure of the chair.

## PROCESS FOR MUNICIPALITIES WITH A POPULATION OF 50 OR FEWER

Step One- Petition

Step Two- Deorganization Meeting.

Step Three - Notice to the Legislature and the Fiscal Administrator. Procedure.

Step Six - Public Hearing on Deorganization

Step Seven - Deorganization Approval Vote.

Step Ten - Approval by the Legislature.

Step Eleven - Final Approval by the Voters.

Step Twelve- Declaration of Results.

## PROCESS FOR MUNICIPALITIES WITH A POPULATION OF MORE THAN 50

Step One- Petition

Step Two- Deorganization Meeting.

Step Three - Notice to the Legislature and the Fiscal Administrator.

Step Four - Deorganization Procedure

Step Five - Commission on Municipal Deorganization

Step Six - Public Hearing on Deorganization

Step Seven - Deorganization Approval Vote.

Step Eight - Advisory Referendum in Unorganized Territory

Step Nine - Commission Review

Step Ten - Approval by the Legislature.

Step Eleven - Final Approval by the Voters.

Step Twelve- Declaration of Results.