

## About Online Topical Legislative Histories

- 1) **What is a topical legislative history?** The Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library has created legislative histories on major or recurring topics (e.g. capital punishment). Each topical legislative history is comprised of numerous individual legislative histories of laws that enacted, amended, or proposed to amend the law on a specific topic.
- 2) **What materials are included in an online topical legislative history?** Each topical history is a bit different from the next. For example, some legislative histories include only enacted legislation whereas others include proposed measures that failed. Generally speaking, they include:
  - a) *Enacted law or resolve*
  - b) *Legislative document (LD)*
  - c) *New drafts and amendments* – An act might address several areas of law. The topical legislative histories provide links only to those amendments related to provisions that are relevant to the topic at hand. Amendments marked with an asterisk (\*) did *not* affect sections of the bill related to the topic at hand and are not included. Some legislative histories include only amendments that passed. Some include passed and proposed amendments.
  - d) *Debate* – The topical legislative histories include excerpts from the *Legislative Record* which document debate or remarks only. They do not include excerpts from the *Record* which document procedural actions.
  - e) *Committee files* – Available for most bills from 1983 forward.
  - f) *Legislative reports, if available*
  - g) *News clips, if available*
- 3) **How are topical legislative histories different from the Law Library's other compiled legislative histories?** Topical legislative histories allow researchers to see how an area of law has changed over time, often going back decades or centuries to the origin of particular statutory language. They contain *selected* material for each legislative document listed (see above). The Law Library's individual legislative histories are currently available for bills from 1991 forward. They include *complete* legislative history information for each bill. For example, an individual legislative history lists all proposed and passed amendments and all actions in the *Legislative Record* related to a particular bill.
- 4) **Why can't I access committee files online?** Topical legislative histories indicate whether a committee file is available for a particular bill. If you would like to view the committee file, please contact the Law Library. Committee files often contain copyrighted materials, and the Law Library may not republish them online.
- 5) **Why can't I access news clips online?** News articles are protected by copyright and the Law Library may not republish them online.
- 6) **How do I get copies of news clips cited in a topical legislative history?** Please contact the Law Library.
- 7) **How do I get copies of committee files cited in a topical legislative history?** Please contact the Law Library.
- 8) **How do I contact the Law Library?** If you have any questions while conducting legislative history research, please contact us at <http://www.maine.gov/legis/lawlib/refemail.htm> or (207) 287-1600.