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Public Law
123rd Legislature
First Regular Session

Chapter 144
S.P. 83 - L.D. 246

**An Act To Protect the Solemnity and Dignity
of a Funeral or Memorial Service in Maine**

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Legislature recognizes that the State has an immediate interest in balancing the rights of the bereaved to mourn peacefully at funerals with others' rights to free expression; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 17-A MRSA §16, sub-§2, ¶A, as amended by PL 1979, c. 127, §125, is further amended to read:

A. Any of the Class D or Class E crimes described in sections 207; 209; 211; 254; 255; 501, subsection 2; 503; 501-A, subsection 1, paragraph B; 751; 806; or 1002.

Sec. 2. 17-A MRSA §501, as amended by PL 1995, c. 258, §1, is repealed.

Sec. 3. 17-A MRSA §501-A is enacted to read:

§ 501-A. Disorderly conduct

1. A person is guilty of disorderly conduct if:

A. In a public place, the person intentionally or recklessly causes annoyance to others by intentionally:

(1) Making loud and unreasonable noises;

(2) Activating a device, or exposing a substance, that releases noxious and offensive odors; or

(3) Engaging in fighting, without being licensed or privileged to do so;

B. In a public or private place, the person knowingly accosts, insults, taunts or challenges any person with offensive, derisive or annoying words, or by gestures or other physical conduct, that would in fact have a direct tendency to cause a violent response by an ordinary person in the situation of the person so accosted, insulted, taunted or challenged;

C. In a private place, the person makes loud and unreasonable noise that can be heard by another person, who may be a law enforcement officer, as unreasonable noise in a public place or in another private place, after having been ordered by a law enforcement officer to cease the noise; or

D. In a private or public place on or near property where a funeral, burial or memorial service is being held, the person knowingly accosts, insults, taunts or challenges any person in mourning and in attendance at the funeral, burial or memorial service with unwanted, obtrusive communications by way of offensive, derisive or annoying words, or by gestures or other physical conduct, that would in fact have a direct tendency to cause a violent response by an ordinary person in mourning and in attendance at a funeral, burial or memorial service.

2. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Public place" means a place to which the public at large or a substantial group has access, including but not limited to:

(1) Public ways as defined in section 505;

(2) Schools and government-owned custodial facilities; and

(3) The lobbies, hallways, lavatories, toilets and basement portions of apartment houses, hotels, public buildings and transportation terminals.

B. "Private place" means any place that is not a public place.

3. Disorderly conduct is a Class E crime.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

Effective May 18, 2007.