

§556. Special motion to dismiss**(CONTAINS TEXT WITH VARYING EFFECTIVE DATES)****(WHOLE SECTION TEXT EFFECTIVE UNTIL 1/01/25)**

When a moving party asserts that the civil claims, counterclaims or cross claims against the moving party are based on the moving party's exercise of the moving party's right of petition under the Constitution of the United States or the Constitution of Maine, the moving party may bring a special motion to dismiss. The special motion may be advanced on the docket and receive priority over other cases when the court determines that the interests of justice so require. The court shall grant the special motion, unless the party against whom the special motion is made shows that the moving party's exercise of its right of petition was devoid of any reasonable factual support or any arguable basis in law and that the moving party's acts caused actual injury to the responding party. In making its determination, the court shall consider the pleading and supporting and opposing affidavits stating the facts upon which the liability or defense is based. [PL 2011, c. 559, Pt. A, §13 (AMD).]

The Attorney General on the Attorney General's behalf or on behalf of any government agency or subdivision to which the moving party's acts were directed may intervene to defend or otherwise support the moving party on the special motion. [PL 1995, c. 413, §1 (NEW).]

All discovery proceedings are stayed upon the filing of the special motion under this section, except that the court, on motion and after a hearing and for good cause shown, may order that specified discovery be conducted. The stay of discovery remains in effect until notice of entry of the order ruling on the special motion. [PL 1995, c. 413, §1 (NEW).]

The special motion to dismiss may be filed within 60 days of the service of the complaint or, in the court's discretion, at any later time upon terms the court determines proper. [PL 1995, c. 413, §1 (NEW).]

If the court grants a special motion to dismiss, the court may award the moving party costs and reasonable attorney's fees, including those incurred for the special motion and any related discovery matters. This section does not affect or preclude the right of the moving party to any remedy otherwise authorized by law. [PL 1995, c. 413, §1 (NEW).]

As used in this section, "a party's exercise of its right of petition" means any written or oral statement made before or submitted to a legislative, executive or judicial body, or any other governmental proceeding; any written or oral statement made in connection with an issue under consideration or review by a legislative, executive or judicial body, or any other governmental proceeding; any statement reasonably likely to encourage consideration or review of an issue by a legislative, executive or judicial body, or any other governmental proceeding; any statement reasonably likely to enlist public participation in an effort to effect such consideration; any written or oral statement made in connection with a discrimination complaint pursuant to the Maine Human Rights Act; any written or oral statement made in connection with a complaint pursuant to Title 20-A, chapter 445 or the so-called Title IX provisions of the federal Education Amendments of 1972, Public Law 92-318; or any other statement falling within constitutional protection of the right to petition government. [PL 2023, c. 322, §1 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1995, c. 413, §1 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 559, Pt. A, §13 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 322, §1 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 626, §1 (RP). PL 2023, c. 626, §7 (AFF).

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