

7 EASY STEPS TO ACCESSING AND FOLLOWING THE MAINE LEGISLATURE:

The First Regular Session of the 128th Maine Legislature convened on December 7, 2016 at 10:00am. This promises to be a robust session. There are many new legislators. What this means for the members of the Autism Society of Maine is that we must educate our legislative representatives about policy issues that concern us as we strive to improve the quality of life and well-being of our family members and friends who are affected by autism.

One of the best and simplest ways to keep current with the Maine Legislature is to use the Maine legislative website. Maine has one of the best and most accessible legislative websites in the country. Here are the 7 easy steps to access the website:

1. <http://legislature.maine.gov/> This home page screen provides easy access to finding information about your legislators and bill information. Under **POPULAR ITEMS** drop down box click on the **FIND MY LEGISLATORS** and click on the first letter of your town name and it will give you links to your Senator and Representative. Click on their names and it will show all of their contact information, including their home phone, email and the Committee they serve on.
2. Right now you will find information about the 127th Legislature on the Home page. Example of a bill that ASM advocated for from last session: LD 1061 "An Act To Establish a Tax-free Savings Program for Individuals with Disabilities": Enter the bill number LD1061 and click on **SEARCH**. A Summary Page will open and under Status Summary you will find the Committee hearing the bill and the actions taken by the House and the Senate and the Governor. On the Left side of the page click **ACTIONS** for a more detailed iteration of the actions taken.
3. Next click on **BILL TEXT AND OTHER DOCS**: This will give you access to the initial bill language and to any subsequent amendments and fiscal notes as they occur. If the bill is passed, as this one was, the final law is listed.
4. Click on **STATUS IN COMMITTEE**: This page gives access to Hearing and Work Session dates and to the copies of the testimony heard in the Hearing. Clicking on **SPONSORS** will list all sponsoring legislators and **ROLL CALLS** will list how the Representatives and Senators voted if there were roll call votes taken. Many times there are no Roll Call votes unless the bill is contentious and is close or if the action is to override a gubernatorial veto which takes affirmative action by 2/3rds of each chamber.
5. If you want to see what bills have been introduced, go to the **HOUSE** home page, click on **DOCUMENTS AND LISTS** which will bring up the Directory of Bills for the 128th as they are introduced and given an LD number in sequence. Click on **1-199** and read the title of the Bill; click on the bill and it will bring you to the screen with the bill information as described in 3,4,5 above.
6. At the top of the Home Screen the links most useful are to the **SENATE, HOUSE, COMMITTEES**. On the **COMMITTEES** link you can select **JOINT COMMITTEES** which are where most of the bills are heard and debated. Committees are comprised of both Senate and House members. Select the committee you are interested in, Health and Human Services and Appropriations are where most of ASM relative bills are heard. The **Committee** homepage carries the membership and a spread sheet that gives all of the contact information for each of the members of the Committee. It also gives the schedule of bill hearings and work sessions for the Committee when they are scheduled.
7. Sessions of the Senate and the House are video broadcast through the **HOME** page by clicking on the designated chamber audio symbol button. Committee Hearings and Work Sessions are accessed by clicking on the **Audio Symbol** and choosing the **Committee** from the drop down list.