

## §71. Laws

The following rules shall be observed in the construction of statutes, unless such construction is inconsistent with the plain meaning of the enactment.

**1. Acts by agents.** When an act that may be lawfully done by an agent is done by one authorized to do it, the agent's principal may be regarded as having done it.

[RR 2023, c. 1, Pt. C, §4 (COR).]

**2. And; or.** The words "and" and "or" are convertible as the sense of a statute may require.

**3. Authority to 3 or more.** Words in any statute, charter or ordinance giving authority to 3 or more persons authorize a majority to act when the statute, charter or ordinance does not otherwise specify. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a vacancy on an elected or appointed body does not in itself impair the authority of the remaining members to act unless a statute, charter or ordinance expressly prohibits the body from acting during the period of any vacancy and does not in itself affect the validity of any action no matter when taken.

[PL 2007, c. 396, §1 (RPR); PL 2007, c. 396, §4 (AFF).]

**4. Corporations.** Acts of incorporation shall be regarded in legal proceedings as public Acts. All special Acts of incorporation become null and void in 2 years from the day when the same take effect, unless such corporations shall have organized and commenced actual business under their charters.

[PL 1971, c. 439, §2 (RPR).]

**5. Dates.** Wherever in the Revised Statutes or any legislative Act a reference is made to several dates and the dates given in the reference are connected by the word "to", the reference includes both the dates which are given and all intervening dates.

**6. Disqualification.** When a person is required to be disinterested or indifferent in a matter in which others are interested, a relationship by consanguinity or affinity within the 6th degree according to the civil law, or within the degree of 2nd cousins inclusive, except by written consent of the parties, will disqualify.

**7. Gender.**

[PL 1987, c. 705, §1 (RP).]

**7-A. Gender.** In the construction of statutes, gender-neutral construction shall be applied as provided in this subsection.

A. Whenever reasonable, as determined by the Revisor of Statutes, nouns rather than pronouns shall be used to refer to persons in order to avoid gender identification. [PL 1987, c. 705, §2 (NEW).]

B. In preparing any legislation which amends a section or larger division of statutes, the Revisor of Statutes shall be authorized to change any masculine or feminine gender word to a gender-neutral word when it is clear that the statute is not exclusively applicable to members of one sex. The Revisor of Statutes shall not otherwise alter the sense, meaning or effect of any statute. [PL 1987, c. 861, §§1, 3 (AMD).]

C. The rule of construction concerning gender on the effective date of an Act or resolve shall apply to that Act or resolve. [PL 1987, c. 861, §§2, 3 (NEW).]

[PL 1987, c. 861, §§1-3 (AMD).]

**8. Severability.** The provisions of the statutes are severable. The provisions of any session law are severable. If any provision of the statutes or of a session law is invalid, or if the application of either to any person or circumstance is invalid, such invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application. The repeal of a severability

clause located in and applicable to any title or a division of a title, chapter, section or Act, must be construed as the removal of surplus language unless the law indicates otherwise.  
[PL 1991, c. 332, §1 (AMD).]

**9. Singular and plural.** Words of the singular number may include the plural; and words of the plural number may include the singular.

**9-A. Shall; must; may.** "Shall" and "must" are terms of equal weight that indicate a mandatory duty, action or requirement. "May" indicates authorization or permission to act. This subsection applies to laws enacted or language changed by amendment after December 1, 1989.  
[PL 1991, c. 332, §2 (NEW).]

**10. Statute Titles.** Abstracts of Titles, chapters and sections, and notes are not legal provisions.

**11. Statutory references.** Wherever in the Revised Statutes the word "Title" or "chapter" or "subchapter" appears without definite reference, it refers to the Title or chapter or subchapter in which the word "Title" or "chapter" or "subchapter" appears; if the chapter or subchapter is given a number without reference to a numbered Title, it refers to the chapter or subchapter of the Title in which the numbered chapter or subchapter appears. Wherever in the Revised Statutes a numbered section appears without reference to a numbered Title, it refers to the section of the Title in which the numbered section appears.

Wherever in the Revised Statutes or any legislative Act a reference is made to several sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, divisions, subdivisions or sentences, the section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, division, subdivision or sentence numbers given in the reference are connected by the word "to," the reference includes both the sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, divisions, subdivisions or sentences whose numbers are given and all intervening sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, divisions, subdivisions and sentences.

Wherever in the Revised Statutes the designation of a division of the statutes larger than a section is numbered with the use of a Roman numeral, it may be known and cited by its Arabic equivalent.  
[PL 2001, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

**12. Statutory time periods.** The statutory time period for the performance or occurrence of any act, event or default that is a prerequisite to or is otherwise involved in or related to the commencement, prosecution or defense of any civil or criminal action or other judicial proceeding or any action or proceeding of the Public Utilities Commission is governed by and computed under Rule 6(a) of the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure as amended from time to time, when the nature of such action or proceeding is civil, and under Rule 45(a) of the Maine Rules of Unified Criminal Procedure, as amended from time to time, when the nature of such action or proceeding is criminal.  
[PL 2015, c. 431, §1 (AMD).]

**13. Reporting dates.** If legislation or another legislative instrument requires a report to be filed by a date certain, and the date certain falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the report is due by close of business on the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday.  
[PL 2001, c. 471, Pt. D, §1 (NEW).]

## SECTION HISTORY

PL 1971, c. 439, §2 (AMD). PL 1973, c. 85 (AMD). PL 1973, c. 788, §1 (AMD). PL 1983, c. 606 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 737, §C1 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 705, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 861, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 332, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 471, §D1 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 710, §1 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 396, §1 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 396, §4 (AFF). PL 2015, c. 431, §1 (AMD). RR 2023, c. 1, Pt. C, §4 (COR).

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