

OPPOSE

LD 1405 – An Act to Amend the Laws Restricting Advertising on Public Ways

Sponsor: Representative KESCHL of Belgrade

Co-Sponsors: Representatives CHIPMAN of Portland, CLARK of Easton, FITTS of Pittsfield, HAMPER of Oxford, MAKER of Calais, McKANE of Newcastle, PICCHIOTTI of Fairfield, and SARTY of Denmark; and Senators SAVIELLO of Franklin and SHERMAN of Aroostook

Summary: The bill proposes a broad range of changes to Maine laws that limit “on premises” advertising along Maine roadways.

Explanation: This bill dramatically increases the allowed size, height, width, and locations of “on-premises” signs, in a fashion that would greatly increase the clutter of signage along Maine’s roads. LD 1405 amends Maine law to decrease the protection of scenic resources by stating that only “off premises signs” are “detrimental to the preservation of scenic resources.” Signs located “on-premises” are thus deemed to not have any impact on scenic resources. The bill also deletes the finding in existing law that outdoor advertising “is not an effective method of providing information to tourists about available facilities,” and it deletes the finding that “outdoor advertising is hazardous to highway users.”

The bill then significantly broadens allowable locations for “on premises” signs, increases distance that signs can be located from principle structures or points of interest (using the broader definition) from 1000 to 2500 ft., allows signs to be closer (20 ft) to roads of 25 ft. in width, and dramatically increases the allowable size height, length, and width of signs for food, fuel, or lodging along Interstates from 20 ft high, long, and wide and a total area of 150 feet to 100 feet high, 35 feet wide or long and 400 square feet in area. This change is done in steps – smaller signs allowed nearer the Interstate and the biggest signs allowed further from the road. Height of signs along other roads are increased to 35 feet (from 25 feet), more approach signs are allowed and can be located on any land contiguous to the business, and loosens limits on changeable display (electronic) signs. It also exempts real estate signs from current legal restrictions.

There is no way to assess LD 1405 other than it would be a major chipping away of Maine’s billboard ban, resulting in significant harm to Maine’s natural landscape. The number, size, and obtrusiveness of “on-premises” signs would greatly expand. The bill explicitly reverses state policy which concludes that outdoor advertising has a negative impact on the preservation of Maine’s scenic resources. The driving experience in Maine would start to seem like other states, where billboards and roadside advertising are unconstrained. With so many travelers now receiving information from smart phones, GPS devices, and on-board information systems, it is highly questionable that the proliferation of signs anticipated in this bill would have any significant value – but it would have very substantial impacts.

NRCM Opposes LD 1405.