**How an Idea becomes a law in Maine**

*Setting: Plain background or office setting, with overlays*

SECRETARY of STATE MATTHEW DUNLAP: Have you ever had a great idea and thought to yourself, “That should be a law”? Well, as a citizen of the State of Maine, you can propose ideas to your state representatives and if enough people agree, it just might make it into the lawbooks.

That’s what happened for the Brewer Community School third-graders who thought that Maine lobster ought to be recognized as one of the official symbols of the State of Maine. Their efforts in 2016 led to the passage of the state law that recognizes lobster as the official State crustacean.

How did their idea make it all the way to Maine’s lawbooks? Let’s look at the process, from when the students first came up with the idea all the way through to the day the governor signed it into law:

*Setting: Classroom with group of children and teacher*

STUDENTS- DIFFERENT VOICES:

Did you know the chickadee is Maine’s state bird?

Yeah, and the insect is the honeybee!

The white pine is the state tree.

Well, of course it is- we’re the Pine Tree State!

Yeah, but where’s the Maine lobster?

I don’t know, it looks like lobster isn’t official at all!

Hey- it says here that other states have an official crustacean, but we don’t.

We should do something about that!

TEACHER: The honor of being an official state symbol can only be granted through the Maine State Legislature. To make the Maine lobster the official crustacean of the State of Maine, you’ll have to go through the legislative process.

STUDENTS: Let’s go for it!

TEACHER: The Legislature is a group of people chosen by the voters to represent us in the law-making process. It’s made up of two groups of representatives who get to vote on the laws: The House and the Senate. All the laws we know today, like stopping at a stop sign when you travel in a car, began as ideas just like yours. For your idea to become law, we first must find a legislator who will sponsor it.

*CHILDREN WRITING LETTERS, SHOW TEXT:*

STUDENT: Hello, Rep. Peter Lyford, we have a great idea to make lobster the official crustacean of the State of Maine. Would you sponsor our idea so it can become a Maine law?

*REP. LYFORD AT HOME READING A LETTER AT MAILBOX:*

REP. PETER LYFORD: That’s a great idea! Maine lobster is recognized as a delicacy around the world and is a major part of our economy. I’d be happy to sponsor your idea and I’ll bet a few of my fellow legislators will sign on, too.

*Setting: office or plain with overlays*

SECRETARY DUNLAP: Rep. Lyford, as a member of the House of Representatives, took the students’ idea to the Revisor of Statutes, who turned the idea into a bill. A bill is simply a written explanation of the idea, in proper legal form. The bill gets a special number and title so you can follow it through the lawmaking process. The lobster bill was deemed LD 1609, “An Act to Designate the Maine Lobster as the State Crustacean.” LD stands for “legislative document.”

Rep. Lyford was right: other legislators were also interested in sponsoring the lobster bill, so they signed on too: Rep. Arthur “Archie” Verow, Sen. Kim Rosen, and Rep. Tori Kornfield.

*Setting: legislators sitting around a table*

SECRETARY DUNLAP: Once a bill is written, it is referred to one of the 17 Joint Standing Committees. These are groups of just a few legislators, since it’s easier to discuss ideas in smaller groups. Each committee considers bills that pertain to certain areas of interest, such as Fish and Wildlife, Education, and Criminal Justice. The lobster bill was sent to the State and Local Government committee because it pertains to an official state symbol.

SECRETARY DUNLAP: Members of the public are invited to speak to the committee to share their opinions, too. The Brewer students did just that, visiting Augusta to tell the committee why the lobster should be deemed the state crustacean.

***(These quotes will come directly from the committee audio; text is partial)***

*Student 1 (Natalie Francis): We enjoyed learning about Maine’s forest, wildlife and state symbols. We are so proud of our great state. We were very surprised to learn that the lobster was not an official state symbol. We hope you agree that our bill should become law.*

*Molly?: There are other states with state crustaceans. Louisiana has the crayfish, Maryland has the blue crab, and Oregon has the Dungeness crab. Who even knows what that is? We think the Maine lobster is more famous than other states’ crustaceans.*

*Student 2 Reese Smith: Lobster has been Maine’s unofficial symbol for over 400 years.*

*Isaac: people come from all around the world to eat our lobster. Maine’s lobster deserves special recognition.*

SECRETARY DUNLAP: Committees listen to the public comments and then have their own meeting, called a work session, and make a decision. They may recommend the bill to pass without changes; with changes; or not to pass at all.

In the case of the lobster bill, the students successfully convinced the committee that the lobster should be deemed the state crustacean, and the bill passed unanimously without changes – that means *every single committee member* voted for it!

The bill then goes on to all the members of the House and Senate, with a recommendation of “ought to pass” from the committee.

SPEAKER OF HOUSE: LD 1609 is here, to make the Maine lobster the official state crustacean. It is recommended for passage.

Rep. 1: Add Maine shrimp to that too, and I’ll agree to vote yes.

Rep. 2: I vote yes as it is. Lobstering contributes $1B to the state economy each year.

Rep. 3: Me, too.

Floor: Yay, yay, yay….  
  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: It’s a vote!

PRES OF THE SENATE: LD 1609 is here, to make the Maine lobster the official state crustacean. It is recommended for passage.

Sen. 1: I think there should be a time limit on the lobster holding that honor.

Sen. 2: I vote yes as it is

Sen. 3: We have too many symbols already. What about the Maine potato?

Floor: Yay, nay, yay, nay….

PRES OF THE SENATE: It’s a vote!

*Setting: Voiceover, with statehouse scenes, legislators working together, bill going back and forth, etc.*

SECRETARY DUNLAP: Each Bill has a first and second reading in the House and Senate, to give members time to think about it and discuss it.

If the House and Senate can’t agree, the bill is sent to a committee of conference. This is a group of three legislators from the House and three from the Senate who all voted in favor of the bill. They get together to find out what they can change to get the bill passed.

The state crustacean bill was very popular and did not require a committee of conference, as it passed in both the House and Senate.

The next step is engrossment, which is when the final description is written, with any changes the legislators agreed upon. Finally, the bill is placed on a list of bills that are ready for Final Enactment. If both the House and Senate vote for that final version, the Bill is sent to the Governor for his official signature so the bill becomes Maine law.

*Setting: governor’s office, surrounded by children*

REP. LYFORD: Governor, here is LD 1609 to make lobster the official state crustacean. We’ve passed it and we hope you’ll sign it into law.

GOV. LEPAGE: This looks great. I agree this should become Maine law. *(signs it)* This will now be known as Chaptered Law #426. Now the lobster has found its place alongside the other official symbols of the Great State of Maine.

STUDENTS: Hooray! / applause

*Setting: Matt at statehouse/or plain background*

SECRETARY DUNLAP: Sometimes the Governor doesn’t like a bill and does not sign it. This is called a veto. He sends it back to the Legislature with a message of why he objects to the bill. If the Legislature still wishes to pass the bill into law, it needs a two-thirds vote of both the House and the Senate to override the objection of the Governor, which is more votes than they needed to pass it the first time.

If a bill doesn’t make it through to become law, it can be brought back at another time to go through the process again.

And that’s how Maine laws are made!

*THE END.*