



MAINE PRESS ASSOCIATION
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December 15, 2017

Matthew Pollack, Executive Clerk

Maine Supreme Judicial Court

205 Newbury Street, Room 139

Portland, Maine 04101

Re. Recommendations Presented to the Court in the Report of the Task Force on
Transparency and Privacy in Court Records

Comments by the Maine Press Association

Dear Mr. Pollack:

The Maine Press Association (MPA) offers the following comments on the recommendation
of the Task Force on Transparency and Privacy in Court Records concerning public access to

online Maine court records:

The MPA strongly urges the Judicial Branch to allow public access to all public court records online. We make our case based on the following:

- * Transparency is critical in government proceedings, and the bedrock of our judicial system;
- * Online access benefits numerous sectors of the public;
- * Neither identity theft nor "practical obscurity" are compelling reasons for blocking online access;
- * A sweeping prohibition, as proposed, against public access to online Maine court records is an overbroad reaction to a narrow problem.

These are points also raised by the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition and contained in a separate statement from the Coalition to the court on this issue. We support and endorse the detailed, thorough and well-grounded arguments the Coalition uses to back up each of those points in its statement to the court.

We add to those arguments an appeal based on practical grounds. Maine newspapers play a vital role as representatives of the public, offering information that is critical to readers and critical to a healthy democracy. Easier access to government proceedings, including court proceedings and records, means our 40 members — which include all of the state's daily newspapers and dozens of weekly newspapers — can more quickly, more efficiently and more accurately provide this vital information to readers.

In conclusion, the Maine Press Association urges the Judicial Branch to adopt a statewide policy allowing online public access to court records already public at Maine's courthouses.

Very truly yours,

Mark Mogensen

MPA Board Member and Chair of the MPA's Legislative Committee

cc: Maine Press Association