



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
16 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0016

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

David Bernhardt
COMMISSIONER

September 2, 2016

Dear Candidate:

It is campaign season again and the Maine Department of Transportation would like to take this opportunity to offer some information regarding the placement of political signs. MaineDOT understands and appreciates the potential impact of strategically placed political signs as well as the substantial investment that candidates make in purchasing these signs.

In the past, Maine sign law allowed political signs to be placed within the public right of way up to 6 weeks prior to an election. During the most recent legislative session, changes were made to the statute to allow non-commercial signage, which includes campaign signs, for only up to 6 weeks during any one calendar year. The new law further states that signs bearing the same or substantially the same message may be placed no closer than 30 feet from one another-- See 23 M.R.S.A. § 1913-A, as amended by P.L. 2015, c. 403. These changes were put into place to conform with a recent Supreme Court ruling and to deal with the public concerns regarding the overall density of signs along the roadway. The most recent law change also requires sign owners to place their name and contact information, as well as the 6 week time frame for which the sign owner intends to have the sign up.

Maine's roadways offer an enormous opportunity to place a great many signs, but there are some areas within the state's roadway system that are off limits to non-commercial signage, including campaign signs. These areas are comprised of the Maine Interstate system, including the Maine Turnpike Authority system, and all the various interchanges and ramps along the interstate system. The Interstate system and its interchanges have been designated as "control of access" areas. The term "control of access" indicates that this section of highway is being controlled from development. Typically no new entrances such as driveways or side roads or the like will be allowed within these sections. All types of signs are restricted in these sections with the exception being the State of Maine may install a sign within a control of access area for the purposes of the highway system. All other types of signs are prohibited within the control of access areas.

There are various reasons for the prohibition of signs within the control of access sections but the main reason is safety. The interstate system and its connecting interchanges are not the only "control of access" areas within Maine's many road ways. There are several control of access sections along Maine routed highways as well. Many of these non-interstate control of access sections are located within some of Maine's busiest roads, such as Rte. 202 in Winthrop and Rte. 3 in South China. Control of access areas may have a very high volume of car and truck traffic as well as a high speed limit that could create a potential hazard for pedestrians attempting to install signs along the roadways.

Here are some questions that campaign personnel may ask regarding the placement of political signs:

How do I recognize a "control of access" section?

- *MaineDOT is continuing the process of installing signs at each of the control of access areas to indicate where the sections begin and end. The signs will provide information such as "C.O.A. Area-No Signs" with arrows indicating which direction the control of access boundaries extend.*

- *Unsigned areas may be recognized by the limited access points into the highway and often a wildlife deterrent fence set 30 to 50 feet off the edge of pavement.*

What will happen to my sign if it has been placed in within a control of access section?

- *MaineDOT personnel have been advised to remove all types of signs from within the control of access areas. Maintenance crews have also been instructed to safely store the signs until the owner of the sign (business, campaign) can be contacted and arrangements can be made for pick up.*

Does MaineDOT enforce these sign placement restrictions state wide?

- *MaineDOT is committed to providing the equitable enforcement of these areas state wide. All signs that are installed within control of access areas will be removed as soon as possible by department personnel.*

What do I need to know about placing my sign along the roadway?

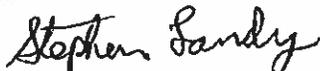
- *The first thing to consider in placement is the safety of the traveling public. Please do not install your signs in an area that will limit sight line of anyone trying to pull out of a side road or driveway. All signs that block a driver's sight distance will be removed for the public's safety. Removed signs will be held at the closest MaineDOT maintenance lot to be picked up by the candidate.*

In summary, when placing political signs, the important areas to remember are the interstate system with the connecting interchanges and ramps, including the Maine Turnpike Authority system, and the control of access areas, these areas are all off limits to all signs, regardless of content or viewpoint. Also, your individual signs can be no closer than 30 feet from one another, and can be put up for only 6 weeks during one calendar year. These signs must contain the owner's contact information and the 6 week time frame for which the sign owner intends for the sign to be up. MaineDOT will continue to provide information as necessary to help individuals with questions.

For more information regarding the appropriate placement of political signs, please contact the Department's Legislative Liaison, Meghan Russo at Meghan.russo@maine.gov or 624-3558.

MaineDOT appreciates your cooperation in this effort.

Sincerely,



Steve Landry
Maine State Traffic Engineer
MaineDOT