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**An Act To Allocate Punitive Damage Awards in Civil Cases To
Include an Amount To Ensure Access to Justice for Maine Citizens**

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 14 MRSA §1602-D is enacted to read:

§ 1602-D. Judgments including punitive or exemplary damages; funding access to justice programs

Beginning October 1, 2007, in all civil actions in this State in which a judgment is entered that includes punitive or exemplary damages, the court shall require the plaintiff to distribute 25% of the punitive or exemplary damages actually collected from the defendant to a statewide nonprofit organization devoted exclusively to law-related charitable work for the purpose of funding access to justice programs in this State, including, without limitation, volunteer lawyer programs and elderly and low-income legal assistance programs.

SUMMARY

This bill requires a plaintiff in a civil case who receives punitive or exemplary damages to distribute 25% of those damages to a statewide nonprofit organization devoted exclusively to law-related charitable work for the purpose of funding access to justice programs.