



IMPACT

ON

ISSUES

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Public Policy Positions

Maine has always had a unique and independent political culture, and the advocacy work of the League of Women Voters of Maine ([LWVME](#)) reflects those values. Like state and local chapters of the League of Women Voters ([LWVUS](#)) across the country, we focus on issues that are of particular concern and interest to our members.

Since the early 2000s, LWVME has focused its advocacy work on a short list of priority issues with an emphasis on voting rights, the conduct of elections, government ethics, and campaign finance. As a part of the federated organization that the League of Women Voters comprises, local and state Leagues automatically subscribe to [positions developed by the national organization](#). If an issue arises for which there is no national position, LWVME may consult with our state League counterparts around the country and adopt a position based on existing positions developed elsewhere. The Maine state League also conducts studies within its own membership to formulate positions that are consistent with League principles. The public policy positions adopted by LWVME are [listed here](#).

Given those positions, which reflect broad member agreement, our advocacy work varies from year to year, taking into consideration Maine's political climate, the prospects for legislative action, and the likelihood of gubernatorial support. What follows is a description of recent important LWVME advocacy work through lobbying, tracking bills, testifying before the legislature, and communicating with the public.

Campaign Finance and Campaign Finance Reform

Most of the work done by LWVME on financing candidate campaigns, going back to the 1990s, has been based on the LWVUS position adopted in January 1974, revised in March 1982, and updated again in April 2016.

Campaign finance regulation should enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure transparency, protect representative democracy from distortion by big money, and combat corruption and undue influence in government. The League believes that campaign spending must be restricted but not banned. The League supports public financing, full disclosure, abolishing SuperPACs and creating an effective enforcement agency.

<http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/lwvus-position-money-politics>

In the summer of 2007, LWVME launched a multi-year study, [Money in Politics: PACs in Maine](#), a deep analysis of the role of PACs (political action committees) in state politics. As a result of this important study, in December 2011 the state League's Board of Directors adopted the following position:

LWVME supports reform in the financing of state candidate PACs consistent with the LWVUS position on Campaign Finance Reform.

This means that we support measures to improve the regulation of candidate PACs in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and promote citizen participation in the political process. Applying these principles to PAC reform in Maine provides a basis for sound action in a changing constitutional context, as the Supreme Court of the U.S. reshapes the landscape of permissible reform.

While PAC reform, meaningful disclosure, and regulatory compliance are all core issues in our work on campaign finance reform, the dominant issue in this area for more than 20 years has been public financing of political campaigns.

Maine Clean Elections

Since the mid 1990s, the League of Women Voters of Maine has worked in partnership with Maine Citizens for Clean Elections ([MCCE](#)) to establish and support Maine's public campaign finance system. LWVME was a [founding member](#) of MCCE, a coalition that worked to gather signatures to pass the [Maine Clean Election Act](#) in 1996. Since it went into effect in 2000, the Clean Election Act has:

- Enabled qualified people from diverse backgrounds to run for office.
- Kept candidates focused on voters, not donors.
- Allowed legislators to serve in office without strings to big money.

The Maine Clean Election Act (MCEA) established a voluntary program of full public financing of political campaigns for candidates running for governor, state senator, and state representative. Candidates who choose to participate may accept very limited private contributions, or "seed money," at the beginning of their campaigns. To become eligible, candidates must demonstrate community support by collecting a minimum number of \$5 donations, known as qualifying contributions, which are paid into the Maine Clean Election Fund (MCEF). Once a candidate qualifies to receive funds from the state, they can no longer accept private contributions. (From www.maine.gov/ethics/mcea.)

Almost since the inception of the program, the legislature "borrowed" millions of dollars from the MCEF to cover state budget deficits. In 2006, MCCE and the League advocated for restoration of the moneys and were partially successful: \$1.2 million of the \$4.8 million outstanding was returned. This was adequate for the 2006 election cycle. As a result, over 80% of all candidates for the legislature, as well as three of four major candidates for governor, used public funding.

The years between 2006 and 2011 were rebuilding years for MCCE, with the establishment of an independent corporate structure and its own board of directors. The League of Women Voters and its leadership were instrumental in shepherding MCCE through these transition

years. From 2006 through 2010, the [LWVME Education Fund](#) served as fiscal agent for MCCE. Throughout this period, the League worked hand in glove with MCCE, collaborating on legislative strategy and coordinating testimony. In 2010, MCCE achieved independent status as a stand-alone 501(c)(3) corporation, and the fiscal agency relationship between MCCE and the Education Fund was severed, but our close working relationship continued.

The Legislature continued to “borrow” from the Clean Election Fund to cover the state budget deficit. Funding was adequate to cover the 2008 legislative races, and 85% of the newly elected members of the 124th Legislature ran with MCEA funding.

The central legislative agenda of MCCE in the 124th Legislature was to preserve adequate funding for the 2010 general election, including funding for the gubernatorial race. The League and MCCE testified on numerous bills submitted to the 124th Legislature that proposed changes to the Maine Clean Election Act. We supported helpful changes and deflected destructive ones, including a bill, which was defeated, that sought outright repeal of the act. ([LWVME testimony, 124th Legislature, LD 205](#)) Despite opposition from the League and MCCE, bills making seed money mandatory for MCEA gubernatorial candidates and dramatically increasing the contribution limit for privately funded candidates were enacted into law.

In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in an Arizona case dealt a severe blow to Maine’s Clean Elections program. In *Arizona Free Enterprise Club v Bennett*, the court ruled that triggered matching funds — that is, additional public funding for candidates facing big-spending opponents — were unconstitutional. Arizona’s law was similar to Maine’s in this regard, and Maine’s triggered matching funds were immediately struck down. In the wake of these court decisions, we lobbied extensively for a repair to the Maine Clean Election Act that would have allowed participating candidates access to additional funds by continuing to collect additional qualifying contributions. The 125th Legislature (2011-2012) failed to implement a repair, leaving participating candidates with only a very modest initial distribution of funds. (LWVME testimony, [LD 120](#), [LD 659](#), [LD 848](#).) Participation in the program plummeted.

Saving the Clean Elections program was now a critical goal of the League and MCCE. In 2013, we strenuously opposed a recommendation in the Governor’s budget that would have completely defunded the Clean Elections program. Ultimately, the gubernatorial portion of the program was eliminated for the 2014 election cycle.

In the 126th Legislature (2013-2014), supporters of Clean Elections, including the League and MCCE, tried to pass a repair bill that would allow additional public funding to compensate for the loss of triggered matching funds ([LD 1309 An Act to Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act](#).) The bill passed in both chambers but failed in budget negotiations. With the program defunded for gubernatorial candidates, and inadequate allocations for legislative candidates, Clean Elections participation in the 2014 election remained historically low.

Following that defeat in the Legislature, the [League joined partners at MCCE](#) to gather sufficient signatures to put a referendum question on the ballot in November 2015 that would include

the main provisions of LD 1309 plus other measures to strengthen transparency and accountability. The measure passed and was in effect for the 2016 election. The main provisions of the [law](#) include:

- An optional system of supplemental funding to replace matching funds. Clean Election candidates can remain competitive in high-spending races by collecting additional \$5 contributions in order to qualify for supplemental funds.
- Increased funding for the Clean Election program.
- Mandatory disclaimers in certain political advertising that would prominently name the entity sponsoring the ad, and identify the top three funding sources of that entity.
- A reporting system for money raised and spent to finance the Governor-elect's inauguration and transition into office.
- Increased fines and penalties for campaign finance violations.

Implementation of these policies, and securing adequate funding for Clean Elections, have dominated the 2016, 2017, and 2018 legislative sessions.

Challenges to statutory funding surfaced right away. The 2015 initiative increased funding from \$2 million to \$3 million per year, but the state comptroller did not immediately transfer the extra \$1 million to the fund on January 1, 2016. Following pressure from MCCE and the League, the money was eventually transferred in late February.

In the 2016 legislative session, MCCE and the League advocated for restoration of \$1.7 million not transferred to the Clean Elections fund in 2014 (just part of the more than \$6 million still owed to the MCEF). Ultimately, we supported an Ethics Commission bill, LD 1579, which would have transferred \$500,000 from Fiscal Year 2017 into 2016. LD1579 did not overcome a veto ([see MCCE's 2016 Legislative record](#)). Nevertheless, in the 2016 election, participation in Clean Elections increased to 63%, and the new supplemental funding mechanisms worked well.

In the 128th Legislature (2017-2018), LWVME and MCCE advocated for Clean Elections funding in the biennial budget, including both the \$3 million per year statutory funding and the \$1.7 million still owed to the fund, ultimately securing the \$3 million per year and an early transfer of the 2019 funding into June 2018. We also defeated more than 17 bills attempting to roll back aspects of the MCEA and other campaign finance regulations. The League supported bills to ban leadership PACs for privately-funded candidates and ban lobbyists' contributions year-round (the ban is now in effect only while the Legislature is in session). Neither bill passed. (See the [MCCE 2017 Legislative Record](#) and [League testimony](#) for more information on these bills.)

In late 2017, MCCE and the League of Women Voters of Maine announced their Democracy Partnership, and hired joint staff to support work in close collaboration, formalizing their long-standing alliance.

In 2018, an error was discovered in the state budget that was understood as preventing the

Ethics Commission from distributing appropriated funds to MCEA candidates after the 2019 fiscal year began on July 1. A fix to the error was introduced into LD 1894, the routine errors bill. However, House Republicans refused to pass the bill, and a legislative stalemate dragged on into August. At the same time, Governor LePage refused to sign routine financial orders to allow the Ethics Commission to distribute funds for candidates in the last quarter of the 2018 fiscal year (April - June). In late June, MCCE and seven candidates filed a lawsuit against the governor. In August, a Superior Court judge ruled that the administration must release funds candidates have qualified for, regardless of the governor's actions. Later in the month, the Ethics Commission voted that the court decision allowed them to release the FY19 funds and ignore the budget error.

In 2018, the first year that gubernatorial candidates were able to use Clean Elections with the new supplemental funding provisions, three candidates ran using the program: a Democrat and a Republican lost in the primary, and an independent ran in the general election. Sixty-three percent of winning legislative candidates in the general election used Clean Elections.

After her election in November, 2018, Governor-elect Janet Mills became the first prospective governor required to register transition and inaugural committees with the Ethics Commission, and disclose contributions underwriting their expenses.

Voting Rights

Voting rights are at the core of the League's work. LWVME work in this area is based on the LWVUS position on Citizen's Right to Vote, announced by the National Board in March 1982:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.

Our advocacy priorities have consistently emphasized voting issues, voting rights, and the smooth conduct of elections. For the last few years, voting rights have been under attack all around the country; and, here in Maine, the League has been at the center of the fight to protect and restore access to the ballot.

Voting is the most fundamental expression of citizenship in our democracy. The expansion of voting rights to include all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, and the breaking down of barriers to citizens' voter participation – from literacy tests to poll taxes – has been one of the great successes in the evolution of American democracy. [LWVME has advocated for a number of measures](#) that would enhance voter rights and streamline the voting and administrative process, and opposed any bill that would restrict voting rights.

Same-Day Voter Registration

Since 1973, Maine voters have enjoyed the right to register in-person up to, and on, Election Day. On several occasions since then, bills to eliminate same-day voter registration have been introduced in the legislature.

In 2007, we [argued](#) against a bill before the 123rd Legislature that proposed moving the deadline for voter registration back seven days. League testimony maintained that people are less likely to make one trip to town hall to register and another trip to the polls to vote, especially in rural areas where distances are longer. Further, the new deadline would disenfranchise eligible voters who become interested in an election in its final days. Additionally, people who have moved or changed their names recently or who have been accidentally purged from the voting rolls would also be unable to vote.

That 2007 bill did not pass. However, In 2011, the legislature overturned the 38-year-old same-day voter registration law. (Read our testimony [against](#).) Later that same year, we were a key partner in a successful [People's Veto](#) ballot initiative that restored same-day voter registration in Maine.

Early Voting

LWVME is an [advocate for early voting](#) because it reduces congestion at the polls on Election Day, contributing to a better experience for voters and election officials. True early voting, in which voters complete a ballot and put it directly into the ballot box or scanning machine, is preferable to Maine's current absentee ballot system, where ballots are collected but are not recorded until Election Day.

Implementing early voting requires an amendment to the Maine Constitution. [LD 156](#) (2013, 126th Legislature) was a *RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine Concerning Early Voting and Voting by Absentee Ballot*. The measure, which required a two-thirds majority in both chambers, narrowly failed. Citing the large number of absentee ballots cast by Maine voters, we testified in support saying, "...because the percentage of ballots cast absentee has grown to 50-60% of total ballots cast in some municipalities, this process is a stress point for local election officials. True early voting probably offers a more secure, orderly process for the conduct of elections..." A similar resolution, LD 1383, failed in the 128th Legislature (2017-2018) despite widespread support and testimony from the Town and City Clerks' Association, the Office of the Secretary of State, and [LWVME](#). The League also [testified in favor of LD 979](#), which would have allowed municipalities to conduct early voting in person during the same period as absentee voting. This measure also failed.

While these efforts were unsuccessful, we have supported other measures related to early voting, such as permitting clerks to process absentee ballots on the days immediately before the election (which is currently the law). (LWVME testimony, 124th Legislature, [LD 129](#), 125th Legislature, [LD 203](#))

Online Voter Registration

Calls for online and automatic voter registration are beginning to surface as technology changes and citizens are more comfortable carrying out sensitive transactions online. A bill ([LD 770](#)) to implement online voter registration was introduced in the 127th Legislature in 2015. While the League encourages the development of online voter registration programs to modernize the

registration process, we neither supported nor opposed the bill. It restricted online voter registration to those who have a driver's license or state I.D., raising concerns about a discriminatory effect. The measure failed.

Instead, the League proposed using the Uniform Electronic Transaction Act as a way to legally "sign" an affidavit that all information provided in the voter application is true. This is used in other states, and we feel this is a fairer way to expand online access.

[Automatic Voter Registration](#)

In 2017, the League, among many other groups, supported [LD 1232](#) (128th Legislature), an automatic voter registration bill. The measure proposed an opt-out system where eligible persons would automatically be registered when they interacted with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles unless they requested not to be. It also required that voter registration information be updated when voters change addresses or change their names through the BMV. [LWVME testified](#), "This one improvement will make registering easier for Maine people, will reduce the potential for errors in the voting rolls, and will ultimately save money and time at all levels of the election process." The bill failed to pass over opposition from the Office of the Secretary of State.

[Photo ID Requirements](#)

Photo ID requirements have gathered momentum around the country, and in Maine, bills are introduced in nearly every session to require that photographic ID be presented at the polls in order to vote. In 2011 the [League was instrumental in defeating a photo ID bill](#). But the proponents of voter ID did not rest. They convened the [Commission to Study the Conduct of Elections in Maine](#) to study voting issues and make recommendations to the 126th Legislature. The Commission held eight public hearings between August and November 2012, and members of the League attended all of them. Over and over again, opponents to photo ID testified that it would unfairly penalize Mainers who cannot afford an ID or who simply cannot get to a location that provides ID. The final report of the Commission did not support a photo ID measure.

In 2015, we [testified](#) against another Photo ID bill, which failed to pass. The League argued that implementing the law would disenfranchise voters while costing the state millions of dollars to prevent a very few ineligible voters from breaking existing law. Voter ID laws counter one exceptionally rare kind of voter fraud: impersonating someone else at the polls. We knew of only one case of voter fraud that had been prosecuted in Maine in more than 30 years.

[\(LWVME testimony, 127th Leg. LD 197\)](#)

The League supports full voter participation by all eligible American citizens, and we oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizens' constitutional right to vote. A 2014 federal General Accounting Office study concluded that voter participation fell between 2% and 3% in states implementing Photo ID between the presidential election years 2008 and 2012. For

Maine, that would have meant that implementing photo ID could have disenfranchised some 20,000 voters in the 2016 presidential election.

An identical bill failed passage in the first session of the 128th Legislature (2017) as [LD 121](#). Undeterred, Governor Paul LePage introduced the measure again at the 11th hour of the Second Session ([LD 1846](#)), but that bill was never referred to committee and died without legislative action.

Limitations on Voting Rights

In 2007, [LWVME opposed](#) an effort to deny voting rights to students living in college-owned housing, arguing that any proposal that disenfranchises students is inconsistent with the basic democratic principle of allowing all citizens to exercise their right to vote. When young people vote, they establish a life-long voting habit that pays off for our democracy with higher voter turnout in the years ahead. The issue came up again in 2017, when the we [testified](#): “By setting a higher proof-of-residency standard for students residing in campus housing, LD 155 would treat some college students differently than others based on a purely practical choice of housing accommodations. This would seem to be a violation of their Constitutional right to equal protection under the law.” The bill failed to pass.

In 2013, we [opposed LD 573](#) (*RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Restrict the Voting Privileges of Persons Incarcerated for Murder or Class A Crimes*). The League of Women Voters has consistently opposed measures to restrict the voting rights of incarcerated citizens. Allowing and encouraging convicted citizens to vote during and after their incarceration has the effect of promoting citizenship and engaging them in civic life. The measure failed. (LWVME testimony, 123rd Legislature, [LD 300](#))

According to the [Brennan Center for Justice](#), laws that prevent felons from voting are deeply rooted in our country’s troubled racial history and have a disproportionate impact on minorities. A 2010 study of New York’s constitutional history traces that state’s current felony disenfranchisement law to a century-long effort to keep African-American citizens out of the voting booth. The magnitude of prisoner and ex-felon disenfranchisement elsewhere in the United States – upwards of 6 million people – has serious implications for the democratic process and racial inclusion.

Election Methods and Administration

LWVME has advocated a number of measures that would streamline Maine’s voting and administrative procedures and enhance the voting process. Each session brings new bills that address voter access and election management. We monitor these bills very closely. Also important is making sure that election staff around the state have the resources and support they need to carry out their work, maintain a secure voting place, and return an accurate account of the vote.

Ranked Choice Voting

Following three years of study and discussion, in March 2011 the League of Women Voters of Maine reached concurrence with the League of Women Voters of Minnesota in favor of ranked choice voting (RCV). In addition to Maine and Minnesota, other state Leagues around the country that have endorsed RCV include Arizona, California, North Carolina, Vermont, and Washington.

The final position reads:

The League of Women Voters of Maine supports election systems for elected offices in single seat elections that require the winner to receive a majority of the votes, as long as the majority is achieved by Instant Runoff Voting/Ranked Choice Voting, rather than a second, separate runoff election.

With this position, the League of Women Voters of Maine supports the right of local governments to choose [ranked choice voting](#) for their local elections regardless of what system is used at the state level.

In general, League members participating in the study believed that the winner of single seat elections should be determined by a majority vote, and they supported a system of ranked choice voting for determining the majority winner. While there was strong support among League members for majority-winner elections, that support diminished if the winner had to be determined by a traditional runoff election.

The League was an early supporter of ranked choice voting in Maine. We supported [two RCV bills](#) in the 126th Legislature (2013-2014). After the defeat of [LDs 518 and 860](#) in the first session, the League convened a statewide working group to plan a more concerted effort to pass RCV in the future. The group, comprising civic leaders, legal scholars, elected officials, and reform advocates, eventually spawned the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting, led by former State Senator Dick Woodbury. The Committee launched a signature drive for a citizen initiative in the fall of 2014, and RCV qualified to appear on the November 2016 ballot. The referendum question, [An Act to Establish Ranked-choice Voting](#), passed with 52% voting in favor.

In 2017, in the early days of the 128th Legislature, Senate Republicans called for a Solemn Occasion, asking the Maine Supreme Judicial Court to issue an opinion on the constitutionality of ranked choice voting as applied to the general elections for governor and members of the legislature. [LWVME presented oral argument](#) on April 13, 2017, urging the Maine Supreme Judicial Court to uphold the ranked choice voting citizen initiative passed in November 2016.

On May 23, 2017, [the Court issued an advisory opinion](#) that declared RCV unconstitutional for the general elections for governor and members of the legislature, saying that it violated the provision of the Maine Constitution that calls for election to these offices to be decided by a

plurality of the voters. Following the court's opinion, two bills were put forward in the legislature to address the concerns raised by the Court.

- [LD 1624](#) - *RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Implement Ranked-choice Voting*. [LWVME supported](#) this bill, but it failed final passage.
- [LD 1625](#) - *An Act to Repeal the Ranked-choice Voting Law*. [LWVME opposed](#) this bill. It died when the House and Senate did not agree on the final language.

Thus, at the end of the first regular session of the 128th Legislature, the ranked choice voting law remained in effect for all elections to be held in 2018, without any apparent resolution of the issues raised by the Court.

In October 2017, the governor called the legislature back into special session on several issues, one of which was RCV. [LD 1646](#), *An Act to Bring Maine's Ranked-choice Voting Law into Constitutional Compliance*, was introduced during the special session. [LWVME supported](#) LD 1646, which would have suspended the use of RCV in elections where the Maine Supreme Court advised that it is unconstitutional while requiring it to proceed for other elections covered by the new law. LD 1646 was enacted with Committee Amendment B, which delayed implementation until after December 2021, and repealed the law unless the Constitution of Maine was amended by that time to authorize the legislature to determine the method by which the governor and members of the legislature are elected. This amendment created a high probability that RCV would be repealed.

Following passage of the amended version of LD 1646, the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting launched a partial People's Veto effort designed to permit races not found to be unconstitutional to go forward in 2018 using ranked choice voting, while keeping in place the delay for general elections for governor and members of the legislature. The Campaign worked feverishly from Election Day, November 7, 2017, until the February 2, 2018 deadline for gathering signatures in order for the question to be on the ballot in June 2018. They were successful in gathering more than the required number of signatures.

Once the signatures were certified by the Secretary of State, the implementation of LD 1646 as amended was delayed until after the vote on the People's Veto in June 2018. This enabled Maine to become the first state in the nation to use RCV for primary elections for U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, governor, and members of the legislature in races in which there were more than two candidates. The People's Veto to overturn parts of LD 1646 was successful in June 2018. In November 2018, ranked choice voting was used in the general elections for U.S. Senate and Congress, as these elections are not prescribed by the Maine Constitution.

Following the November election where ranked choice voting played a role in determining the outcome of the Congressional race in CD 2, candidate Bruce Poliquin filed suit in federal court challenging the constitutionality of RCV in federal elections. On Thursday, December 13, 2018, U.S. District Judge Lance Walker issued his final judgement in that lawsuit. His strongly-worded

opinion denied the Poliquin campaign's request for a permanent injunction against the use of RCV and found for the defendant, Maine Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap.

The League continues to be a leader in public education on the issue of ranked choice voting, hosting forums and events, and writing op-eds and letters-to-the-editor for newspapers around the state. In the run-up to the 2018 primary election, we issued [Guiding Principles for RCV](#). We also provided substantive commentary on the Secretary of State's proposed rules for the conduct of RCV elections and RCV recounts. (See ["What We're Doing to Help"](#) on our website.)

During the 127th Legislature, the League testified neither for nor against bills to implement a top-two primary in Maine elections ([LD 720](#)) and to implement a top-two primary in certain local elections ([LD 1189](#)). In testimony on both these bills, we argued that ranked choice voting was a better, more equitable alternative because:

- It minimizes "strategic" voting.
- It allows voters to express their sincere preferences among candidates.
- RCV eliminates the problem of "spoiler" candidates who have little chance of winning but who pull votes from major candidates.
- RCV does not require separate runoff elections.
- It promotes civility in campaigns.
- RCV is most likely to elect a candidate with broad appeal.
- It may improve voter participation.

Election Audits

At the LWVUS Convention in 2006, delegates clarified the Position on Citizen's Right to Vote to affirm that the LWVUS supports voting systems:

- *that are voter-verifiable by paper ballot or other paper record where the voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision,*
- *that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent; and such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting where the paper ballot/record is used for audits and recounts; and*
- *the vote totals can be verified by an independent hand count of the paper ballot/record; and*
- *routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts can be conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction.*

At the national Convention 2010, delegates added the principle of transparency, so that the League's position would support voting systems that are secure, accurate, recountable, accessible, and transparent.

Following the position of our national affiliate, LWVME supports the implementation of voting systems and procedures that are secure, accurate, recountable, accessible, and transparent. Routine audits in randomly selected precincts should take place in every election, and the results made public. In 2007, LWVME testified neither for nor against [LD 1150 An Act to](#)

Establish Random Audits of Voting Machines. We supported random audits in general, but since the Maine League had not studied the subject, we took no specific position on what percentage of votes constitutes a statistically appropriate random audit, or what procedures should be used in conducting an audit. More recently, during the 124th Legislature (2009), we testified in support of [LD 1170](#), a concept bill — that is, a bill without specific statutory provisions — that proposed mandatory random audits for election results.

In 2017, we used the national affiliate’s 2009 *Report on Election Auditing* to draft [LD 1284 An Act To Require Election Transparency and Audits](#). This bill required a regular process audit of Maine elections, and called on the Secretary of State to initiate a study and conduct a pilot of risk-limiting post-election audits. This bill entered committee with nine cosponsors, including Democrats, Republicans, and an independent, but was voted Ought-Not-to-Pass in committee in deference to reservations expressed by the Office of the Secretary of State.

Absentee Voting

As explained in the Early Voting section above, LWVME prefers early voting to absentee ballots because votes are cast at the time of voting rather than saved and counted on Election Day. Early voting is a more secure system that alleviates some of the pressures placed on elections staff to simultaneously run an election and count the votes in a timely manner. Because Maine already allows no-excuse absentee voting, more and more citizens are using that method as a way to avoid long lines at the polls and vote at a time convenient to them.

The 127th Legislature considered proposals to expand absentee voting and to facilitate the timely return of ballots. [LD 413](#) proposed to expand access to no-excuse absentee ballots into the “closed period” and to relax requirements for third-party absentee ballots. The bill failed to pass. [LD 509](#), which proposed free return postage paid by the state on absentee ballots, failed to emerge from committee. LWVME testified neither for nor against on both bills. We did support [two bills](#), one of which finally passed, allowing election officials to process absentee ballots as early as the Saturday before Election Day.

Candidate Selection Primaries vs Caucuses

With a presidential election on the horizon, the issue of caucuses versus presidential preference primaries surfaced again in 2016. Many citizens were confused by the caucus system, especially since Maine has changed from caucuses to primaries and back in the course of a generation. Record turnouts and limited caucus sites resulted in long lines and long distances to travel to reach a caucus. The result was that many citizens who wanted to participate did not get a chance and felt cut out of the system.

A bill to re-establish presidential primaries in Maine passed during the second session of the 127th Legislature, with final legislation due at the start of the 128th. The 128th Legislature adjourned without closing the deal on the return to presidential primaries in 2020. At the time, LWVME had no position on the relative benefits of caucuses vs primaries and did not weigh in.

At the same time, in non-presidential primaries, voter participation remains extremely low, leading to calls for an open primary, and one such bill ([LD 744](#)) failed in the 127th Legislature. We testified neither for nor against, citing a lack of evidence that open primaries actually improve voter participation in primary elections. The issue is further complicated by party rules regarding timing and process.

In order to develop an evidence-based position on this issue, LWVME launched a formal consensus study in 2017. The Study Committee examined the advantages and disadvantages of (1) primaries vs caucuses, (2) various types of open vs closed primaries, and (3) nonpartisan primaries. On completion of the study, the State Board adopted a [new position](#) on primaries/candidate selection systems in November 2018:

The League of Women Voters of Maine believes that primary elections should encourage broad voter participation and that all voters should have the opportunity to participate in the primary election of their choice. More specifically, the LWVME supports:

- *"Semi-open" primaries over the various forms of closed or fully open primaries for candidate selection at all governmental levels.*
- *Presidential primaries over presidential caucuses, recognizing that the rules concerning the primaries will be more consistent with League values if they are "semi-open." The League also supports Presidential primaries held on set dates that do not cause a loss of party delegates.*

The LWVME defines a "semi-open" primary as a primary in which unenrolled/unaffiliated voters may vote on one ballot per primary without having to enroll in that particular political party. Voters enrolled in a political party can vote only on the ballot of their party.

- *Government, as opposed to party, funding and administration of federal, state, and county primaries.*

The LWVME neither supports nor opposes nonpartisan primaries. The LWVME will continue to monitor experience with nonpartisan primaries and re-examine this issue when the results of more empirical studies are available.

Ethics and Disclosure

The LWVUS policy on Congress and the Presidency calls on government to be accountable and responsive to the will of citizens. LWVME applies this policy when monitoring the function of the Maine Legislature, Governor's office, and Executive staff. The policy calls on government to:

Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision making capability and effective performance. And, to promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

The [State Integrity Investigation](#) report published in 2015 ranked Maine 43rd in the nation, with an overall grade of F. The [State Integrity Investigation](#) report published in 2012 ranked Maine even lower, 46th in the nation. Our low ranking does not mean that we are among the most

corrupt states in the country, but it does suggest that, because we don't have a history of corruption, our laws are weak; and weak laws create vulnerability. Some of these issues have arisen in the past few years as we have faced issues involving the "revolving door," transparency, nepotism, and cronyism.

[Lobbying and the Revolving Door](#)

Lobbying, undue influence, and conflict of interest are a growing concern. Recent reports indicate that lobbyists are targeting state legislatures more than ever, and "between 2006 and 2012 the number of interest groups and organizations, including unions, represented by lobbyists in the states grew by more than 6,200, about 12%." (See: ["With Gridlock in Washington, Lobbyists Turn to Statehouses."](#)) With the growth of out-of-state money influencing regulation, legislation, and campaigns, Maine's ethics requirements must adapt to a changing – and increasingly charged – political environment in Augusta. LWVME closely monitors legislation while also keeping an eye on ethics disputes and issues that arise throughout Maine's government.

Influence from paid lobbyists is especially perilous in a term-limited, part-time citizen legislature such as Maine's. Industry insiders are far more knowledgeable than most legislators, and they use their savvy to influence legislation that benefits them and their clients – but not always the citizens of Maine. The League supports lobbying disclosure that provides information on the pressures exerted on the policy-making process. In order for citizen participation to be meaningful, a high level of transparency is required so that citizens can understand how laws and regulations are developed, where proposals originate, and who is influencing the process. In April 2007 (123rd Legislature), we supported three bills to enhance transparency and public information about lobbying in Augusta:

- [LD 1058](#) (123rd) *An Act to Require the Reporting of Executive Branch Lobbying*, would require lobbyists to report lobbying of any state agency or agency representative. (Signed into law.)
- [LD 1008](#) *An Act to Improve the Legislative Ethics Laws*, would permit members of the public to file ethics complaints against legislators and would somewhat strengthen current ethics law. (Signed into law.)
- [LD 1051](#) *An Act to Provide Information to the Public Regarding Lobbying and Lobbyists*, would require, among other things, that lobbyists wear name tags when lobbying. (Did not pass, although name tags are now required under subsequent law.)

We support reasonable efforts to monitor ethics and transparency issues, but we are mindful of the burdens that disclosure record-keeping may cause small nonprofit and volunteer organizations. The League is also a volunteer-run organization that lobbies and advocates in Augusta on behalf of our membership and Maine citizens. Subjecting volunteer lobbyists to the reporting and disclosure requirements seems counter to the goal of encouraging citizen

participation. So, in 2009 (124th), the League supported [LD 1448](#) *An Act to Exempt Volunteer Lobbyists from State Disclosure Requirements*.

Of growing importance is the so-called “revolving door,” when legislators or public employees negotiate and/or obtain lobbying or industry jobs. Their experience and inside contacts are attractive to employers seeking to influence the government or legislature on issues of regulation, government contracts, or oversight. But this advantage is often detrimental to public interests. We have frequently testified in favor of stricter laws regarding the oversight of public employees and their relationships with the companies they regulate, including on these 2013 bills:

- [LD 69](#) *An Act To Strengthen Financial Disclosure Laws for the Legislative and Executive Branches of State Government*. (Did not pass.)
- [LD 184](#) *An Act to Enhance Transparency in Government by Implementing a Waiting Period for Legislators before They May Register as Lobbyists*. (Signed into law.)
- [LD 859](#) *An Act to Increase Ethics and Transparency in Government Service*. (Signed into law.)

During the 128th legislative session, we supported:

- [LD 413](#) *An Act to Limit the Influence of Lobbyists by Expanding the Prohibition on Accepting Political Contributions* would extend the prohibition on soliciting or accepting contributions from during the legislative session to year-round. (Did not pass.)
- [LD 1591](#) *An Act to Strengthen the Restrictions Governing Lobbying by Former Legislators and Executive Branch Employees* would increase the current restriction on compensated lobbying by former legislators and certain former executive-level employees from eight hours per calendar month in the first year after leaving office or employment to no compensated lobbying during the first year. (Did not pass.)

Ethics Oversight

A major concern in state government ethics is determining how issues will be addressed and what governing body has oversight power. The 2015 [State Integrity Investigation](#) pointed out weaknesses in Maine’s ethics laws and highlighted the lack of oversight and accountability. Loopholes and gaps in regulation render many of Maine’s laws toothless in their ability to enforce and prosecute transgressions.

In 2011 (125th Legislature), we supported [LD 1150](#) *An Act to Improve the Administration of the Legislative Ethics Laws*. The bill passed, and the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices was given the responsibility of investigating any possible violations of legislative ethics.

Our work on ethics issues continued into the 126th Legislature (2013-14) with several measures to address breaches in transparency, finance, and conflicts of interest. We testified on and supported:

- [LD 924](#) *An Act to Prevent a Conflict of Interest of the Secretary of State*. (Did not pass.)
- [LD 1222](#) *Resolve, To Create a Task Force on Maine's Ethics and Transparency Laws*. (Did not pass.)

Ethics bills are proposed nearly every session but often are not passed. In the 127th Legislature, a bill *To Implement Recommendations of the Government Oversight Committee to Strengthen the Ethics Practices and Procedures for Executive Branch Employees* ([LD 6](#)) was introduced in the first session but stalled after testimony, and no work session was ever scheduled. We supported it with testimony and the bill was carried over into the second session, but died in Appropriations.

Financial Disclosure

Financial disclosure laws are important because they promote citizens' right to know whether legislators are using their public service to advance their private interests. LWVME has testified on numerous measures addressing this concern. [LD 1001](#) (2013, 126th Legislature) proposed requirements that legislators report their involvement with for-profit companies, including a 5% ownership, income of over \$2000 per year, and other interests. We testified in support, and the bill was enacted. An amendment clarified that financial disclosure statements by legislators and certain executive branch employees must be filed electronically and immediately placed on a publicly accessible website.

Transparency and Freedom of Information

League of Women Voters of Maine follows the LWVUS position on Citizen's Right to Know as announced by the National Board, June 1984:

The League of Women Voters of the U.S. believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

Maine's Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) requires public notice, open meetings, and availability of public records for inspection and copying, and it conforms to the League's beliefs. However, the success of the Act depends upon the willingness of government to comply.

LWVME is a long-standing member of the [Maine Freedom of Information Coalition](#). Through our participation in that coalition, we monitor and testify on transparency issues as they arise in the legislature, and follow any issues that may affect [Maine's FOA laws](#). Further, the League publicizes these issues as a public service.

In 2007 (123rd Legislature), we supported [LD 1822](#) *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Right to Know Advisory Committee*, which would establish a Public Access Ombudsman and require all elected officials to take Right To Know training. A League representative testified that the measure would expand the public's ability to access public records and guarantee their right to attend public proceedings, as well as provide training for elected officials. While the majority of Maine's public officials are responsive to citizen requests for public records, some are not. The findings of the 2006 *Report on Public Records Follow-Up Audit*, from a study conducted by the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition, were alarming. According to the report, in a significant percentage of instances, citizens requesting information from the public record were denied access or questioned inappropriately about their identity or their reason for wanting the information.

We testified that, "Under current law, if a citizen has been denied access to a public record, or excluded from a public proceeding, their only method of appeal is to request reversal of the denial in writing and then appeal to Superior Court. That places an untenable burden upon the average citizen. A Public Access Ombudsman would greatly increase the public's ability to access records and attend open meetings." LD 1822 passed, and according to current Maine Law, the Public Access Ombudsman's duty is to "Respond to informal inquiries made by the public and public agencies and officials concerning the State's freedom of access laws."

Two years later, in the 124th Legislature, another FOA issue arose. We testified in support of [LD 679](#) *An Act to Allow a Court to Award Attorney's Fees in Successful Freedom of Access Appeals*. Our testimony maintained that although the Freedom of Access Act as currently written permits a citizen to bring an action in Superior Court to seek disclosure of records or nullification of actions illegally taken in executive session, that right is essentially meaningless for a citizen who cannot afford to hire counsel. The addition of an attorney's fees provision to the Act would level the playing field, and give citizens a meaningful enforcement opportunity. Attorney's fees can only be awarded to a citizen who prevails in an enforcement action, which inhibits the filing of meritless claims. Fortunately, LD 679 passed.

Transparency and Freedom of Information are ongoing front-burner concerns for the League, and in 2015 the Advocacy Committee expressed a growing unease over the use of "corner caucuses" during legislative committee hearings. Since these committees are public and the information discussed is meant to be public, the League was concerned that decisions were being made behind closed doors. Unsure of the legality, LWVME contacted the Attorney General's office about the issue. After some digging (and input from an attorney on our Board), we found that Maine's FOA laws do not cover these side meetings because they were party-only caucuses. As a result of this loophole, these meetings are overused. They leave the public out of the public hearing and work session process.

Good Government

Action in Maine on good government issues is based on fundamental League principles:

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among different agencies and levels of government.

A fully functioning government is necessary to support American democracy, and the League of Women Voters of Maine supports adequate funds for government to do its work. Staff coverage, resources, management, and oversight are required for the government of Maine to fulfill its mandate. Good government also requires a knowledgeable legislature that understands the laws and regulations of Maine, as well as public participation in the political process. In the first session of the 127th Legislature (2015), we supported [LD 1103](#) *Resolve, To Study Understaffing in State Agencies*. The resolve died between chambers.

Term Limits

In 1991, the national League announced its opposition to term limits for members of the U.S. Congress on the grounds that such limits would adversely affect the accountability, representativeness, and effective performance of Congress; and by decreasing the power of Congress, would upset the balance of power between Congress and an already powerful presidency. The 1992 LWVUS Convention reaffirmed opposition to term limits, and authorized state and local Leagues to take action on term limits for state and local offices.

Maine voters approved a term limits referendum in 1993, which was enacted in 1996. Now members of both the House and Senate are limited to four two-year terms. This is a consecutive, rather than lifetime, limit, and members who have served the limit are re-eligible for election after two years. Members termed out of one chamber may immediately run for election to the other chamber.

The League was the main plaintiff, along with the Maine Council of Senior Citizens and a handful of Portland voters, in a 1994 lawsuit challenging Maine's term limits law. The lawsuit argued that term limits violated the constitutionally protected right to vote for the candidate of one's choice. It also claimed that lawmakers' qualifications should be modified only by a constitutional amendment. The League argued that the term limits law should not be retroactive and therefore should not restrict candidates until 2004. Term limits for federal office were deemed unconstitutional, but the League lost the lawsuit with respect to state offices, and term limits remain in effect.

The League presented testimony in 2007 supporting a measure to [repeal term limits](#). Rather than adopt the measure outright, the Legislature sent a compromise bill to referendum, asking voters if they wanted to extend term limits from the current four consecutive terms (eight years) to six terms (twelve years). Even though this was a half-way measure, the League supported it. But it failed on the November ballot in 2007.

That electoral defeat gave term limits a new mandate and put a damper on legislative action regarding term limits for several years. Finally, in 2015, a bill was again introduced, and the League supported [LD 182](#) *An Act To Eliminate Term Limits for Legislators* (measure failed). During the same session, the League opposed a resolution calling for an [amendment](#) to the U.S. Constitution to institute term limits for Congressional office.

The issue of term limits for members of Congress came up again in the 128th Legislature in [HP 987](#) *JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING APPLICATION TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES FOR CALLING A CONVENTION TO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES TO LIMIT THE POWER OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT*. This resolution included, among other provisions, limiting the terms of office for the officials of the federal government and for members of Congress. LWVME offered [testimony in opposition](#) to the resolution. (The resolution did not pass.)

Income Tax

Government can only serve the people of Maine if it has adequate resources to support the function of departments and staff that do the work. Adequate funding and staffing are essential to carry out the work of serving the Maine people, and yet resources seem to face cuts every session. LWVME has supported the income tax since it was established in the 1960s, and the League was a key partner in educating the public about the tax before it was adopted. The League continues to support the income tax because, in the words of Dorothy Dunton, a League leader who worked to establish the tax, it places “the burden where it belongs on those most able to pay.” In 2015, the League testified against [LD 409](#) *An Act to Lower the Individual Income Tax Incrementally to Zero*. The act failed to pass.

Additional Policy Areas

In addition to our primary policy areas, LWVME occasionally works on other areas identified as important to the our mission. This work may include advocacy and testimony, and may involve working with and supporting partners who are leading the work on allied issues.

Civil Rights

As the debate about marriage between same-sex partners took center stage in public discourse, and legislation regarding the issue was pending before the 124th Legislature (2009), the LWVME Board of Directors undertook a consensus project to assess whether the membership supported or opposed same-sex marriage in Maine. After months of study and discussion, LWVME concurred with the League of Women Voters of Maryland and publicly announced a position in favor of marriage equality.

[LWVME Position on Equality of Opportunity](#) (Civil Marriage), announced in April 2009:

The League of Women Voters of Maine supports equal rights for all under Maine Law. LWVME supports legislation to equalize the legal rights and benefits available to same-sex couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVME supports legislation to permit same-sex couples to marry. The League believes the civil status of marriage should be clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights should be preserved. LWVME believes that Maine should recognize the civil unions and same-sex marriages of other states.

That same year, LWVME testified in favor of [LD 1020](#) *An Act to End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom*. The bill passed.

We worked with LWV-Maryland to bring this issue to the floor of our national Convention 2010. Based on our joint efforts, LWVUS adopted an Equality of Opportunity policy position at the 2010 convention. It states:

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

Gun Control and Safety

Although gun control and gun safety have not been high priority issues for the League, we have taken action on occasion when an opportunity presented itself for the League's voice to have an impact. Our work on this issue has been based on the LWVUS Position on Gun Control, as adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 Conventions:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on "Saturday night specials," enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

During the 126th Legislature (2013-2014), LWVME testified in support of [bills](#) that would have restricted high-capacity magazines and that would have required universal background checks. Both of these bills failed. In 2015 (127th), we testified against [LD 652](#) *An Act to Authorize the*

Carrying of Concealed Handguns without a Permit. The bill passed, and concealed carry is now permitted in Maine.

LWVME is not anti-gun but does support safety laws that ensure public and private well-being. Stressing the importance of safety training and background checks, we testified that

In addition to teaching how to safely handle a gun, gun safety training courses discuss the legal ramifications of shooting a gun in public, under what circumstances you are legally allowed to use a gun in public, and where you can and cannot carry a concealed weapon in Maine. The background check assures that felons and other prohibited people will not get legal permission to carry hidden guns in public. This is especially important in a state that allows for the private sale of guns where no background check is run on the purchaser.

Health Care and Reproductive Choice

Although reproductive rights are not a top-tier issue for the League of Women Voters of Maine, occasionally the League works with coalition partners on these concerns. The position of the League of Women Voters of the U.S.:

The League of Women Voters believes that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices. That means that no governmental body should make laws restricting access to family planning to citizens when those decisions are rightly made in private with the support of medical service providers. The League supports programs that decrease teen pregnancy.

In 2011 (125th Legislature), we testified against [LD 31](#) *An Act to Protect the Safety of Maine Children by Requiring the Express Consent of a Legal Guardian to Dispense Prescription Medication to a Minor*, which sought to undermine a law that has been successful since 1973. This law permits physicians to provide family planning services to any minor “who is a parent or married or has the consent of his or her legal guardian or who may suffer in the professional judgment of a physician probable health hazards if such services are not provided.” (22 MRSA §1908). As a result of Maine’s efforts, the state has seen its teen pregnancy rate drop from among the highest in the country to a current ranking of third lowest in the country. We testified that LD 31 “would reverse nearly 40 years of successful law by tying the hands of medical professionals and prohibiting teens from accessing much-needed prescription contraception or prescription drugs to treat sexually transmitted diseases.” The measure failed.

Energy and the Environment

Environmental issues are a major focus for the League of Women Voters of the U.S. Its 2014-16 *Impact on Issues* document lays out the LWVUS policy positions for management of natural resources, under which energy and environmental issues fall:

The policy for environmental protection is: “Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.”

The energy policy is: “Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.”

LWVME does not focus on these issues in its advocacy work but occasionally addresses them, relying on the LWVUS policies as framework. In February 2010, the LWVME contacted Senator Olympia Snowe regarding a [letter](#) she sent to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton about the Fiscal Year 2011 budget and U.S. commitment to international adaptation and climate change. The LWVME communication said “We agree with you that the most vulnerable countries require immediate assistance to adapt to the effects of climate change. We also agree with your support of the position of the U.S. National Intelligence Council and the United Nations Environment Program about the need to increase adaptation programs to reduce the threats posed to our national security from conflicts and migrations due to resource constraints.”

Developing Official Positions

The League of Women Voters takes action on an issue or advocates for a cause when there is an existing League position that speaks to the issue or supports the cause.

Positions result from a formal study process, for which the League provides guidelines (<http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/guidelines-lwvus-studies>).

Any given study, whether it be national, state, or local, involves thorough research and discussion of the pros and cons of each side of an issue. Study committee members fashion consensus questions, which are presented to and discussed by the general membership. After the members reach consensus, the Board forms positions based on that consensus.

It is the **consensus statement** – the statement resulting from the consensus questions – that becomes a position. Firm action or advocacy can then be taken on the particular issue addressed by the position. Without a position, action/advocacy cannot be taken.

Legislative Action

The LWVME closely monitors bills before the Maine Legislature and offers testimony on bills in priority areas. Advocacy work also includes observing government and legislative practices, monitoring election and campaign procedures, and identifying issues that may impact citizens’ right to vote or access to government.

LWVME works to forge relationships with representatives of both parties, and is a respected voice in Augusta. Each session, the [Advocacy Corps](#) tracks dozens of bills and maintains a steady presence at hearings and committee meetings, primarily those of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government and the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, because they hear the bulk of bills regarding voting, campaigns, and government

functions. The volunteer-led Advocacy Committee strives to educate and to hold Maine representatives accountable on behalf of LWV members and the citizens of Maine.

Principles

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that development of international organizations and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

LWVME LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY AREAS FOR ADVOCACY

The LWVME State Board has adopted the following advocacy priorities for 2019:

- Constitutional amendment to allow ranked choice voting in elections for governor and state legislators
- Establish a presidential candidate primary for the 2020 election
- Mandate that Maine joins the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact
- Full funding for Clean Elections
- A year-round ban on lobbyist contributions to the governor, legislators, constitutional officers of the state, and their staff
- Automatic voter registration
- Improvements in election transparency, audits of election processes, and consideration of post-election audits
- A constitutional amendment to allow true early voting

LWVME BACK-BURNER PRIORITY AREAS

The following issues may be taken up if a special opportunity presents itself and if it does not interfere with action in our priority areas:

- Civil Rights
- Gun Control
- Health Care
- Energy and the Environment
- Reproductive Choice
- Citizenship Education

These factors must be considered before taking up advocacy work:

- Timeliness — the likelihood of action
- Coverage — someone on the board who will monitor and alert
- Importance to members
- Impact — we can make a difference (partnerships, political climate)
- Alternatives — who else will step forward?

LWVUS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2019

The LWVUS Board is recommending state action in the following areas:

- Voter Protection and Voting Rights
- Election Administration Reform
- Redistricting and the Census
- Money in Politics
- Constitutional Convention

Responsibilities of the LWVME Advocacy Committee

The Advocacy Committee is a committee of the League of Women Voters of Maine. The chair of the committee must be a member of the League's state board.

The Advocacy Committee is responsible for the League's lobbying and advocacy agendas. Tasks of the Committee are designed to maximize the League's effectiveness in lobbying on and advocating for the priority areas designated by the state board.

LWVUS Action Alerts and Advocacy Priorities

The Maine League supports the national affiliate with in-state activities that support federal action on national priorities. The Advocacy Committee serves the board and the board president in the following ways:

- Helping the LWVME president draft or recruit drafts of letters to our Congressional delegation for her/his signature.
- Working with the Communications Committee to draft or recruit drafts of letters to the editor and OpEds.
- Working with the Communications Committee to draft and disseminate e-messages to prospects and members, as well as blog posts, Facebook posts, and tweets to followers.
- Drafting or recruiting drafts of articles for the *Maine Voter*.

Priorities

The Advocacy Committee facilitates a process by which the state board sets priorities on an annual basis or as needed from time to time:

- Making recommendations to the State Board regarding advocacy priorities for action on state and national advocacy agendas.
- Helping the State Board stay focused on high-priority items.

LWVME Advocacy

The Advocacy Committee is responsible for fulfilling the advocacy mission of LWVME:

- Recruiting, training, and supporting off-board volunteers for the Lobby Corps.
- Developing and maintaining expertise on our legislative priorities.
- Developing and signing off on LWVME legislative testimony.
- Serving as contact/clearinghouse for other groups working in the same areas.
- Monitoring bills before the Legislature for LWVME interest.
- Mobilizing members and the public when necessary.
- Developing our own legislation if/when appropriate.
- Reporting annually to the State Board and the membership on legislative activity on bills of interest to the League.
- When appropriate, developing a campaign strategy to achieve program wins in high priority areas.
- Designing the League's role for participation in partner-led campaigns.

Key to Abbreviations

FOIA – Freedom of Information Act

IRV – Instant Run-off Voting

LD – Legislative Document

LWVME – League of Women Voters of Maine

LWVUS – League of Women Voters of the United States

MCCE – Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

MCEA – Maine Clean Elections Act

MCEF – Maine Clean Elections Fund

RCV – ranked choice Voting