



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

PO Box 863
Augusta, ME 04332-0863

(207) 622-0256
lwvme@gwi.net

TO: The Honorable Senator John L. Tuttle, Jr.
The Honorable Representative Louis J. Luchini, Co-chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: March 27, 2013

RE: LD 1001 An Act To Improve Laws Governing Financial Disclosure by Legislators
and Certain Public Employees and Public Access to Information Disclosed

My name is Ann Luther. I'm a resident of Trenton. I work as a volunteer for the League of Women Voters of Maine and chair its Advocacy Committee.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people and that it should be free from undue influence, corruption, and the appearance of corruption. We support measures that encourage ethics in governmental, that promote an atmosphere of openness and transparency, and that give citizens confidence that public affairs are being conducted in the public's best interests. LD 1001 surely contributes to these goals, and the League urges that you vote Ought to Pass.

Disclosure is the most fundamental tool available to us for protecting against conflicts of interest and undue influence. Disclosure induces upright behavior – those who are asked to disclose are loathe to engage in activities that would be censured if known. And disclosure lights the way for future reform – without evidence, we lack the tools to know where enforcement needs to focus, much less the next wave of reform. For all these reasons, we support meaningful disclosure.

Of course, disclosure has its limits. If the disclosures are not timely or accessible, they do not contribute to any of our goals. For this reason, we also support the aspects of this bill that require electronic filing and online public access.

Furthermore, if we know that bad things are happening but lack enforcement tools to stop it, we citizens are likely to become more cynical than ever about politicians, government, and public service. Disclosure is not substitute for outright prohibitions and enforcement on activities that erode citizen confidence in government. For these reasons, we support additional measures that provide enforcement jurisdiction for the Ethics Commission over executive branch employees and that close the revolving door for both legislators and executive branch employees, as proposed in bills heard earlier this session.

But LD 1001 stands on its own and deserves your support. We urge you vote Ought to Pass on LD 1001.