



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Rodney Wittemore
The Honorable Representative Roland Danny Martin, Co-chairs
The Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: April 13, 2015

RE: LD 1103 – Resolve, To Study Understaffing in State Agencies

My name is Polly Ward. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am a resident of Freeport. I am here today as a volunteer member of the League's Advocacy Committee in support of LD 1103 - Resolve, To Study Understaffing in State Agencies

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization working in the public interest, one of a dwindling number of so-called "good government" organizations. The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, coordination among the different agencies and levels of government, and well defined channels for citizen input and review. This is a fundamental principle of the League. Our principles underlie all of our public policy positions. Our interest in this matter is in ensuring that government works both well and economically, and serves the needs of the people.

While we are not in a position to judge that state agencies are understaffed, like everyone who follows the news, we have observed many media reports over the years of staff cuts and the consequences of these cuts.

At the same time that positions, both vacant and filled, are being eliminated from state agencies, there has rarely been corresponding identification of tasks and duties that are no longer required to be performed. In fact, the Legislature often adds new duties to be performed. While each new task in itself may not be onerous, the accumulation of such tasks at the same time that staffing levels are declining may be overwhelming in certain state agencies and may place recipients of State services at risk.

Further, cutting of positions that have been vacant for a period of time may be shortsighted and hamper the ability of state agencies to carry out their current and future missions.

Positions that have been vacant for an extended period of time may be those that require highly qualified personnel. They are vacant not because they are not needed, but because it is difficult to recruit the highly qualified individuals sought for the positions, especially if the compensation offered is not competitive with private sector employment.

A lack of adequately trained ancillary or support staff further may complicate the delivery of essential State services, decrease productivity, and lead to lowered job satisfaction and retention of higher level staff.

A carefully crafted study with buy-in from affected personnel might include an assessment of employee recruitment, retention, and morale, along with risk management issues.

This resolve would enable the State to identify the staffing levels needed for state agencies to perform the workload assigned to them. It should result in a plan for the right-sizing of state agencies and an analysis of the real-world worth of the positions within them.

We encourage the Committee to vote *Ought to Pass* on LD 1103 – Resolve, To Study Understaffing in State Agencies. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this bill.