



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

PO Box 863
Augusta, ME 04332-0863

(207) 622-0256
lwwme@gwi.net

To: Senator Nancy B. Sullivan, Senate Chair
Representative Pamela Jabar Trinward, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs

From: Michelle A. Small, League of Women Voters of Maine

Re: Testimony in Favor of LD 1111, An Act To Promote Transparency and Accountability in Campaigns and Governmental Ethics

Date: April 6, 2009

My name is Michelle Small, and I live in Brunswick. I am the volunteer Treasurer of the League of Women Voters of Maine and a member of the League's all-volunteer lobby corps. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. I am here today to testify in Favor of the provisions of LD 1111, An Act To Promote Transparency and Accountability in Campaigns and Governmental Ethics, that would provide the Legislature and the public with more information about lobbyists.

Due to its concerns about citizens' rights, the League of Women Voters has for some time supported lobbying disclosure reform to provide information about the pressures exerted on the policy-making process and to guarantee citizens the ability to influence the process. Members of the Legislature and the public should have more information about lobbyists so they can fully evaluate where bills originate, how they are developed, and who is influencing the process. For that reason, the League of Women Voters of Maine supports the provisions of this bill that would require lobbyists to submit a digital picture and a list of the committees they intend to lobby and that would require the Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices to publish photographs of and additional information about lobbyists.

According to the August/September 2007 issue of LEGISBREIEF, a publication of the National Conference of State Legislatures, 11 states required registered lobbyists to submit photos with their registrations: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. According to the NCSL, only Georgia, Tennessee and Vermont posted these photos to a publicly accessible web site. The NCSL's listing is not exhaustive. For example, the Wisconsin State Accountability Board's Web site indicates that lobbyists in that state are required to submit photos to obtain lobbying licenses and indeed, photographs are available at their Web site. As another example, the California Secretary of State's Web site on lobbying activity also displays photographs of individual lobbyists.

Examining these state web sites, we find that the photo docket is more helpful when combined with other on-line searchable features, such as bills or areas lobbied, and agency or committee lobbied.

The League recognizes the concerns of some lobbyists that this bill could pose a safety risk to those who work on very divisive issues. Therefore, the League also supports the provision of LD 1111 that gives the Ethics Commission broad authority to waive the requirement to submit a digital picture.

The League also supported legislation proposed during the 123rd Legislature that would have required registered lobbyists to wear name badges while lobbying. We mention this in response to the discussion at last Friday's work session on the lobbyist photo requirement in LD 832. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 13 states require lobbyist name badges: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Carolina and South Dakota. In six other states, name badges are encouraged or provided but not required.