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To: Honorable Senator Nichi Farnham  
Honorable Representative Michael Beaulieu  
The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

From: League of Women Voters of Maine

Re: LD 1126, An Act To Require That the Governor Be Elected by the Ranked-choice Voting Method

Date: May 9, 2011

My name is Michelle Small, and I live in Brunswick. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Maine, and I am here as a volunteer to testify in Favor of LD 1126, An Act To Require That the Governor Be Elected by the Ranked-choice Voting Method.

The League of Women Voters of the United States, a nonpartisan political organization with 50 state Leagues and more than 800 local Leagues, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Following three years of study and discussion, the League of Women Voters of Maine recently reached concurrence with the League of Women Voters of Minnesota in favor of Ranked Choice Voting, also known as Instant Runoff Voting. Based on that position, the League endorses the election of candidates in single seat elections by a majority vote, if achieved through Ranked Choice Voting. Other state Leagues that support this election method are those in Arizona, California, North Carolina, Vermont and Washington.

Plurality voting, in which the candidate with the most votes wins, can be thorny in elections with more than two candidates. Voters may sometimes be reluctant to vote for the candidate they most strongly support for fear of facilitating the election of the candidate they most strongly oppose. The winning candidate may be one fervently supported by a minority of voters – albeit a winning plurality –

but lacking the broad support of a majority of voters. Ranked Choice Voting, on the other hand, encourages candidates to reach out to more voters, alleviates concerns about the “spoiler effect,” and guarantees the election of candidates who have majority support.

“Majority rules” has always been a basic tenet of democracies. However, the majority does not prevail when a plurality elects a governor. Thus, the League of Women Voters urges the Veterans and Legal Affairs to vote Ought to Pass LD 1126.