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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 1150, An Act To Improve the Administration of the Legislative Ethics Laws

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 support of LD 1150, An Act To Improve the Administration of the Legislative Ethics Laws. In particular, the League is in favor of granting the Ethics Commission the authority to investigate possible violations of legislative ethics on its own motion, without a complaint by a third party.

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.

For a democracy to work properly, the electorate needs to feel confidence in its representatives. To promote this confidence, representatives must be accountable to citizens and transparent in their operations. It is of the utmost importance that representatives refrain from behavior that calls into question their ability to conduct government business honestly and impartially.

The Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices is charged with investigating and making advisory recommendations concerning apparent violations of legislative ethics. Currently, only a third party may file a complaint with the Ethics Commission to launch an investigation.



<b>Commission</b>							
<b>Florida Commission on Ethics</b>		X	X	X	X		§ 112.324(1)
<b>Georgia State Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X		§ 21-5-6
<b>Hawaii State Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 84-31
<b>Idaho</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>Illinois Office of the Legislative Inspector General</b>		X					5 ILCS 430/25
<b>Indiana Lobby Registration Commission</b>		X	X	X	X		
<b>Office of the Indiana Inspector General and Indiana State Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 4-2-6-4
<b>Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 68b.32b
<b>Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 25-4160
<b>Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 6.686
<b>Kentucky Executive Branch Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 11A.080

<b>Louisiana Board of Ethics</b>	X	X	X				§ 42:1141
<b>Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 1013
<b>Maryland State Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 15-401
<b>Massachusetts State Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 268B Sec. 4
<b>Michigan State Board of Ethics</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 15.345
<b>Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board</b>		X	X	X		X	§ 10A.02
<b>Mississippi Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X		§ 25-4-19
<b>Missouri Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X		§105.957
<b>Montana Commissioner of Political Practices</b>		X	X	X	X		§ 13-37-111
<b>Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission</b>		X	X	X	X	X	§ 49-14,124
<b>Nevada Commission on Ethics</b>	X	X				X	§ 281A.440
<b>New Hampshire</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>New Jersey Election Law Enforcement</b>		X		X			

<b>Commission</b>							
<b>New Mexico</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>New York State Commission on Public Integrity</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 94-12
<b>New York State Legislative Ethics Commission</b>	No Response						
<b>North Carolina State Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X	X	§ 138A-12
<b>North Dakota</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>Ohio Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 102.06
<b>Oklahoma Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X	X	§ 257:30-1-4
<b>Oregon Government Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X		§ 244.260
<b>Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X	X	§ 1108
<b>Rhode Island Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 36-14-12
<b>South Carolina Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 8-13-20
<b>South Dakota</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 3-6-201 § 3-6-210
<b>Texas Ethics Commission</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 571.122
<b>Utah Independent</b>		X*	X*				JR 6-3-101

<b>Ethics Commission</b>							
<b>Vermont</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>Virginia</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>Washington State Legislative Ethics Board</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 42.52.410, LEB Rule 1B
<b>Washington Public Disclosure Commission</b>	No response						
<b>West Virginia Ethics Commission</b>		X	X	X	X	X	§ 6B-2-3a
<b>Wisconsin Government Accountability Board</b>	X	X	X	X	X		§ 5.05(2m)(c)2.a
<b>Wyoming</b>	No ethics commission						
<b>Total:</b>	26	44	42	39	37	20	

\* The Utah Independent Ethics Commission requires that two or more members of the House of Representatives file a complaint against a Representative; two or more members of the Senate file a complaint against a Senator; and permit two or more registered voters to file complaints against members of either the House or Senate.