



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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

DATE: February 4, 2009

RE: LD 129 Resolve, Directing the Secretary of State To Conduct a Pilot Program for Early Voting for the November 2009 Election (President Mitchell, Sponsor)

Good afternoon, I'm Ann Luther, the co-president of the League of Women Voters of Maine. The League of Women Voters offers testimony NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST the Resolve on Early Voting.

The League is a grassroots membership organization. Advocacy on behalf of the League can only be taken when it represents the consensus of League members. The League does not now have a position on early voting. The League has not yet seen definitive data on the effects of early voting on voter participation, either in general or for particular populations.

Here in Maine, because we have so-called "no fault" absentee voting, the growing trend to vote early by absentee ballot has created challenges for municipal election officials. True early voting offers an opportunity to streamline the existing process and make it more secure.

However, if early voting is provided, we do support requirements to ensure that the entire early voting process provides fair and equal voting opportunities. Some things to consider include: nondiscriminatory geographic placement of polling places; equitable allocation of voting systems, poll workers, and other election resources; and making sure that voters participating in early voting do not face more restrictive rules than those voting by absentee ballot or on Election Day.

Recognizing that this resolution calls for a pilot program only, we want to ensure that early voting in Maine meets the same high standards of election conduct that is the case for regular elections in Maine.

Ann Luther, Co-president
League of Women Voters of Maine

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Founded in 1920, the League of The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major political policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.