



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Colleen M. Lachowicz
The Honorable Representative Anne P. Graham, Co-chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: March 13, 2013

RE: LD 587 An Act To Designate Election Day as an Official State Holiday

Good afternoon, my name is Ann Luther. I serve on the state board of the League of Women Voters of Maine and chair its Advocacy Committee. I'm a volunteer with the League, and I live in Trenton. The League of Women Voters offers testimony neither for nor against LD 587.

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental right of citizenship, and we have been working for more than ninety years to defend and protect that right. Among other things, we work for measures that improve voter turnout.

We applaud the spirit in which this bill is brought forward, and we join the sponsor in seeking ways to improve voter turnout. But we have not been able to find any evidence that an Election Day holiday would work to accomplish that goal, and there is some evidence that it would have no effect. A recent study by Henry Farber, Professor of Economics at Princeton University, concludes, "Having an election holiday, by itself, is not an effective strategy to increase voter turnout."¹

Maine has already implemented and defended one of the most effective measures available for encouraging high voter participation: that's Election Day registration. There may be other steps we can take, including removing further barriers to registration and promoting a voting culture. We cannot see anything wrong with making Election Day a state holiday, but we cannot find any evidence that it will accomplish improvements in voter turnout.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ann Luther
Advocacy Chair
League of Women Voters of Maine

¹ Henry S. Farber, Princeton University, "Increasing Voter Turnout: Is Democracy Day the Answer?" CEPS Working Paper No. 181, February 2009, <http://www.princeton.edu/ceps/workingpapers/181farber.pdf> [as of March 11, 2013]