



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: Senator Nichi Farnham, Senate Chair
Representative Michael Beaulieu, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: March 28, 2011

RE: LD 659 An Act to Repeal the Maine Clean Election Laws (Rep. Libby, Sponsor)

Good afternoon, my name is Ann Luther, and I'm here today as a volunteer member of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Maine and the chair of the League's Advocacy Committee. The League of Women Voters urges you to vigorously OPPOSE repeal of the Maine Clean Election Act.

The League of Women Voters believes that methods of financing political campaigns should to ensure the public's right to know; combat corruption and undue influence; enable candidates to compete equitably for public office; and allow maximum citizen access to the political process. The League believes that public financing of elections is the best approach for accomplishing these goals.

The League of Women Voters has been a champion of campaign finance reform at the state and federal levels for more than three decades. The League is proud to have been a founding member of the broad-based, nonpartisan coalition that drafted the Maine Clean Election Act and collected 65,000 signatures in 1995 to put the citizens' initiative before the voters.

The Maine Clean Election Act was a landmark reform that appeared on the ballot in 1996, a Presidential election year when Maine ranked #1 nationwide in voter turnout. This measure passed with 56% of the vote. More Maine voters (320,755) voted "yes" on this ballot question than have voted for any winning gubernatorial candidate in the last 20 years. We believe that failure to retain Maine's public financing system would be a breach of public trust and an enormous loss to the public good.

Maine's public financing system is a shining example of best government practice to be emulated in other states around the country and at the federal level. The annualized cost of public financing in Maine is truly modest – about \$2 per person per year – especially in light of the fundamental public benefit it provides.

The League urges you to OPPOSE LD 659.

Ann Luther
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.