



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 848 Resolve, Directing the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election
Practices To Study Modifying the Maine Clean Election Act (Sen. Patrick, 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 SUPPORT this Resolve.

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 helped draft the Maine Clean Election Act. In 1995, we helped field dozens of volunteers to collect signatures to put the citizens' initiative on the ballot. We helped lead the campaign for passage of the Act. We have been a governing member of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections ever since, with our members serving as co-chairs (now co-presidents) of the coalition for the entire duration of the post-referendum period.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is invested in this law. We feel we have an ownership stake in the law, and we believe it is fully constitutional. We successfully defended the MCEA in court following its passage, and we hope we will be vindicated this year by the U. S. Supreme Court, which is hearing arguments on aspects of a similar law in Arizona even as we speak.

However, should the Court issue a ruling in the Arizona case that adversely affects our law, we – the League of Women Voters and our members – want a chance to engage in a public process to develop those remedies that are most carefully tailored to preserve the fundamental values that the Act bestows on the citizens of Maine. We want “the fix” to work in the public interest and, at the same time, to be administratively practical, attractive to candidates, and constitutional. It must also be timely.

Sitting here today, we cannot foresee what the Supreme Court's decision will be in the Arizona case. The time to consider alternatives is after we know what problem, if any, we have to solve. When that day comes, we want to be involved in the solution. The process outlined in this Resolve will provide that opportunity. The Resolve also provides a timeline that allows any solution to be brought to the full legislature before the 2012 elections are fully underway.

The League urges you to SUPPORT LD 848.

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.