



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

PO Box 863
Augusta, ME 04332-0863

(207) 622-0256
lwvme@gwi.net

TO: The Honorable Senator Lisa T. Marraché
The Honorable Representative John L. Patrick, Co-chairs
The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs

RE: LD 1008 An Act To Improve the Legislative Ethics Laws
Sponsors: President Edmonds and Speaker Cummings

The League of Women Voters of Maine (“LWVME”) is pleased to submit the following testimony concerning LD 1008. The League believes that legislative ethics laws are fundamental to balancing the pressures exerted by special interests on the state policy-making process. Ethics laws create an atmosphere of transparency and openness that guarantee citizen access, prevent corruption and undue influence, and safeguard our citizens’ ability to influence the legislative process. Because LD 1008 will strengthen Maine’s ethics law, we urge you to vote “ought to pass.”

The League particularly supports the provision in LD 1008 that provides a method for members of the public to bring an ethics complaint against a legislator. As we stated in testimony before the Presiding Officers’ Advisory Committee on Legislative Ethics, “the public should be permitted to file complaints because political, collegial and other practical reasons are likely to create major constraints against one Legislator filing a complaint against another Legislator. In addition, information concerning a conflict of interest may be more readily known by a member of the public.”¹

We are, however, concerned about proposed §1013(4) which provides, among other things, that “Any person who knowingly breaches the confidentiality of a complaint investigation commits a Class D crime.” We understand the proposed language to mean that a person who files a complaint against a Legislator could not discuss the fact that the complaint had been filed. This blanket prohibition would also deny that person, and perhaps also the target of the investigation, the right to discuss a complaint with a spouse, an attorney, or anyone else assisting them in preparing to appear before the commission on the matter of the complaint. We urge the Committee to delete this portion of §1013(4).

That said, because LD 1008 clarifies and strengthens Maine’s ethics law, we respectfully suggest that this Committee vote “ought to pass” on LD 1008.

Ann Luther, President
League of Women Voters of Maine
30 April 2007

¹ League of Women Voters of Maine testimony presented in writing to the Presiding Officers’ Advisory Committee on Legislative Ethics, July 2006.