



TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: January 27, 2025

RE: LD 13: An Act to Provide Funds Necessary for the Production and Delivery of Election Materials by the Secretary of State and to Reconvene the Working Group to Study Polling Places at Schools

Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica,

My name is Al Cleveland. I am here today as the Advocacy Director of the League of Women Voters of Maine. The League is testifying in support of LD 13.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years to encourage informed and active participation in government, to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

The Office of the Secretary of State requires reliable, sustainable funding to print ballots and election materials. This bill would provide the necessary changes to the Office of the SOS to consistently fund the cost of election materials.

It should never be an issue whether a policy initiative advances simply because we don't have the money to print an extra ballot page: the fiscal note for ballots or ballot pages should not be the determinant. For example, when the League was working to pass semi-open primaries, in 2021, the bill ended up with a fiscal note because if more people vote, we'd have to print more ballots. The Office of the SOS should not be put in a position to question or weigh the impact of its support for a bill because the length of the ballots or number of voters would increase costs. More specifically, it's a perverse disadvantage for a bill to have as a perceived downside that it aims to increase voter participation. Nor should the Office be required to make up these ballot expenses after the fact, depending on how many candidates or questions appear on the ballot in any given year, or based on anticipated voter turnout. Requiring the Office to trade these expenses off against other budget needs continually short-changes the needs of the Elections Division to perform critical functions.

The League supports a formal working group to study the role of polling places at schools. Schools are often centrally located in communities, close to where voters live, making them ideal polling places. However, we understand the impact of school closure and the hardship this imposes on teachers and parents. Polling places are pillars of our community and deserve the deep attention that a working group can bring to bear.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.