



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

DATE: February 10, 2025

RE: LD 309: An Act to Allow a Political Party to Determine How That Party's Nominee Is Selected in a Primary Election

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Good afternoon Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

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 opposition to LD 309.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is Maine's leading voice for a wide array of measures that would improve and strengthen our democratic process, including ranked choice voting.

The League of Women Voters in Maine traces its roots back 100 years to the struggle for women's suffrage. To this day, our advocacy continues our long history of work to guarantee the rights of citizens to vote, to secure our election administration with modern best practices, to implement reforms that enhance voter turnout and participation, and to protect our elections against the undue influence of big money.

On March 7, 2011 – just over fourteen years ago – LWVME issued its policy position supporting ranked choice voting in Maine. We support RCV because it:

- ✓ Gives voters more meaningful choices: Ranked choice voting supports a diversity of views among candidates.
- ✓ Eliminates spoilers and strategic voting: Ranked choice voting allows voters to support their favorite candidate without worrying that they might split their votes with like-minded voters and unintentionally help elect the candidate they like the least.
- ✓ Reduces negative campaigning: Voters are less likely to rank a candidate highly who is negative toward their preferred candidate.
- ✓ Reduces the influence of money in politics: By making negative advertising less effective, ranked choice voting reduces the need for, and influence of, money in politics.

All of these considerations apply in primary elections.

From a practical standpoint, it's better for voters and for election officials that primary elections be conducted on a consistent basis year after year. RCV is the system Maine people have chosen.

But over and above that, qualified parties enjoy many systemic advantages in our political structure. While Maine has many unenrolled voters and a long history of supporting independent candidates, the fact remains that the winners of these primary elections – candidate selection contests – most often prevail in the general

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election and go on to serve as the representatives of Maine people in our highest elected offices. When elected, they serve all the people, not just those who voted in the primary, not just the members of their party. Maine has an obligation to its citizens to conduct those elections to the highest standards, including using RCV.

We urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 309.

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