



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 349 - An Act to Repeal the Laws That Allow Same-day Voter Registration

Good morning 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. Protecting the right of every citizen to vote and encouraging citizens to exercise the right to vote is key to our democracy and central to the mission of the League of Women Voters. Because LD 349 would have the effect of limiting citizen access to the ballot box, we urge that you vote “Ought Not To Pass” on this bill.

Since 1973, Maine has successfully allowed citizens to register to vote on Election Day. Today, we are joined by 22 other states and the District of Columbia.¹ In 2011, the Maine legislature tried to repeal same-day registration (SDR), but a successful peoples veto campaign rejected the repeal and sustained SDR with a nearly 60% majority, demonstrating overwhelming support for SDR.

Same-day registration eliminates unnecessary barriers to citizen participation in the election process and increases voter turnout. Because of SDR, Maine consistently ranks near the top of voter participation in general elections. We were 1st in 2022, 3rd in 2024. Maine and other SDR states generally have a voter participation rate that is 3 to 6% higher than states without same-day voter registration.² Same-day registration may be the single most important practice that states can adopt to improve voter turnout.

Given the benefits of same-day registration in increasing voter turnout and ensuring access to the ballot, arguments to overturn this long time practice would have to be compelling.

Those arguments against same-day registration, however, generally rest on two points, which are not compelling :first, the increased possibility of fraud because a person might attempt to register at more than one location on Election Day. Such claims have proved to be entirely unfounded in Maine. With our Centralized Voter Registration system, it is virtually impossible to register and vote more than once in a Maine election without detection.

The second argument against same-day registration is that it gives one party an advantage over the other. However, there is no evidence to support this. While evidence suggests that SDR benefits young voters, those

¹ <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/same-day-voter-registration>

² <https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/same-day-registration>

citizens whose housing changes frequently, and minority groups, that has not translated to a partisan advantage. In fact, research suggests that implementation of SDR in Wisconsin may have contributed to a decrease in the Democratic vote share.³

Voter awareness of registration deadlines is by far the highest in states with same-day registration, as opposed to states that have a registration deadline in advance of Election Day, where voters are more likely to be ignorant or mistaken about the deadline.⁴ Since so many people in Maine are aware that we have same-day registration, reversing our current law would undoubtedly have the unfortunate effect of disenfranchising some voters who will miss the new deadline because they believe they can register at the polling place on Election Day. Passage of this law would inevitably mean that many Maine citizens would be caught unawares and therefore deprived of one of the most fundamental rights of a citizen: the right to vote.

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine, I urge that you vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 349.

³ Ibid.

⁴Thomas E. Patterson, *The Vanishing Voter: Public Involvement in an Age of Uncertainty*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), p. 134-136. Excerpt attached. Thomas Patterson is the Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press at the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University. The 2000 Vanishing Voter Project conducted more than 80,000 interviews during the 2000 Presidential campaign.