



TO: The Honorable Joseph Baldacci
The Honorable Suzanne Salisbury, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: February 10, 2025

RE: LD 53: An Act to Establish the November General Election Day as a State Holiday

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Al Cleveland. I am here today as the Advocacy Director of the League of Women Voters of Maine.

The League of Women Voters has been working for more than 100 years to strengthen voter turnout and remove barriers to voting for all citizens. The League is a nonpartisan membership organization with no consensus position on this issue. The League is testifying neither for nor against LD 53.

Improving voter turnout and removing barriers to voting are goals that we work for year-in and year-out. We thank Rep. Poirier for bringing attention to this issue. While we support the underlying principles behind this bill, removing barriers to voting and increasing access to the ballot box, we are not convinced that establishing Election Day as a state holiday would benefit voter turnout and have concerns it could increase barriers to some workers.

We know that voter turnout in Maine is lowest in districts with the highest poverty rate¹. There are any number of practical reasons for this. Workers in low-wage jobs, and those working multiple jobs, may not have the luxury of time off. Maine is one of 21 states that do not have laws requiring companies to give employees time off to vote.

It's important to consider whether closure of state and local government offices could have unintended consequences by depriving low-income Mainers of resources that could help them vote that day. If schools close, parents would have the added burden of child care on Election Day. It's unlikely that health care, service, and retail businesses would close for a state holiday, so many low-wage workers would probably not have the day off.

¹Democracy Maine, Maine: The State of our Democracy; April 2020. p. 25. Accessed at https://issuu.com/jen-democracymaine/docs/2020_march_state_of_maine_democracy_web

Enacting a time-off-to-vote law is a better way to support voters in the workforce. Maine is a leader in voter turnout and in protecting voter rights, but this is one area where we lag behind. Twenty-nine states plus the district of Columbia have laws requiring employers to provide time off to vote. Of those 29 states, 21 require that the leave be paid.²

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

²Guerin, Lisa. "Taking time off to vote . NOLO,
<https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/taking-time-off-voting-jury-29708.html>