



TO: The Honorable Louis Luchini
The Honorable Chris Caiazo, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: April 26, 2021

RE: LD 1375 - An Act To Permit Online Absentee Voting

My name is Anna Kellar. I'm a resident of Portland. I am here today as the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Maine. While we appreciate the spirit with which the sponsor brings this bill forward, we are here today to testify *in opposition to* LD 1375.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For 100 years, Leagues here in Maine and across the country have worked to educate and register voters, eliminate obstacles to voting, and make government at all levels more accessible and responsive to citizens. The League supports full voter participation by all eligible American citizens, and we oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizens' constitutional right to vote. At the same time, the League believes that elections should be secure, accurate, recountable, accessible, and transparent.

The main thing is this: all online voting systems are vulnerable to hacking. Cybersecurity experts have identified numerous technical vulnerabilities to malicious intrusion¹, with Andrew Appel, Professor of Computer Science at Princeton and a leading expert on election hardware going so far as to say that all computer election systems can be hacked to transfer votes from one candidate to another.² Frankly, there is some question whether it is possible to develop a system that is both secure AND private. People will often present secure online banking as an analogous situation, but in addition to examples of compromised financial transactions, banking is qualitatively different. Each party in a banking transaction expects to have verifiable evidence of transaction details, including the identity of each party. With voting, we don't want either party to have access to this level of detail.

Ideally, given the state of current technology, we would have no online voting at all. Uniformed Service & Overseas (USOCA) Voters in Maine and most other states utilize online transmission

¹ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-voting-machine-security-20181029-story.html>

² <https://freedom-to-tinker.com/2016/09/20/which-voting-machines-can-be-hacked-through-the-internet/>

of ballots. (We do not read this bill as proposing true “internet voting” -- voting on a computer screen without a paper ballot. Rather this bill proposes electronic ballot retrieval and transmission by email similar to our UOCAVA system.) Beginning in 2020, the same online mechanism was made available to disabled voters for the first time during the COVID emergency in an effort to provide these voters an opportunity to vote safely by absentee ballot while preserving the privacy of their vote. We wish that all of these voters could vote securely. There are presently no good alternatives for UOCAVA voters that ensure timely delivery and receipt of paper ballots through international mail. For disabled voters living in Maine, we would like to consider alternatives that would provide these voters the same ballot security that other voters enjoy. One idea might be to provide mobile voting stations featuring the Accessible Voting System (AVS) that would travel to the qualified voter in the days or weeks before an election. We encourage the Secretary of State to continue evaluating new remote-voting systems as opportunities become available to improve privacy and security for voters who require this option.

In the meantime, while our current deployment of online ballot transmission is not ideal and not entirely secure, it is somewhat protected from malicious intrusion by the fact that the numbers are quite small. From what we can tell, in the November 2020 election, fewer than 4,000 UOCAVA and disabled-voter ballots were transmitted electronically —less than 1% of the total. Making online voting more prevalent makes this a bigger target and increases the risk to our elections. Expansion of online voting should not be considered except in cases of extreme exigency.

We look forward to the day when technological advances might provide a platform for secure and convenient online voting. That day is not today. We urge you vote ought not to pass on LD 1375.