



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

DATE: February 22, 2021

RE: LD 321 - An Act To Limit State Legislators to a Lifetime Total of 16 Years of Legislative Service

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

My name is Penelope Hamblin. I'm a resident of South Portland. I am here today as a volunteer on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in opposition to LD 321.

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.

Because we believe that term limits adversely affect the representativeness, accountability, and effective performance of the Legislature, we have long opposed term limits. We worked in opposition to term limits when this issue came before the citizens of Maine in 1993 and again in 2007. Our original objections have only been bolstered and reinforced by Maine's experience since term limits went into effect in 1996.

Term limits violate the ultimate right of voters to choose the representatives who best serve the needs of their district and the State of Maine. By disqualifying experienced, knowledgeable, and capable legislators, term limits make our government less responsive to voters, less accountable, and less effective.

By imposing a lifetime cap on the number of terms served, LD 321 would further erode the accumulation of expertise in the legislature. The value of a long-serving legislator is up to the voters to decide. Researchers at M.I.T. found that legislative effectiveness "rises sharply with tenure" due to on-the-job learning. They found no evidence that effectiveness declines with tenure, even out to nine terms.¹

¹Padro' i Miquel and Snyder, Legislative Effectiveness & Legislative Life. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Economics Working Paper Series; July 2004. p.2
https://ia800203.us.archive.org/7/items/legislativeeffec00padr/legislativeeffec00padr_bw.pdf

Mandatory retirement for experienced representatives would further dilute the effective performance of the Legislature and weaken the Legislature's role in crafting sound policy solutions to complex problems.

Under our current system of term limits, the policy expertise formerly reposed in Legislative Committees has been ceded to Executive Branch department heads, lobbyists, and partisan professional staff. In addition, term limits have effectively restructured the bicameral relationship between the House and the Senate, with the Senate becoming much more influential. Because many senators previously served in the House, they are more experienced and power has migrated to the Senate.²

We believe that term limits should be repealed. This bill takes us in the opposite direction, doubling down on a bad idea and making it worse. We urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 321.

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

² For more on the evidence regarding the effects of term limits, see:

- *First in the Nation: Term Limits and the Maine Legislature*, Richard Powell and Rich Jones, National Conference of State Legislatures Joint Project on Term Limits, 2004, p. 6, available at <https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/jptl/casestudies/Maine-FinalReportv2.pdf>
- *Changing Members: The Maine Legislature in the Era of Term Limits*, by [Matthew C. Moen](#), [Kenneth T. Palmer](#) and, [Richard J. Powell](#), 2005, Lexington Books
- "Minority Party Gains under State Legislative Term Limits," Richard J. Powell. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, [Vol. 8, No. 1 \(Spring, 2008\)](#), pp. 32-47 (16 pages)