



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

DATE: March 3, 2021

RE: LD 451 - An Act To Remove the Party Designation from Return Envelopes for Absentee Ballots for the General Election

LD 456 - An Act To Protect Voter Identification by Prohibiting a Voter's Party Designation from Appearing on Absentee Ballot Envelopes

Good morning Senator Luchini and Representative Caiazzo.

My name is Debra McDonough and I am a resident of Scarborough. I am here today as a volunteer with the League of Women Voters of Maine to testify *in support of* LDs 451 and 456. These bills ask that Maine adopt an established best practice by ensuring that in a general election, a voter's party affiliation can not be easily determined from their absentee ballot return envelope. We would also support an amendment extending this provision to the outer mailing envelope.

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.

The League advocates for full voter participation by all eligible American citizens, and we oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizens' constitutional right to vote. The League also believes that elections should be secure, accurate, recountable, accessible, and transparent.

Maine has some of the best election laws in the country. We have enjoyed well-run elections and very high voter participation. We should be clear that we are supporting these bills, not because we believe that Maine's elections have been compromised but because, as advocates for the public interest, it is our obligation to engage in an ongoing evaluation of election administration, looking for ways to close vulnerabilities, while limiting disruptions to election administration and avoiding new barriers that might impede eligible citizens from exercising their freedom to vote.

We are supporting LDs 451 and 456 because printing a voter's party designation on an absentee ballot envelope in a general election represents a vulnerability. It is best practice to include party affiliation on absentee ballot envelopes during primary elections. Just as voters who present in person for a primary

election are asked to state their party affiliation out loud to ensure that they get the right ballots, party affiliation should continue to be printed on absentee ballot envelopes in a primary election.

But in a general election, the situation is entirely different. Party affiliation is irrelevant, and election security experts overwhelmingly recommend against any public indication of voter's party registration in this context. We do not ask voters to announce their party affiliation when they present to vote in person for a general election, and we should not print their party affiliation on the ballot envelope when they vote absentee.

We find that these bills would effectively address an incidental election vulnerability — without disrupting election administration or impeding our freedom to vote. We urge your support.

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