



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

DATE: April 21, 2021

RE: LD 1013 - An Act To Provide Absentee Ballot Tracking for Maine Voters

My name is Will Hayward. I'm here today as the Advocacy Program Coordinator for the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 1013.

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.

Online absentee ballot tracking is an essential voter service. Voters want and need to know when their absentee ballot has been mailed out to them, when their completed ballot has been received and accepted by the town clerk, and whether there were problems at any stage of the process. Ballot tracking systems reassure voters that their vote really did count.

Until last fall, Maine was one of a handful of states that did not offer online ballot tracking. Weeks before the November general election, then-Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap released a new ballot-tracking tool. The pandemic was raging, the postal service was undergoing widespread disruptions of service, and tens of thousands of voters were casting absentee ballots for the first time. The League enthusiastically recommended the tracking tool, and we're aware of many voters who used it successfully. When I dropped my ballot off at the drop box here in Portland, I used the ballot tracker to confirm later that day that it had been received and accepted.

The League closely followed the rollout of the ballot tracking tool. In rare instances, the tracker did not display accurate or clear information. Despite these glitches, the ballot tracker helped to ease the workload of overstretched town clerks. In most cases, use of the ballot tracker represented one less telephone call to check on the status of a ballot. Considering the strained resources of election officials at the time, they deserve credit for finally making this service available to Maine voters.

Online ballot tracking should be part of much-needed modernization of Maine's voter services. The key to modernization is passage of LD 1126, which would establish Online Voter Registration. This would allow the Secretary of State to develop an online portal where voters could register, update their address, get election information, apply for an absentee ballot, and track their ballot through the system.

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

