



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Lisa T. Marraché
The Honorable Representative John L. Patrick, Co-chairs
The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs

RE: LD 434 An Act To Allow a Voter To Preserve the Confidentiality of That Voter's
Presence at the Polls Sponsor: Sen. Plowman

The League of Women Voters of Maine (“LWVME”) is pleased to submit the following testimony concerning LD 434. The League supports the implementation of voting systems and procedures that are secure, accurate, and accessible. Because LD 434 would compromise the ability to challenge a voters’ eligibility to vote and thus prevent fraud, we urge you to vote “Ought Not To Pass” on this bill.

Maine election law requires that a voter’s name, and residence if requested, be called out by the election clerk in a “loud clear voice.” We understand the purpose of this requirement is to provide the right of any voter to challenge another voter’s right to vote. Such challenge “must be made at the time the voter being challenged is checking in with the election clerk in charge of the incoming voting ... but before that voter enters the voting booth.”¹ The only way this can be possible is if a person’s name is called out in a loud, clear manner so that others in the voting area can issue a challenge. For example, if someone knew the person was using a false name, or is no longer a resident of the community, they could issue a challenge.

The difficulty may be that voters do not understand why their name is being called out. This problem was born out by an informal survey of Hancock County town clerks conducted by our local Downeast League after last November’s election. Many clerks reported that voters did not understand why their names were being called out. Perhaps this is a matter of voter education. One town clerk suggested that a large-print poster, developed by the Secretary of State’s Office, should be placed at every polling station. The poster should explain specific voting place rules including why voters’ names are called out, as well as the roll of poll watchers and other helpful information.

We realize the importance of the citizens’ views of the voting process and understand that the polling place experience can impact voters both at the time they vote and in their future inclination to vote. But we are uncertain what legitimate concern on the part of prospective voters can be served by masking their identity at the polling place. While the League believes that it is essential to protect the privacy of a person’s actual vote, we believe it is equally important that the right to challenge is preserved.

We respectfully suggest that this Committee vote “ought not to pass” on LD 434.

Ann Luther, President
League of Women Voters of Maine
12 February 2007

¹ Title 21-A §673(1)(B)