

129th Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 29

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Introducing LD 1988, “An Act To Prohibit the Distribution of Deceptive Images or Audio or Video Recordings with the Intent To Influence the Outcome of an Election.”

Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I’m Senator Rebecca Millett, and I represent South Portland, Cape Elizabeth and part of Scarborough. I’m here today to introduce LD 1988, “An Act To Prohibit the Distribution of Deceptive Images or Audio or Video Recordings with the Intent To Influence the Outcome of an Election.”

Today, we’re lucky to live in a society with technological advancements that past generations could have never imagined. Breaking news from across the globe is at our fingertips in mere seconds; scientists have eradicated some of the most deadly, contagious diseases; And we can keep up with a friend or family member’s every move while they travel. While many of these advancements have benefited society, however, there are also some that threaten to wreak havoc in our world.

The use of artificial intelligence to alter an image or video to appear as though its real, commonly referred to as “deepfake,” is one of these advancements that could have disastrous effects for our democracy. This technology has the capability to make it appear that elected officials, for example, said something that in reality, they did not. We have already seen examples of doctored images and videos affecting public officials. Recently, the likes of President Obama¹ and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi² were targeted with altered media. With how fast news travels the web, the danger of these doctored images or videos being shared millions of times and being taken as real makes deepfake even more dangerous.

It’s not hard to imagine how destructive this technology could be in an election. LD 1988 would prohibit the distribution of altered images or videos of a candidate with the intent to deceive the public within 60 days of an election in which that candidate is on the ballot. The exception here

¹ <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/national-international/arizona-gop-congressman-tweets-doctored-photo-of-obama-doubles-down-when-told-its-fake/2197329/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/05/23/faked-pelosi-videos-slowed-make-her-appear-drunk-spread-across-social-media/>

is that if such material is created and distributed, it must be labeled as an image, video or recording that has been manipulated.

As the campaign cycle continues to ramp up as we approach November, security in our election will remain a top issue. This bill would take a proactive approach in addressing the use of deepfake technology to influence an election.

Thank you for your time, I will take any questions you may have.