



## Department of the Secretary of State

Shenna Bellows  
*Secretary of State*

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*Maine State Archivist*

### JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State

Department of the Secretary of State

March 7, 2023

Testifying in favor

L.D. 78, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to Article X of the Constitution of Maine Regarding the Publication of Maine Indian Treaty Obligations"

And

L.D. 578, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine Concerning the Publication of Maine Indian Treaty Obligations"

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Shenna Bellows and I am the Secretary of State. I am speaking today in strong support of L.D. 78 and L.D. 578 as the keeper of the records of this state and as a defender of the Constitution.

First, as the Secretary of State I play a role in the reprinting of the Maine Constitution. Per Article 10, section 6 of the Maine Constitution, the Chief Justice of the Law Court is ordered to arrange the Constitution every 10 years. This process sometimes begins with the Secretary of State sending the Chief Justice a letter notifying them of any new resolutions enacted by the legislature incorporating all new amendments and arrange the Constitution. After that is done, the draft is then sent to the legislature for approval. Once approval is voted upon, the Constitution is sent to the Secretary of State to be printed and preserved at the Maine State Archives. I take the role I play in this process very seriously.

However, I also have another role and that is to uphold the oath I took when I assumed office. It is an oath to defend the Constitution of the State of Maine – and this includes section 5 of Article X of the Maine Constitution. It is imperative to a fair and free democracy that our Constitution be printed in its entirety. To have any provision of the Constitution not printed but in full legal effect is antithetical to the entire premise of a transparent government. Making our state records, including the entire Maine Constitution, more easily accessible to the public and the people we serve is a cornerstone for an open and credible democracy.

The Constitution is the bedrock upon which all Maine's laws are built. No part of that Constitution should be hidden from the Mainers whose lives it affects every single day.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.