



Laura Supica

34 Highland Avenue

Bangor, ME 04401

(207) 717-5702

Laura.Supica@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

February 6, 2023

Representative Laura Supica Introducing

LD 233, An Act to Ensure Efficiency in Petitions Reviewed by the Secretary of State by Clarifying Deadlines Related to Those Petitions *Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs*

Sen. Hickman and esteemed members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am Representative Laura Supica and I am honored to represent part of Bangor here in the Maine Legislature. Today, I present to you **LD 233, An Act to Ensure Efficiency in Petitions Reviewed by the Secretary of State by Clarifying Deadlines Related to Those Petitions.**

I was asked by the Department of the Secretary of State to submit this bill on their behalf and as a former staff member of the department, with firsthand knowledge of all the work that happens behind the scenes, I was willing and proud to do so.

I am passionate about election integrity and our democracy. The citizen-initiated petition process is an important way for Mainers to have their voices and votes heard. However, the integrity of that process depends upon ensuring that the state workers who review those petitions have the time and ability to do so carefully while performing all of their other constitutionally required duties.

I know from my time in the department and in speaking with Secretary Bellows that the current law under which petitions must be processed is not workable. What's most concerning is what happened this fall when election staff were required to certify two petitions while administering the election and recounts. Secretary Bellows can provide more detail. I am also deeply concerned by the number of overtime hours (more than 2,600 hours combined) worked by state election workers in 2022.

This bill would reduce overtime hours, save the state money and increase election integrity. This proposal, which also has a constitutional amendment companion that I have submitted separately and that is still being drafted, would change the constitutional deadline to verify petitions from 30 calendar days to 30 business days. Under this bill, there is no change in the process for petitioners or clerks and instead this bill would ease workflow demands for the elections division staff.

You will hear more from Secretary Bellows about this bill, the current process of validating petitions and the issues her staff is facing. I hope you all join me in voting ought to pass.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to take any questions you may have.