

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government: my name is Shaun Donnelly, I live in Arundel, and I am testifying in favor of LD 1155, an Act to Address Legislative Salaries.

We are fortunate to live in a state with a great tradition of citizen legislators, which I believe has been strengthened by both our system of clean elections campaign funding and legislative term limits. But running for office and serving in the legislature remains an opportunity only attainable to those who can afford it, which excludes many of the voices that need to be heard the most in our government.

I have had the opportunity to volunteer on several legislative campaigns, and I have seen how much time it takes just to get elected. So many untold hours spent knocking doors, attending events, filling out candidate surveys, and soliciting campaign contributions. Even with a team of volunteers, no one puts in more time than the candidates themselves. And that's just the time it takes to get elected to office. Then come the demands of traveling to Augusta, doing important committee work, being present for every vote, and responding to constituent calls and emails back home.

Over the past six years I've knocked on hundreds of my neighbors' doors, and one of the things that I hear most often from voters is that they wish they saw more people like themselves in office. Folks who understand how stretched they feel working multiple jobs while raising kids and saving to buy a home. Finding and recruiting candidates to run is increasingly a challenge in these times when asking someone to take leave from their full time job and put their careers on hold could mean serious financial hardship.

I don't believe that anyone who runs and gets elected to the Maine Legislature is doing it for the paycheck, nor do I believe that this bill will change that. In my view, the increase this bill proposes still undervalues the commitment it takes to do the people's work. But this bill would go a long way to balancing the equation and open the door to public service for many less fortunate Mainers. Public service is an enormous responsibility, but also a great honor and a privilege that all of our citizens who seek it should have access to.

My thanks go to you and all of your colleagues for the work you do every day for the State of Maine. I hope today that you will extend that opportunity to more of our fellow Mainers and vote "ought to pass" on LD 1155.

Sincerely,
Shaun Donnelly
Arundel

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