

James Waite
OLD ORCHARD BEACH
LD 175

I'm contacting you in support of LD 175 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Ensure That Only Citizens of the United States May Participate in Elections.

Voting is an essential marker of full community membership in a democratic republic. It is the ultimate reflection of the mutual consent between prospective Americans and the American national community by which immigrants become full, legal, and recognized members. In choosing to enter into the naturalization process, immigrants demonstrate an interest in becoming full members of the American national community as well as a willingness to spend the time and effort necessary to do so. In accepting an immigrant as a full citizen at the end of that process, the community affirms that full membership. In linking the vote to full membership, the community further affirms that new members have shown the requisite attachment and commitment to be trusted with helping to make community decisions. The Constitution, the Congress, and the courts have enshrined voting as a central, core, and indispensable element of American citizenship and democracy. If advocates' proposals for non-citizen voting are implemented, new non-citizen voters would not have to demonstrate an understanding of the English language including the ability to read, write, and speak words in ordinary usage in the English language. They will not have to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, principles and form of government of the United States. They will not have to demonstrate that they are of good moral character by not, for example, having been convicted of a felony. They will not have to take an oath of allegiance to the United States and renounce allegiance to any foreign country. And they will not have to have been in residence in the United States for five years and for a minimum of 30 consecutive months before naturalization. These requirements are, of course, those that accompany the naturalization process by which legal immigrants become citizens. Abandoning all of them in order to give non-citizens the right to vote puts advocates in the paradoxical position of requiring far less for non-citizen than for citizen voting. It is additionally odd, because all of the citizenship requirements - knowing English, knowing about American history and government, having good moral character, having spent an ample amount of time in the United States in order to better know and understand it, and being willing to commit oneself publicly to their new home while symbolically placing their allegiance to their old country in a position of lesser prominence would seem to be basic, appropriate, and legitimate requests to make of those who say they want to share and shape the American community's destiny through the vote.

I urge the committee to vote "Ought To Pass" on LD 175