



Maine Town & City Clerks' Association

Local Government Center • 60 Community Drive
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Date: January 30, 2025

To: Senator Craig Hickman, Senate Chair
Representative Laura Supica, House Chair
And members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

From: Patti Dubois, Chairperson, Legislative Policy Committee
Maine Town and City Clerks' Association

Re: LD 158 – An Act to Direct the Secretary of State to Establish a Date Each Year for
Voting by Absentee Ballot

Position: OPPOSE

The Maine Town & City Clerks' Association opposes LD 158 and we thank you for the opportunity to outline our points for your Committee.

Our members expressed concern about establishing an exact date for clerks to begin issuing and accepting absentee ballots. Since the printing and shipping of ballots is mostly out of the control of the clerks, as well as the Secretary of State (to some degree), members worry that they would be in violation of state law if they were unable to meet the established deadline. In addition, members suggested that the USPS may be inundated with mail if all 500 municipalities were mailing out their absentee ballots on the exact same day. Members expressed worry that if a deadline can't be met, whether that would add to distrust of elections.

In-person absentee voting varies from town to town, based on space availability within town and city offices. Many municipalities conduct in person absentee voting in another area, or another building. These off-site locations allow for additional staffing, availability of voting booths, and additional parking for voters. Many of these off-site locations are staffed for a week or two immediately preceding the election, not for the full 30-day period.

Clerks wondered whether setting the date when absentee voting would begin in January was prudent, since candidates and questions are not fully known at that time. Setting an arbitrary date in January removed the flexibility needed when things happen, such as delayed ballot delivery, damaged ballots, etc.

Municipalities that also have local elections on the same date must adhere to deadlines found in other sections of statute that may not align with a newly established absentee ballot date. Double mailing of absentee ballots (state mailed separately from municipal) should be avoided at all costs.

Representing Over 400 Municipalities



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Current law requires clerks to begin absentee voting as soon as they receive the state ballots, which can be no later than 30 days before election day. This allows time for clerks to receive their ballots, check them for content and quantity, and methodically enter the data into CVR and issue the ballots. We also have to ramp up our operation to receive the voted ballots back and organize voting at nursing facilities. Allowing clerks the flexibility to begin absentee voting when they're ready helps make the administration of these tasks manageable.

Voters can request their ballots up to three months before the election. Members pointed out that the current law allows for issuance of absentee ballots no earlier than 45 days before the election and not less than 30 days before the election which has worked well.

The Maine Town & City Clerks' Association appreciates the opportunity to share its testimony with the Committee. Should any questions arise, please feel free to contact me at 207)680-4210 or by email: pdubois@waterville-me.gov .