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Bangor
LD 1356

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Good morning, Senator Hickman, Representative Stupica and Committee members. My name is Geoff Gratwick. I live in Bangor and had the privilege of serving Bangor and Hermon for 8 years in this body. I count it as one of the great adventures of my life.

I am here to speak in favor of LD 1356, Congressional District voting

In 1820 Maine seceded from Massachusetts. We started off by splitting our electoral votes because that was what Massachusetts had been doing. In 1828 we switched to the more commonly used winner-take-all system. More than a century later, in 1969, Democratic state representative Glenn Starbird proposed a return to the older split-vote method. He was concerned that Maine's electoral votes could be awarded to a candidate who received just 34 percent of the state's popular vote. (This was a potential outcome of the three-way race in the 1968 presidential election, which pitted Richard Nixon against Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace). Starbird introduced a bill that was unanimously passed by Maine's Republican-controlled legislature. State legislators approved Starbird's bill under the assumption that other states would follow suit. But 20 years passed before another state made the change. Nebraska adopted the split-vote system in hopes of attracting presidential candidates to a state they usually ignore because it's so reliably conservative. In 1968 Nebraska had mattered.

The reasons for keeping our current system of Congressional District voting are:

1.) It is a way to make sure everyone's vote is important. The 2nd district can be conservative and not have its choice of President negatged by the liberal 1st district'

2.) It keeps Maine as a wild card in elections – it can't just be counted on by liberals or potentially conservatives. Presidential candidates will keep coming here.

3.) It decreases partisanship. Partisanship is the enemy of good government, of compromise. Congressional District voting is not perfect but helps. Representative Golden, like him or not, is an example of a bipartisan legislator.

4.) It is unlikely that there will be a state trend to split the electoral college ticket. Were this to be so and were NY or Texas to split their votes then whichever party had split their large state votes would then most certainly lose the next election. The conclusion: Maine and Nebraska will continue to have an outsized importance in national presidential elections.

4.) If Nebraska eliminates split voting it will become a reliable republican bastion. Maine must counterbalance such a change to keep the national playing field level.

5.) Our current system benefits Maine Republicans because the 2nd district is conservative. It does not benefit Democrats. If we abolish our current system, it may benefit the democrats nationally. But philosophically I am opposed to change. I value different opinions. Everyone must have a voice. That is what I learned in 8 years here in the Legislature.

6.) Finally, the Congressional district voting is a way to push back against bullies. I come from a family of teachers and know all about school yard bullies. Right now, we have a Republican bully. In another 4-8-? years we could easily have a Democratic bully. Maine and Nebraska need to preserve their independent voice. The U.S. depends on us.

I urge you to pass LD 1356. Thank you.