

In Support of LD 1579, "An Act to Abolish School Budget Referenda"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am writing as an individual and not as a member of any group or organization. I urge you to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1579.

Here is why:

It has been my experience for several years now that the school budget hearing, usually held in May, is not always very well attended, yet this is where the voters hear the detailed information about the budget that the school board is putting forth; they can ask questions and they can hear debate on the various components. This is where voters can become well-informed. Those that support the budget need to attend in order to pass the budget at the hearing for it to go on to the next step, the ballot referendum. Anyone who may ultimately oppose the budget can just wait until June where they may simply vote down a budget without necessarily being very informed, if at all.

Of course, voters could also attend, or even watch from home in many cases, the numerous school board meetings where the development of the budget—a careful, lengthy process—is discussed prior to adoption by the school board which moves it to the public hearing vote in May. They could also attend, or watch, the frequent school board meetings to learn all that is happening in the schools—the great work being done and the many accomplishments of students. But people, understandably, have very busy lives, so typically attendance is low at best.

Of course a lot is done by school boards to try to encourage the community to attend and to provide voters with information. But still, unfortunately, many voters are not aware of all you would hope they might be when they go to vote in June. If ballot referenda are eliminated, my hope would be that voters would indeed attend budget hearings, be well-informed, and would support the budget since they would know where, why, and how the money will be spent and they would be aware about the careful process that took place in order to provide for the needs of students for them to be successful while also balancing that with fiscal responsibility.

I urge you to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1579.

Grace Leavitt
Raymond, ME