



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1668:

“An Act Regarding the Voting Requirement to Extend the Date for Adjournment of the Legislature”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and the distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 1668, “An Act to Remove the Supermajority Requirement for Extending the Legislative Session.”

This bill would dismantle a key structural safeguard that has, for decades, promoted bipartisan cooperation and accountability within the legislative process. Current Maine statute requires a two-thirds vote of each chamber of the Legislature to extend the session. LD 1668 would replace that threshold with a simple majority, effectively allowing the party in power to unilaterally extend the legislative calendar without any input or consent from the minority party. This is not a modest procedural tweak, but a fundamental change to how our government shares and exercises power.

The two-thirds requirement exists for good reason. It ensures that the decision to prolong the legislative session, which has implications for taxpayer resources, legislative workload, and political dynamics, is made only with broad agreement from across the political spectrum. It compels both parties to negotiate in good faith, prioritize, and operate within a finite window. Removing this provision would encourage procrastination, partisan overreach, and a lack of urgency in conducting the people’s business.

Recent legislative history in Maine illustrates the danger of weakening bipartisan constraints. For multiple budget cycles, we have witnessed the erosion of consensus-building, with the majority increasingly turning to procedural shortcuts to pass state budgets without support from the minority party. This has fractured trust, discouraged collaboration, and led to rushed, omnibus bills crafted behind closed doors. LD 1668 would further that imbalance by removing one of the last remaining levers incentivizing cross-party cooperation and negotiations.

It’s worth remembering that structural rules in a legislative body are not meant to empower the majority party, or any party for that matter. Instead, they ensure the process is inclusive, deliberative, and accountable regardless of which party is in control. Simple majority rule in every circumstance might seem efficient in theory, but in practice, it stifles debate and concentrates power. Supermajority thresholds, especially



in matters like constitutional amendments, taxation, and session extension, exist to promote legitimacy and stability in lawmaking. They ensure that durable decisions reflect a broader consensus than a bare majority can provide.

This is especially critical in a state like Maine, where political control of the Legislature shifts and the people expect their representatives to work across the aisle. Preserving the supermajority requirement for session extensions protects the minority's voice and ensures that decisions about the length and structure of the legislative calendar remain balanced and transparent.

Moreover, this bill invites abuse. Under the regime proposed by LD 1668, the majority party could continuously extend the legislative session to accommodate its policy priorities, even after the statutory deadline has passed, leaving minority lawmakers with few tools to check runaway agendas. The Legislature was never meant to operate on an open-ended calendar dictated by partisan interests.

If this bill intends to make legislative operations more flexible, that goal should be approached through mechanisms that build consensus and accountability, not through lowering the bar for decision-making. The supermajority threshold doesn't prevent necessary extensions—it simply ensures that such extensions reflect the agreement of both sides of the aisle. That is not an unreasonable requirement, but a prudent safeguard against politicized legislative time and misuse of taxpayer funds.

In short, LD 1668 undermines the principles of cooperation, balance, and public accountability that our legislative structure was designed to uphold. It may appear technical, but its implications are far-reaching. It would make the government less responsive, less inclusive, and less restrained.

Maine Policy Institute strongly urges the committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1668 for these reasons. Thank you for your time and consideration.