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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

Testimony of Senator Richard A. Bennett

In Support of LD 233, "An Act to Ensure Efficiency in Petitions Reviewed by the Secretary of State by Clarifying Deadlines Related to Those Petitions"
6 February 2023

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor LD 233, An Act to Ensure Efficiency in Petitions Reviewed by the Secretary of State by Clarifying Deadlines Related to Those Petitions.

This legislation is an election integrity bill that also preserves the constitutionally-protected citizen initiative process. In simple terms, it gives the Secretary of State more time to validate signatures, which is a large undertaking that usually happens around election time, when the Secretary of State's office is busiest. While the staff has managed to validate signatures in the past, it has caused a great deal of stress and forced staff to work countless hours of overtime. Depending on the number of initiatives, signature validation can be a huge undertaking.

The citizen initiative process is an important tool for the Maine people to have their voices heard. Allowing the Secretary of State's office more time to validate signatures will not take away from this process, but will allow the office the necessary time to do the work without overwhelming staff.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.