



Pinny Beebe-Center
Senator, District 12

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Pinny Beebe-Center introducing LD 577 "An Act to Increase Availability of Election Information on Local Government Websites"

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

March 2, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Nangle and Representative Stover.

My name is Pinny Beebe-Center. I'm the state senator for District 12, which includes all of Knox County except Washington and Isle au Haut. I am the sponsor of LD 577, An Act to Increase Availability of Election Information on Local Government.

The goal of LD 577 is to increase the availability of official online information about local elections for all Maine voters, regardless of where they live. Democracy – self-government – depends on an informed electorate. Voters must be able to access information about when and where elections are happening and what is being voted on. Given how prevalent the internet and social media have become as the go-to source for any and all information, it is critical that official information about every election be readily available online.

In working with the League of Women Voters of Maine to develop this bill, I wanted to ensure that any requirement to post official local election information online be paired with adequate support for the town clerks to meet that requirement. Representing a district of mostly small towns, I am well aware of the workload for town clerks and the lack of resources for digital infrastructure in many Maine municipalities. Having the Secretary of State's office implement a system whereby town clerks could submit official local election information to be posted somewhere on the Secretary of State's website would solve the issue of some towns not having the existing infrastructure or technical capacity to post official local election information online themselves. This could be seen as a matter of equity: no Maine voters should be penalized in their efforts toward civic engagement if they live in a town with limited resources as a result of its small population.

Together with the League of Women Voters of Maine, I have been in discussion with the Secretary of State's office regarding what it would take to implement such a system. We understand that it would require additional resources for the Secretary of State's office, though we are optimistic that a delayed implementation date and the possible use of the Central Voter Registration system as a means for collecting the information could minimize the disruption and long-term staffing needs involved. We appreciate the Secretary of State office's feedback which has helped shape this amendment.

We have worked together to bring forward the amendment attached, which I hope will get your favorable consideration. I have put the proposed amendment below this testimony.



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Title 21-A, §611. Online access to election information

The Secretary of State shall provide a website or equivalent means by which voters may access information about upcoming state elections, and local elections to the extent that the municipality provides information in accordance with Title 30-A, section 2506. The information must allow voters to look up the polling location for the address at which they are registered.

Unallocated language: The Secretary of State shall hire three staff members: a web manager and two digital navigators in order to carry out the responsibilities of this provision. Implementation for this provision will take place no sooner than January 1, 2026.

Title 30-A, §2506. Online access to election information

The municipal clerk shall make available to the Secretary of State information about upcoming local elections for the purposes of Title 21-A, section 611.