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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State
Department of the Secretary of State

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Testifying in opposition

L.D. 1991, “An Act Regarding Gubernatorial Primary Elections”

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Shenna Bellows. I am the Secretary of State and the chief elections officer. I am speaking today in opposition to L.D. 1991.

While we appreciate that we are not in a gubernatorial election year, our main priority for 2024 is to focus on election administration and implementing all of the new policies that were enacted last year. Therefore, we cannot support any election related changes that go into effect this year because it would take away the elections division’s focus from more critical and immediate responsibilities and tasks. This committee has heard many times about the immense work our elections division do – even in “off” election years – proofing ballots, answering clerk queries, testing tabulators and the list goes on. If there were to be any changes in election law this year, all of these things would need to be put on hold, which in an election year as important as this year, cannot happen.

We have some concerns about the practicality of the proposed measure as well but given the important work our professional elections staff are engaged in for preparations for 2024, we do not have adequate resources to fully assess the consequences of such a dramatic change to Maine’s election laws.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.