



TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: March 6, 2024

RE: LD 332 - An Act to Provide Funds Necessary for the Production and Delivery of Election Materials by the Secretary of State and to Reestablish the Working Group to Study Polling Places at Schools

Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica.

My name is Will Hayward. I am here today as the Advocacy Program Director on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in support on LD 332.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years to encourage informed and active participation in government, to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

LD 332 addresses an ongoing and unnecessary problem facing Maine elections: the uncertainty of cost around ballot materials. This bill establishes a permanent fund for election materials, providing assurance that funds exist for the backbone of our elections. Maine elections use the gold standard for secure elections — paper ballots — and the availability of funds for these ballots and associated materials should never be in doubt.

In previous years, the League has observed the problems that the lack of a dedicated fund creates in two ways. The first of these is in the appropriations process. Because there is no dedicated fund, legislation which will result in more ballots being printed always receives a fiscal note and heads to the appropriations table. In past years, we have seen this process endanger legislation that would increase voter turnout, such as the semi-open primaries legislation. This seems perverse to us: increased voter turnout should not be debatable solely because it costs a little more. Establishing a permanent fund would mitigate this barrier. Additionally, legislation which sends a question to the voters, such as a constitutional amendment or a bond question, also receives this fiscal note. Again, the cost of ballots strikes us as an unnecessary roadblock for this sort of legislation, which is otherwise deemed worthy of voter consideration.

The second problem that we've observed is that the lack of a dedicated fund makes it more difficult for the Secretary of State's office to budget accordingly when costs change. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this played out when supply chain issues led to dramatically increased costs for ballot paper, generating unforeseen doubt about where the funds for ballots would come from. A permanent fund reduces the

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impact of these events and would allow the Secretary of State's office to more easily focus on its primary duty: administering our safe, secure, and accessible elections.

LD 332 creates predictability that will improve the legislative process around voting bills and the administration of our elections. For these reasons, we urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.