



Department of the Secretary of State

Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions

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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

January 27, 2025

Testifying in favor

L.D. 13 “An Act to Provide Funds Necessary for the Production and Delivery of Election Materials by the Secretary of State and to Reconvene the Working Group to Study Polling Places at Schools”

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Shenna Bellows and I am the Secretary of State and the chief elections officer. I am speaking today in support of L.D. 13.

Section one addresses the reoccurring challenges we see within elections regarding funding. Supply chain and staffing issues have increased the cost of materials for ballots, printing, postage, and other election costs in addition to the delivery of such materials, which in turn has increased the cost of statewide elections dramatically in recent years. Indeed, since Senator Hickman introduced a similar bill last legislature, we have seen further increases. The second ballot in the November 2024 election – the referendum ballot – cost \$408,431.41. The detailed quote from the printer is included at the end of this testimony.

Unfortunately, while a fiscal note of sorts is included on all bills and bonds that may go to the voters, that is not the type of fiscal note that results in any funds being appropriated to a Department. I learned this when we reached out to the Comptroller’s office last summer for the funds from each of those pieces of legislation, so that we could pay for the printing and shipping of ballots. We were told no funds would be coming. Instead, we were forced to once again get creative with how we paid our bills, and we made it work, but this is why I appeared before this committee and the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee last week requesting this funding.

L.D. 13 offers a new path forward for future years. Establishing a fund to receive ongoing appropriations and allowing any remaining balances to be carried forward, will ensure predictability and stability when it comes to election material expenses incurred, instead of this office repeatedly needing to ask for supplemental appropriations to pay for elections we are legally required to hold.

Additionally, having spoken with Senator Hickman since the introduction of this language, I understand that he is amenable to an amendment to the bill updating the amount to be transferred to the fund biannually to a more up-to-date \$410,000. I appreciate his flexibility.

Section two of the bill re-establishes a working group to, among other duties, investigate the feasibility of using schools as voting places around the State of Maine. This is not a conversation we are new to – in fact we’ve been convening meetings on this topic for a couple years now – but we have not gotten to a point of having a conclusion to present to you and would like to continue this work in a formal manner. These are weighty matters. Our lack of conclusions at this point is not due to a lack of effort, but simply that there are no easy answers. There are several important and laudable goals from all, which are sometimes in friction with each other.

Section two would allow a formal working group to continue to meet through the rest of this year and provide a report to you in December.

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

**DS200 Ballot Printing Price Quote for the State of Maine
November 5, 2024 Referendum Election**

Ballot Type (Camera Ready)	Ballot Size	Paper Weight	Paper Color	Cost for Official Referendum Ballots	
				Per ballot cost	Extended Cost (per ballot cost x est. 1,003,500 Ballots)
Referendum Ballots	8 ½" wide by 17" long	As provided in DS200 specifications	White	\$.37	\$371,295.00
				Cost for Sample Referendum Ballots	
				Per ballot cost	Extended Cost (per ballot cost x est. 12,000 Referendum Samples)
Sample Ballots	11" by 17"	50 or 60 lb offset	Green	\$.49	\$5,880.00
Total Cost (Total of Extended Cost of Official plus Extended Cost of Sample Ballots)				\$377,175.00	
Note: Contractor will be responsible for shipping official ballots and sample ballots. Generally, absentee and election day ballots for DS200 towns are shipped separately, but state will be open to ballots for hand-count municipalities being sent in one shipment.				Estimated Shipping Costs	
				\$31,256.41	
Grand Total Project Cost (Total of Printing Cost of Official plus Estimated Shipping Cost)				\$408,431.41	