



Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

Department of the Secretary of State
Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions

Julie L. Flynn
Deputy Secretary of State

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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

February 26, 2025

Testifying against

L.D. 316 “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Create Equity in State Senate Representation”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Shenna Bellows, I live in Manchester, and I am the Secretary of State. I am speaking today against L.D. 316.

We oppose L.D. 316 as a matter of policy because it would give some Mainers considerably more representation in the Senate than others. The more than 300,000 Mainers in Cumberland County would have the same number of Senators as the less than 17,000 Mainers who live in Piscataquis County. Right now each State Senate district has about the same number of people, and changing to a two Senators per county apportionment would not be equitable or wise.

We also oppose L.D. 316 because of the burden that would be placed on the Division of Elections. The Division would be forced to re-do the senate districting in the Central Voter Registration system on a very fast turnaround. January 1, 2026 is when candidates may begin collecting signatures for ballot access for party primaries. That means that redistricting would need to happen in the time between when the November 4, 2025 Referendum Election is certified (November 24, 2025, barring any recounts) and January 1, 2026. Post-election season is already a busy time in the Elections Division and we also often receive citizen initiative petitions around then and there are a number of state holidays. The additional work of redistricting would require staff to work substantial overtime.

They would need to do this work to be ready for the January 1 deadline for candidates. But given that the Legislature will not have convened for the Second Regular Session in order to pass the new districts called for in this Constitutional Amendment, they would be doing the redistricting and distribution of petitions to candidates when the new districts are not actually law yet. It is also very likely that L.D. 316 would be challenged in court, leading to great confusion in 2026 as to which potential constituents candidates can collect signatures from in order to get on the ballot, and which candidates voters will see on their ballots when they go to vote.

Finally, given the likelihood of a couple citizen initiative questions going to the ballot this November, as well as the numerous Bond Issues and Constitutional Amendments being proposed in the Legislature this year, it is possible that we will need additional funds to run the election this fall, in order to get all of the questions before the voters. The cost of the second ballot in November 2024 was over \$408,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.