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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State  
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Testifying against

L.D. 944 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Improve Representation and Simplify Legislative Redistricting"

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 testifying against L.D. 944.

Rather than simplifying legislative redistricting, as the title of the bill states the aim of the legislation to be, L.D. 944 would inject confusion and delays into the redistricting process.

Maine has some of the best redistricting policies in the nation. Voters, lawmakers and election officials know that the process is fair, efficient, and the number of districts has been constant for many years. Not only do I not see a need to upend that system by injecting a variable number of House districts, I worry that adding this variable – and the delays it would cause – would make Maine voters less trustful of our system.

Even with the pandemic-driven delays to the release of census data, and the subsequent delay in the 2021 redistricting process, Maine led the nation in that redistricting cycle, completing the process efficiently and largely without partisan rancor or fanfare. The proposed Constitutional Amendment in L.D. 944 would add a new variable into that process which may upend it.

The bill also does not answer the inevitable question of how to determine the number of districts within the proposed range. What is the mechanism to increase the number of seats or reduce them? Who gains representation and who loses? Our original state constitution in 1820 stated the House of Representative would consist of between 100 and 200 seats, with a specified process for determining that number. This was accomplished locally when most Maine town had much fewer residents, and even fewer who were eligible to vote. The electoral landscape of modern-day Maine has greatly changed in our 205 year history. The inconsistency of changing seat numbers, and therefore changing districts, is difficult for voters to keep track of and would require new software programming of our elections systems each session.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and I encourage you to vote ought not to pass on this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.