



TO: The Honorable Joseph Baldacci
The Honorable Suzanne Salisbury, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: March 26, 2025

RE: LD 944 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to
Improve Representation and Simplify Legislative Redistricting

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government.

My name is Debra McDonough, and I am a resident of Representative Warren's district in Scarborough, and I want to thank her for taking on this technical bill. I'm here today to testify on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine, in support of LD 944.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working since 1920 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 nor oppose any political party or candidate.

LD 944 was designed to enable Maine's next redistricting commission to deliver maps with nested districts, joining twenty-four other states where the number of House seats divided by the number of Senate seats is a whole number¹. As you might expect, the details vary by state. In Maryland, nested districts are prescribed by the State Constitution, with exactly three "Delegates" per Senate seat². The Nevada constitution is less prescriptive, restricting the total number of legislators to 75, and requiring that "the number of Senators shall not be less than one-third nor more than one-half" of the total³. The ratio wouldn't have to be a whole number, but in the current Nevada legislature, each Senate district contains exactly two house districts. Others have nominally nested districts, with a few bobbles here and there, presumably responding to other redistricting priorities. The proposed amendment would establish constitutional guidelines that remain well within the norm.

¹ <https://www.ncsl.org/resources/details/number-of-legislators-and-length-of-terms-in-years>

² <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/43const/html/03art3.html>

³ <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Const/NVConst.html#Art15Sec13>

I've experienced this inequity first hand, as coastal Scarborough has been one of these small 'overlap zones,' for three cycles now. I happen to live right near the Senate district line, such that sometimes I've been in the small part, needing separate networks to work with my Senator and my Representative. Currently, I'm in the larger part and my advocacy work is much simpler.

This bill provides an opportunity to eliminate this inequity statewide. Our Constitution already permits "an odd number of Senators, not less than 31 nor more than 35." The proposed amendment uses parallel language to permit "an odd number of Representatives, not less than 151 nor more than 155." This would enable the next redistricting commission to produce a single legislative map with 31 Senate districts, each divided into exactly five House districts for a total of 155.

While the bill in front of you today was designed to provide for more equitable representation across the State of Maine, the use of nested districts would also reduce the administrative load on election officials. Each House/Senate combination requires a separate ballot style, with a separate scanner configuration and a separate deck of test ballots. Representative Warren's district on the east side of Scarborough, is split between Senate districts 29 and 30, and requires two ballot styles. Representative Gatine's district, which includes the western part of Scarborough, actually overlaps with four Senate districts, and so requires four separate ballot styles. A map with fully nested districts would significantly reduce the number of ballot styles associated with each House District.

If this amendment is passed, first by the Legislature and again at the ballot, the League will join with interested legislators and citizens to ensure that the next decennial Redistricting Commission has access to the testimony associated with this bill, so that they recognize the opportunity to proceed with nested districts.

I hope that you will join us in supporting LD 944.