



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Dan Shagoury introducing
**LD 1148, An Act to Improve Access to Absentee Ballots for Municipal
Elections for Uniformed Service Voters and Overseas Voters**
Before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I am Representative Dan Shagoury, and I represent House District 55 - the communities of Hallowell, Manchester and West Gardiner. I come before you today to introduce **LD 1148, An Act to Improve Access to Absentee Ballots for Municipal Elections for Uniformed Service Voters and Overseas Voters.**

A constituent came to me with a problem. Her daughter, Kate, was studying in England and wanted to vote in the state and local elections in Hallowell, Maine. Kate requested a ballot from the Secretary of State's Office, and received only the state ballot. She was surprised that all she got was the state ballot – she wasn't informed that you have to request municipal and local school district ballots directly from your home community. Apparently this is a fairly common occurrence, and as a result a fair number of people overseas miss out on voting in their local elections.

Kate was able to work things out with the City Clerk in Hallowell to get her a local absentee ballot in time, but this prompted her and her family to ask me if we could come up with a better, simpler way that would help ensure overseas and uniformed voters can vote in municipal and local school district elections. After some discussions with the Secretary of State's Office, we came up with the idea in this bill.

This bill directs municipalities to send a copy of their local ballots to the state, then when the overseas voter requests a ballot from the Secretary of State's office they are sent both the state and local ballots. This is not only easier for the overseas voter, who only has to send one request, it is also easier for the municipal clerks, who only have to send one ballot to the Secretary of State. This saves them the time and expense of processing lots of ballot requests from overseas voters.

Of course this will only work when local elections coincide with state-wide elections, but when they line up it will be a much more convenient process for both the overseas voter and the municipal clerks.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you on this bill. You will be hearing from the Secretary of State's Office after me, and they can provide you with more detailed answers, but I will be glad to attempt to answer any questions.