JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State
And Emily Cook, Deputy Secretary of State
Department of the Secretary of State

April 28, 2025

Testifying neither for nor against

L.D. 1690 "An Act Regarding Artificial Intelligence in Campaign Advertising"

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Shenna Bellows, I live in Manchester, and I am the Secretary of State. I am testifying neither for nor against L.D. 1690.

One frustration that we hear over and over from voters, especially as campaign advertising periods pick up, is an inability to tell what is true and what isn't. The increased availability of artificial intelligence to create realistic-seeming photos and videos quickly and cheaply will only supercharge these fears.

We're already seeing this happen. Two days before New Hampshire's presidential primary last year, a robocall went out to thousands of voters. The message featured an AI-generated voice similar to then-President and candidate Joe Biden and falsely suggested that voting in the primary would preclude voters from voting in the November General Election.

Election misinformation has already been a problem, With the increased accessibility of AI tools to campaigns or rogue actors, we do not see that the issue will be diminishing anytime soon.

As the provisions of L.D. 1690 impact the Maine Ethics Commission rather than the Department of the Secretary of State and the Elections Division, we are neither for nor against the bill itself. As an issue that needs addressing, however, we are glad to see the Maine Legislature will be considering the right way of taking on this problem.

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