



TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: May 2, 2025

RE: LD 1446: RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Lower the Voting Age to 16 Years of Age

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs.

My name is Anna Kellar. I am here today as the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Maine. The League is in support of LD 1446.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years 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 or oppose any political party or candidate. After careful study and in keeping with our core mission of protecting and expanding voting rights, LWVME believes that voting in Maine elections is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed to Maine citizens 16 years of age and older.

In 2021 two bills were introduced in the Legislature to lower the voting age, but neither passed. LWVME had no established position on the issue at that time, so we were unable to advocate either for or against those proposed bills. However, those bills and their failure to pass sparked a youth-led campaign and ensuing conversation across the state. Given the interest of our youth members and our increasing awareness of this emerging movement, the LWVME Board proposed a study on lowering the voting age in Maine for statewide elections. At the 2021 State Convention, the proposal was accepted by a vote of member delegates, a study committee was formed in March of 2022, and after following LWVME's protocols, a Study Report¹, was produced in 2023. Members reviewed and evaluated the study, and reached consensus to support lowering the voting age to 16.

It's true: surveys show that large numbers of Americans do not support lowering the voting age. Indeed many of our members shared the public wariness of this change until they evaluated the research available and considered the arguments. The research evaluated by LWVME members as a part of the study process refuted many of the underpinnings of this lack of support.

Among the arguments that our members found persuasive were:

¹League of Women Voters of Maine, 2023, "Voting Age Study: Lowering the Voting Age to 16"
https://www.lwvme.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/2023_April_Voting%20Age%20Study_WEB.pdf

- Voting age has been set arbitrarily and has changed over time.
- Sixteen- and 17-year-olds are capable and contributing members of society; they are often working, paying taxes, and of course, operating potentially dangerous pieces of machinery in the form of motor vehicles.
- If young people become eligible to vote at a time when they are in a stable environment of family and school, rather than in a time of transition to college, work, or military service, they will be more likely to be supported in registering to vote and exercising their right for the first time.
- Research has shown that people are more likely to become engaged and lifelong voters if they vote in the first election in which they are eligible to do so.
- Lowering the voting age to 16 will allow for hands-on civic education in our high schools and encourage civic engagement by our young people, which will ultimately strengthen our democracy and our society.
- Other countries, such as Scotland, and municipalities such as Tacoma Park, Maryland, have lowered the voting age with success.

Our members also considered arguments against lowering the voting age and found them not just unpersuasive, but lacking. For example, the arguments regarding possible lack of capacity or cognitive development were similarly used against women's suffrage and could be used to challenge the rights of voters at the other end of the age spectrum. Other arguments regarding lack of knowledge, apathy, and susceptibility to pressure to vote a certain way by friends or family can be applied to voters of any age.

For all of these reasons, the League of Women Voters of Maine strongly supports LD 1446 and strongly encourages the Committee to do the same.