



SHENNA BELLOWS
SECRETARY OF STATE

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT
OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE

**TESTIMONY OF
SHENNA BELLOWS, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

Before the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and Veterans and Legal Affairs

February 24, 2026

L.D. 2212, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026.

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Shenna Bellows, and I am the Secretary of State. I am here today to present testimony in support of those items presented in the 2026 Supplemental Budget for the Department of the Secretary of State.

Department information begins on page **A-113** of the **Budget Document**.

Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions 0692

The Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions is comprised of three divisions. The Division of Elections and the Administrative Procedure Act is our state's guardian of democracy, overseeing all state and federal elections for the State of Maine. The Division of Election Audits and Training is responsible for safeguarding voter confidence in our elections through election auditing and training. The Division of Corporations, UCC and Commissions serves as a repository for all records relating to business and nonprofit entities as well as all liens filed on personal property under the Uniform Commercial Code and oversees notaries public, boards and commissions for the State of Maine.

There are 4 General Fund initiatives:

Initiative 1 Under the program 0692, the first initiative on Page A-113 provides for the transfer of funding for one Public Service Coordinator I position and related All Other costs from the Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions (CEC) to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

program within the same funds to align funding with operations. The net request of funding for this initiative is zero.

Currently the position for the Executive Director of the Women's Commission is in the structure of the CEC, as well as the All Other funding for the Commission, even though the work of the Commission is entirely separate from the work of the CEC. Making this transfer would align the funding streams with the reality of the already-separate work functions of these two entities within the Department.

You will notice this initiative corresponds to an inverse initiative on page A-114, which moves the allocated funds from this program into Z455 for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Passage of both initiatives is necessary to effectuate the transfer successfully.

Initiative 2 Under the program 0692, the second initiative on Page A-113 provides funding for the approved reclassification of 1 Office Specialist I position to Office Specialist II position to account for the additional responsibilities of the position and includes retroactive pay to July 2024. The Personal Services request is **\$9,540 in FY2025-26 and \$5,999 in FY2026-27**. This employee-initiated reclassification was approved on December 16, 2024, and applies retroactively to the date the reclassification request was submitted by the employee in July 2024.

Initiative 3 Under the program 0692, the third initiative on Page A-113 provides funding for leases of voting tabulators. The All Other request is **\$792,000 in FY2026-27**.

The state has one central lease of tabulators, which are then put into use in municipalities all around the state. Approximately 95% of Maine voters cast ballots in municipalities which use tabulators to count votes. (The remaining 5% are in municipalities which count by hand.) The tabulators currently in use around the state are 14 years old and nearing the end of their useful life. While they still accurately count votes, we have seen bottlenecks at tabulators in recent elections because of the time it takes to feed multiple large ballots into each tabulator and because some municipalities do not have enough tabulators for the number of voters in their jurisdiction. The new statewide lease for tabulators and the accessible voting system devices is going through the RFP process now, but we already know that we need to lease more tabulators, and that each tabulator will be more expensive than the current ones. This All Other request is to make up that cost differential.

Initiative 4 Under the program 0692, the fourth initiative on Page A-113 provides funding to align allocation with actual receipts. The All Other request is **\$314,167 in FY2026-27 and \$314,167 in FY2027-28**.

This initiative item simply updates our current allocation of funds from the Corporations Division's 014 Special Revenue fund to align with actual receipts. The net request of funding for this initiative is zero.

Finally, I would like to discuss one piece of language that you do not see in front of you because it was inadvertently included by the Bureau of the Budget in the Highway Fund supplemental, rather than the General Fund. We are in contact with DAFS about moving the language to the correct budget document in a potential change package. The following language is critically important to include in the general fund budget to ensure proper funding of election operations and security in 2026:

PART D

Sec. D-1. Carrying provision; Department of the Secretary of State, Administration – Corporations, Elections and Commissions program. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the State Controller shall carry forward up to \$750,000 in unexpended balances in the Personal Services and All Other line categories in the Department of the Secretary of State, Administration – Corporations, Elections and Commissions program, after all financial commitments for obligations and budgetary adjustments have been made, at the end of fiscal year 2025-26 to the next fiscal year, to the All Other line category in the Department of the Secretary of State, Administration – Corporations, Elections and Commissions program, to be used to continue the modernization of systems and services provided to the public. These funds do not lapse and are intended to carry until expended.

PART D SUMMARY

This Part authorizes the State Controller to carry forward up to \$750,000 in unexpended balances in the Personal Services and All Other line categories in the Department of the Secretary of State, Administration – Corporations, Elections and Commissions program, after all financial commitments for obligations and budgetary adjustments have been made, at the end of fiscal year 2025-26 to the next fiscal year to the All Other line category in the Department of the Secretary of State, Administration – Corporations, Elections and Commissions program. These funds are to be used to continue the modernization of systems and services administered by the program.

We routinely see costs beyond our basic allocation in election years with high attention and turnout like the 2026 general election. While we have often covered those after the fact with a retroactive supplemental appropriation, we are concerned that such a cycle puts unnecessary stress on the elections system. The carryover language simply allows us to carry over unused funds (capped at \$750,000) to help the Elections Division under the supervision of experienced Deputy Secretary Julie Flynn, meet any unanticipated costs. Given the pending potential passage of the SAVE Act or the SAVE America Act, this may be more important than ever before in 2026.

This concludes my testimony on the items included in the Governor's proposed FY 2026-2027 Supplemental budget.

I would be happy to answer your questions now or at the work session.

Thank you.