

May 12, 2025

Testimony in opposition to:

LD 1556: Resolve, Regarding Increasing The Number of Kennebec County Commissioners

LD 1884: Resolve to Increase the Number of Kennebec County Commissioners

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, I am Peggy Schaffer from Vassalboro submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1556 and LD 1884.

I chair the town budget committee for Vassalboro, and while I am not submitting testimony from that position, my 10 plus years on the budget committee is the foundation of my opposition to both of these bills.

Though Representative Collins represents Vassalboro in the State House, she has not, to my knowledge, asked either the budget committee or the selectmen whether this was a good idea. And it is not a good idea.

I know this committee is well aware of the challenges Maine towns are facing with budgets. Even though under Governor Mills, Revenue Sharing has been restored to 5% and the state is finally meeting its obligation for education funding, there is significant challenges for municipalities as we struggle to fund critical services, needed capital expenses and our schools.

County taxes are one of those challenges where towns have little or no control. In Vassalboro our county tax has gone from \$381,000 in FY21 to \$625,000 for FY26. This means our county tax rate is about 1.5 Mills - or \$450 for a \$300,000 home. We have little say over this amount, and 2 more commissioners will not change that one bit.

The cost of 2 more commissioners is about \$70,000 per year, with no value added for that cost. At a time when town budgets are under stress from many factors, there is absolutely no need to add additional expenses at the county level that have no benefit to the taxpayers. Two more commissioners will not improve anything. We have absolutely no problem reaching our current commissioner.

The sponsors will no doubt say that these bills simply put it out to the public for a vote. Well, a public vote does not make a bad idea a good idea. And these bills are just a bad idea.

There is also a cost to putting this out to a public vote. A redistricting commission will take staff time, and require mapping and other data gathering. None of which is free. ALL of which is paid for by the property taxpayers of Kennebec County. No thank you.

We have not asked for this. There is no need for this additional government expense for no value. This is simply a solution in search of a problem on the property taxpayers' dime. I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on this really unneeded, expensive, and quite frankly, dumb idea.

Peggy Schaffer
592 Hussey Hill Road
Vassalboro Maine