

March 4, 2021

Senator Louis J. Luchini, Senate Chair, Representative Chris Caiazzo, House Chair, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

I am reaching out to each of you to state my concerns with LD 208 – An Act to Expand Access to Absentee Ballots.

**Part 1** of this bill to repeal/delete Title 21-A, Section 753-B, subsection 2 (d) would eliminate the 3-day deadline for any voter to request an absentee ballot and would allow voters to request absentee ballots up until 7:59 pm on election night.

**Part 3** of this bill will allow any voter to vote by absentee ballot in the presence of the Clerk at any time up until 8:00 pm on election day at any election.

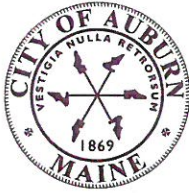
Like other municipalities, Auburn has felt the strain of budget cuts and the loss of revenue sharing over the last several years. We are all trying to do more with less and operating with minimal staff. Elections are challenging enough as it is with the current 3-day cut off for absentee voting and if LD 208 is passed, allowing voters to request an absentee ballot up until 7:59 pm on election night, or vote by absentee ballot, in person in the presence of the Clerk, it will create a significant burden on Municipal Clerks and staff.

Currently, in Maine, anyone can request an absentee ballot and obtain one without a reason (no reason/no excuse). Voters can request an absentee ballot as early as 90 days prior to an election. The ballots are available 30 days prior to an election and are mailed out to anyone who has already requested one. There are several very convenient ways a person can request an absentee ballot. They can do so by phone, electronically via the internet, by completing a written application, an immediate family member can pick up a ballot for someone, or they can vote their absentee ballot in person at their city or town hall. Maine also has the special circumstances criteria, which allows voters with special circumstances to request an absentee ballot up through election day under the current law. In Auburn, as well as other municipalities, we also offer extended hours prior to the current 3-day absentee request cut-off date which allows additional time outside of our normal work hours for voters to request an absentee ballot.

The three days under the current law are critical for us when making final preparations for election day such as printing the voter lists, preparing the paperwork and supplies to take to the polling places, setting up the voting locations (in Auburn, we set up the Monday before the election and it takes time to set up at each location). As it is with the current 3 day cut off, we (the City Clerk and staff) put in long hours weeks prior to the election preparing, testing voting

**City of Auburn, Maine**

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equipment, going to licensed nursing homes/residential care facilities to conduct absentee voting, hiring election workers for election day, putting together training material and conducting training sessions for election workers, issuing absentee ballots, receiving and batching absentee ballots, and the list goes on. On election day, we begin our workday at 5:00 am (normally after working late the night prior to the election) and work until 11:00 pm or later on election night. Again, if this bill passes, it will not allow us the time needed to carefully prepare for the elections, it will increase our work-days and tired, run down staff working under stressful conditions could potentially result in errors.

There is so much that goes into preparing for an election, this letter cannot begin to explain the depth of it all. If members of the general public could follow a Clerk through the process which begins months before the election and continues well after the election is over, they would be amazed.

I believe that under our current law, with the convenient options that are available to request an absentee ballot, Maine voters are not being disenfranchised with the current 3-day cut off. This deadline has been in place for approximately 9-10 years and most voters, based on my experience, are aware of the cutoff date. I also believe that if someone can make the trip to their city or town hall to request an absentee ballot on election day, they can also make it to their polling place to vote in person. I also believe that voters have a responsibility to plan in advance in order to vote either in person on election day or by absentee ballot prior to the election.

In a survey taken to Clerks across the State on this proposed bill, 95% of those who responded were against this bill and 5% were in favor of the bill. The current process works.

I thank you all for your time and ask that you please consider the impact this will have on Clerk's throughout Maine. I am hoping that you will NOT support LD 208.

Sincerely,

Susan Clements-Dallaire  
City Clerk, Auburn