



## Town of Portage Lake, Maine

Incorporated March 24, 1909

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March 4, 2021

To: The Members of the Committee on Veteran and Legal Affairs

RE: LD 208 – An Act to Expand Absentee Voting

Dear Committee Members:

I have been a Clerk in the small Aroostook County town of Portage Lake for over 12 years, with extensive experience handling the elections and the election processes in our town. I am submitting this letter in opposition to LD 208 – An Act to Expand Absentee Voting, being proposed by your committee, which would eliminate special circumstances absentee voting and allow voters to vote by absentee on Election Day.

For most clerks, having the three days before election day for special circumstances voting is a time for us to prepare for Election Day and make sure the integrity of our elections in the State of Maine is upheld by careful consideration of every aspect of the election process, including but not limited to making sure absentee ballots are entered into the Central Voter Registration System and stored properly before election day, making sure all polling places are set up to specifications, and making sure *all* ballots are accounted for. Every step of the election process is time consuming for most clerks, who have a limited office staff and often are doing all of the jobs by themselves or with just one Deputy Clerk. Some Clerks would have to be in two places at once on election day if absentee voting were allowed on the same day as election day---both at the polls for regular voting and in their Town Office to take in any absentee voters who *may* come in to vote that way. It just doesn't make a lot of sense logistically and is very inefficient. If the absentee period were to be extended to include the three days before Election Day, the majority of towns in Maine would need to hire more workers to help during this extended absentee period, not to mention those towns that are not open 5 days a week would now need to be opened for extended hours, equaling higher payroll costs. So now this new bill would be placing a larger financial burden on all towns & cities which would increase the municipal budgets, thereby increasing property taxes for our citizens.

Currently absentee voting is open and available for 30 days before election day. I believe these 30 days are a sufficient amount of time for voters to apply for, receive,

and return their ballots in to the Clerk's office. This process has been used for years and it has worked very well for Clerks who facilitate elections. Voters also know it, understand it, and utilize it if needed. Changing the law to allow absentee voting on Election Day is unnecessary, and would be confusing for both the Clerks and the voter.

I encourage the Committee Members to visit your own home town or city offices during election time to see first-hand what Clerks are required to do and how they handle the election process. Those Clerks are on the front line of Elections, but are usually the last ones considered when new laws are proposed. This Committee is asked to carefully read and understand the testimony by the municipal clerks around the State before making any decision on this law that might negatively affect our quality of work, not only in regards to elections but in all aspects of our job.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Corrine M. Routhier, CCM  
Town Clerk/Treasurer/Dep. Tax Collector  
Town of Portage Lake, ME