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Kim Ericson-Treasurer-Tax Collector-Clerk-Office Manager

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Good Day ,All

My staff and I strongly oppose LD 208. I have been involved in elections for over 30 years. Absentee Voting has been expanded and refined over that time. Thirty years ago Absentee Voting was a very small % of the election process. It has now become at least 30% of the process. Voting is a Right, Privilege and a Responsibility. The State of Maine has done an exceptional job of making voting accessible and safe. In this past Presidential Election, with COVID and controversies, election workers in the State of Maine could assure their voters that their ballots were cast safely and counted safely. We could state with confidence that their vote was counted exactly as they voted it. We were able to get the results to the voters in record time.

LD 208 upends those confidences. It adds enormous extra burdens to the Election staff. Finding election workers has become a challenge every year, so to complicate the process even more turns off people wanting to volunteer. It challenges the clerk and warden to maintain an orderly, safe election day. It creates a chaos environment. How can the clerk/warden oversee the elections, while trying to process absentee voters, who can just walk into the voting location and cast their vote on Election Day.

Voter access is important and a priority in every election, but voter Responsibility is also important. Perhaps investing time and energy into educating the potential voter on the procedure and process for Absentee Voting or Voting on Election Day would be time and energy better spent. LD 208 passes most of the Responsibility to the Election Staff.

Lastly, as we all saw in the 2020 Presidential Election, processing Absentee Ballots in a safe, timely, manner was the biggest goal Election staff had. Extending the request and processing time undermines that goal.

Sincerely,

Kim Ericson, Town of Otis

