

Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, March 15, 2021

Testimony of Thomas A. Rumpf on L.D. 194, An Act To Prohibit Contributions, Expenditures and Participation by Foreign Government-owned Entities To Influence Referenda

My name is Tom Rumpf. I am a licensed forester in Maine and live in Brunswick. I am testifying in opposition to L.D. 194, as I care deeply about the future health and productivity of Maine's forests and waters and recognize the critical threat that climate change poses to them.

As a forester, I was taught to collect all relevant information before making decisions important to the management of forest lands. I use the same approach in making difficult political and public policy decisions – I gather all relevant information and assess it before making important decisions.

I oppose LD 194, as it proposes to limit the sources of relevant information that Maine citizens will have access to before deciding on an important lawmaking referendum this November – the citizens referendum to overturn the Public Utility Commission's approval of the New England Clean Energy Corridor.

As others more qualified than I have pointed out, LD 194 violates the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment free speech provisions. In addition, it presumes to judge the value of any information based on the nationality of the provider of that information. I feel strongly that this is a dangerous path to pursue. Further, it insults the Maine voter by implying they are unable to judge the value and reliability of information coming from certain sources.

I respectfully urge you to uphold the free speech provisions on which our country was founded and reject this bill.

Thank you.