

Eve Wolinsky
Orono

I urge a vote in FAVOR of LD1126.

Passage of this bill will strengthen BOTH integrity and enfranchisement in Maine elections.

I have had the privilege of being a poll observer in both the 2020 March Primary and November General elections, where I observed counting of mail in ballots as well as the in person voting process. I also had an opportunity to review various town websites' voter information ahead of election day. And, WOW, this was quite a civics lesson! The town clerks work VERY hard to make our elections happen.

It became very clear that voter registration was the slowest process for in person voting on election day. It also became very clear to me that the voter information on various town websites is variable from place to place in terms of completeness and accessibility. Some town websites already simply post links to the voter information page on the state website. There also has been some variability in the face-to-face voter registration practices in different towns, especially in the documents that are accepted for proof of identity or residence.

This bill will promote a centralized, uniform, highly accessible registration process that will promote enfranchisement for any Mainer with a smart phone or computer. It will promote integrity of the voting process by coordinating identity and address checks with pre-existing robust databases at the BMV and Social Security.

Centralized, electronic voter registration also streamlines the workload of town clerks and their staff before and during election day. It improves the efficiency of processing mail-in ballot applications and will reduce lines and wait times for in-person voters on election day. Improved efficiency lowers costs and decreased wait times improve voter enfranchisement.

These improvements in enfranchisement, efficiency, and integrity will apply equally to in-person as well as mail-in voters. This bill also provides for continuity of the current option for registering with the local town clerk and on election day itself for those who prefer the in-person process or who miss the deadlines. The deadlines support integrity of elections by making sure state and local officials have sufficient time to verify supporting documents.

In conclusion, LD1126 is a bill that brings to bear up-to-date information technology to protect BOTH the voting rights of Maine citizens and the integrity of the polling process. These improvements are timely and necessary to keep abreast and stay in step with the voting systems that already prevail in the vast majority of states.

Many thanks to the authors and sponsors of this bill!