

To the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

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LD 231 OUGHT TO PASS

My name is Mark Barnett. I am a resident of Auburn, Maine and the owner of a medical caregiver store in Portland, Maine. I am testifying today in support of LD 231.

This Committee ought to allow for unenrolled voters to vote in an open primary of their choice in Maine elections. Maine has a very high number of unenrolled voters in any given year, as high as one-third of all registered voters. Access to the vote is the most fundamental goal we should be unified in pursuing as citizens of this state and this country. Further, it seems crucial, in a country of over 300 million where only two political Parties controlled by relatively few people control the political capital of this entire nation, to maintain as robust a dialog around political ideas in our elections as we can. That is a nonpartisan idea I hope the vast majority of us can agree on.

We all know that primaries have a direct impact on the governance of our society and the values we feed and the values we starve. We should strengthen the franchise of as many of our citizens as we can, rather than oppose it for narrow political gains to one of two Parties which for a variety of reasons don't always prioritize the general public in their calculations. If we believe in the philosophy of democratic rule, we should not be afraid of those not automatically 'aligned' with the interest of either of the Parties. They may be some of our most honest and urgent voices. They deserve equal footing with their Party-affiliated peers.