

Dear Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and esteemed members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

My name is Justin Beth (a resident of Portland) and I wish to speak in favor of LD 303, a bill that will seek to allow registered voters, not enrolled in any party, to sign petitions for candidates seeking to run in party primaries, in which those voters are eligible to participate.

As I'm sure you're aware, Independent voters make up roughly one third of the electorate in Maine, yet they currently don't have any input over the candidates running in our elections. As a state that identifies so strongly as Independent voters, shouldn't they have a say as to who can be on the ballot? Why leave them out of this process?

I speak in favor of this important legislation as a member of the Maine Green Independent Party... a party that has made the choice to allow Independent voters to participate in our primary process, since 2016. We want to give them a voice in who we chose to nominate to run in the general election. We, in the Maine Green Independent Party, strongly believe that Independent voters that chose to not align with any party, should have the right to participate in this way, because we believe in a democracy that values Independent voters' inputs also. Taking it a step further, we believe that ALL registered parties in Maine should value the input of Independent voters. We not only come here today, in support of Representative Lookner's landmark legislation, we would also thank Senator Maxmin for LD 231 that similarly gives Independent voters a chance to participate in the democratic process more fully, through semi open primaries.

The point of these pieces of legislation is to ensure all Maine voters are given an opportunity to have a say in the candidates that they would like to see on the ballot, regardless of what party that candidate is aligned to. Rather than force these voters to conform to a given party's ideologies, these Unenrolled voters should be given the freedom to sign in support of any candidates that they feel deserve to be on the ballot.

Not only will Maine's Independent voters benefit from this legislation, but the candidates themselves will also benefit from this, as they would then have a strong case to reach out to Independent voters ahead of the primaries. As a result, candidates will be better informed of the issues important to this significant group of voters much earlier in the process and give them more time to connect with this very important constituency, that too often has been overlooked in our political process.

In summary, LD 303 deserves your support because it is a win for the candidates and a win for the Independent voters in Maine. I truly hope your committee makes the most of this win-win situation and supports this legislation. Not only will Independent voters thank you for this, but so too will the candidates. Thank you for your time and consideration, to give Independent voters more voice.

Sincerely,

Justin Beth, of Portland

Justin Beth
Maine Green Independent Party

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