

Dennis S. Damon

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs please accept my testimony in support of LD 231, An Act to Establish Open Primaries.

Before I begin my testimony I want to congratulate Sen. Luchini on his Alma Maters recent national championship!

I was honored to represent Hancock County in the Maine Senate from 2002 - 2010. Although I am a proud lifelong democrat, I fully realize I might not have been elected initially and three successive times following that without strong support from those citizens who are not enrolled in any party.

While no longer in office, I feel it is important to speak out in support of efforts that would benefit Hancock County as well as the rest of Maine. Now is one of those times. I firmly believe our democracy works best when more citizens participate in the voting process. That is why I am enthusiastically supporting LD 231, An Act to Establish Open Primaries.

Currently, 32% of Maine voters are prohibited from participating in the taxpayer-funded June primary elections. One in three registered Maine voters' tax-dollars are used to pay for the elections in which they are not allowed to vote. This is fundamentally unfair. It is also easy to fix with the passage of LD 231.

Maine is one of only fourteen states with members-only elections. While we Mainers pride ourselves in our traditions of civic engagement and voter participation, this is one area where we are behind the curve and on the wrong side of fairness. Now, with LD 231, we can fix that.

Open primaries would allow all registered voters to have their voices heard in all elections. It is the right thing to do and I wholeheartedly support the effort to allow unenrolled voters to participate in primary elections.

I strongly urge you to join the 80% of Maine voters who already support opening primaries to unenrolled voters and to vote in support of LD 231.

Thank you.

Senator Dennis S. Damon
Trenton, Maine