



Department of the Secretary of State

Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

Julie L. Flynn
Deputy Secretary of State

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Testimony of Shenna Bellows Secretary of State

Testifying in Support of
L.D. 1330 "An Act To Join the National Popular Vote Compact"
L.D. 1384 "An Act To Adopt the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact"
May 11, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Shenna Bellows and I am the Secretary of State and the chief elections officer. I am speaking today in support of L.D. 1330 and L.D. 1384.

One of my main goals as Secretary of State is to increase participation in Maine's elections. We have already discussed a number of pieces of legislation that I hope will do just that, including making it more convenient to register to vote, enshrining absentee ballot drop boxes into law, leveraging technology upgrades to simplify absentee ballot requests for voters, and providing a permanent online absentee ballot tracking system. Today I'm here in support of another way to increase participation: Making sure that every vote matters equally.

For too long, the Electoral College has been a barrier for American voters in many states to believing that their vote matters, which discourages them from turning out in their election. Why would they, when they know that their vote for a Republican presidential candidate in Massachusetts or a Democratic presidential candidate in Alabama won't have an impact on the voting that actually matters – the votes in the Electoral College? The same is true in Maine, especially with our assigning electoral college votes both by the overall state majority and by Congressional District. Given the results of the last couple of elections, it is hard to feel enthusiastic about voting for your preferred presidential candidate when you're supporting a Democrat in Dover-Foxcroft or a Republican in Brunswick.

By joining the National Popular Vote Compact, Maine would send a message to voters here and across the country that their voices matter, and they matter equally. No longer will Florida, Michigan, Iowa, New Hampshire or other perennial swing states dominate presidential campaigns' attention. Under the National Popular Vote Compact, a vote in Allagash counts the same as a vote in Eliot. A vote in upstate New York counts the same as a vote in New York City. A vote in Austin counts the same as a vote in Juneau.

We would suggest however, amending L.D. 1330 and L.D. 1384 to continue to use ranked choice voting in general elections for President. In telling voters that their voices matter, we should not be undoing a decision that was upheld repeatedly by Maine voters at the ballot box in recent years. I

believe this would have a depressing effect on turnout in Maine, and in trust of government to listen to the will of the voters.

Rather, we would suggest not amending §803 of Title 21-A in whichever of these bills moves forward, as language amending this section has been incorporated into LD 1363, and we wouldn't want conflicting language moving forward. The language in LD 1363 amends §803 of Title 21-A as follows:

As soon as possible after the presidential electors are chosen, the Governor shall send a certificate of the determination of the electors to the Archivist of the United States under the state seal. The certificate shall state the names of the electors and the number of ~~votes which each received~~ final round votes received by each presidential-vice presidential slate that has votes in the final round of statewide or district-wide tabulation. The Governor shall deliver 6 certificates under the state seal to the electors on or before the first Monday after the 2nd Wednesday of December, following their election.

When voters trust that their vote matters, they turn out to make their voices heard. Joining the National Popular Vote Compact would send that indication to Maine voters, and I urge you to support legislation for Maine to do so.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony today, and I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.