



Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters

“An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting”

Before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

February 6th, 2023

Good Morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee.

My name is Beth Ahearn, Senior Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters, testifying in opposition to LD 34, “An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting” on behalf of more than 13,000 members and supporters of Maine Conservation Voters. Maine Conservation Voters works to build an inclusive democracy and to make conservation and climate action a political priority. We support measures that make voting more efficient, secure, and accessible for all eligible Maine voters and oppose those that do not achieve that profoundly American goal.

I’d like to address just one of the many problems with voter identification proposals, such as this one. It should not be controversial to unequivocally state that the freedom to vote is a fundamental right in our democracy. As a fundamental right, the right to vote should never come with barriers making it more difficult if not impossible for some Mainers to vote while continuing to ensure easy access to the ballot box for others. Yet this is what happens when voter ID laws are implemented. Numerous studies have found that voter ID policies reduce turnout and have an impact on the results of elections. One study found that “policies such as ID requirements can reduce the probability of voting by as much as four percentage points, which can swing election results even at a national level.”<sup>1</sup> Another from the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that voter ID reduced turnout for eligible voters in states like Kansas and Tennessee by as much as 3%.<sup>2</sup>

For Maine, that would mean that 27,000 eligible Maine voters would not cast a ballot.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Darrah-Okike, Jennifer & Rita, Nathalie & Logan, John. (2020). The Suppressive Impacts of Voter Identification Requirements. *Sociological Perspectives*. 64. 073112142096662. 10.1177/0731121420966620.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-14-634>

<sup>3</sup> Using the 2020 general election as basis for model

With a fundamental right such as voting, it's not our place to question the motives of those without photo IDs and attempting to troubleshoot the barriers they may face in obtaining one ignores our deeply held belief that democracy is not transactional. Voting should not be more accessible for some Americans than others.

As an alternative to those here in support of this bill, I offer a few options that would genuinely strengthen Maine's already safe and secure elections:

1. Advocate for an expansion of ongoing absentee voting and ensure that municipalities have the resources they need to efficiently administer the program.
2. Increase support for election workers, both financially and in your public statements.
3. Encourage your constituents and supporters to volunteer as poll workers and see firsthand how well run Maine's elections truly are.
4. Increase funding for state and local election administrators to administer Maine's elections, and fully fund other updates to continue modernizing our elections.
5. Educate constituents and colleagues about the accuracy of Maine's safe and secure elections, correct misinformation about Maine elections, and call out those who maliciously distort the truth about Maine's elections.

With gratitude to Maine's town and city clerks for the heroic manner in which they administer safe and secure elections, Maine Conservation Voters urges you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 34.

Thank you.

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