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April 28, 2023

State of Maine 131st Legislature
Testimony Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

**Re: LD 1320, An Act to Improve Signature Requirements for Candidates by
Allowing Unenrolled Voters to Sign Petitions for Party Candidates**

Dear Senate Chairman Hickman, House Chair Supica, and Members of the
Committee:

My name is Alice Knapp and I am pleased to testify in favor of LD1320. I am a long-time resident of Richmond and served for many years on the Richmond Planning Board followed by two terms on the Richmond Board of Selectman, my last year as Chair. I have also served on the Sagadahoc County Budget Advisory Committee. Quite some time ago I served the people of Maine for more than a decade as an attorney and then as the first Director of the legislatively created Consumer HealthCare Division at the Maine Bureau of Insurance. For the past 22 years I have run a solo legal practice in Richmond. My office is located in the downtown Richmond building I saved and renovated that was on Maine Preservation's 1997 list of the State's most endangered historic properties.

As I haven't had the pleasure of meeting any of you, I perused your bios on the State Legislature's website and was impressed by your collective diversity, experience and obvious commitment to public service and to our great state, for which I am truly grateful. Thank you for your interest and for your attention to my testimony.

Since leaving state government, I have had the honor of running for State Senate as a Clean Elections candidate twice, once as an independent in 2004 and again in 2014 as a Green Independent, having been asked to run by the Party. I was gratified to win the majority vote in Richmond both times.

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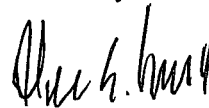
According to information reported on the Maine.Gov website, as of January 27, 2022, there were 33,036 registered voters in my predominantly Sagadahoc County Senate District 23, which includes Bath, West Bath, Arrowsic, Woolwich, Phippsburg, Georgetown, Topsham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Richmond and the Lincoln County Town of Dresden. Of those registered voters 35.94% were enrolled as Democrats, 27.24% were enrolled as Republicans, 4.14% were enrolled as Green Independents, .03% were enrolled as Libertarians, and fully 32.63% were unenrolled.

While the number of signatures required for a State Senate candidate running without a party affiliation is currently double the number required for a party-affiliated candidate, getting the required number of signatures when I ran as an independent in 2004 was a cakewalk compared to the effort required to get the required number of signatures when I ran as a Green as only registered Green Independents could sign my nominating petition.

The approximately 1/3 of registered voters in my District who choose not to enroll in a political party are currently effectively disenfranchised by being unable to both maintain their chosen enrollment status and participate in the process used to get most candidates on the ballot as most candidates run as party candidates. A significant number of voters who signed my petition were willing to change their enrollment to Green just to be able to sign my petition, but they shared my annoyance that this was necessary. It shouldn't be. All voters should have the right to have a say on who they would like to see on the ballot for any given election and choice gives voters a voice.

To its credit, two years ago by an impressive bi-partisan vote, the Maine Legislature sent LD 231 to the Governor for her signature. As a result of that vote, effective January 1, 2024, unenrolled voters, with limited exception, will for the first time be permitted to vote in a party's primary election without having to enroll in that party. Maine should continue its leadership in promoting voter empowerment and choice by taking the logical next step of opening the ballot access nominating process to unenrolled voters. I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1320.

Sincerely,



Alice E. Knapp