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## Maine Town & City Clerks' Association

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Local Government Center • 60 Community Drive  
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Date: January 30, 2025

To: Senator Craig Hickman, Senate Chair  
Representative Laura Supica, House Chair  
And members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

From: Patti Dubois, Chairperson, Legislative Policy Committee  
Maine Town and City Clerks' Association

Re: LD199 – An Act to Change the Limits on Candidates' Communications with Voters  
at the Polls

Position: OPPOSE

The Maine Town & City Clerks' Association is in strong opposition to LD 199 and we thank you for the opportunity to outline our points for your Committee.

Although many municipal clerks from small communities say they wouldn't be significantly impacted by passage of this bill, others from mid to large sized communities expressed significant concerns about the impacts of this bill. However, discussions between candidates and voters could result in more people gathering in the area, resulting in more congestion for those entering and/or exiting, along with even more complaints from voters who at this time do not like having candidates at the polls. Political topics are polarizing and can result in heated discussions which could lead to violence. All of this activity could negate the benefit of wardens not having to monitor candidates' speech.

Clerks in opposition noted:

- Voters gathering to speak with candidates would impede/obstruct/inhibit the flow of voters entering and exiting the polls.
- Many voters are intimidated by the candidates at the polls.
- Election workers could be pulled away from other duties to continuously monitor the entrances to the polls.
- When voting takes place at a municipal office, non-voters could be impeded from entering and would be unable to avoid the political discussions.



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- Allowing political discussion could add more chaos to an already congested atmosphere and could easily be divisive, which could add to voters' anger and the potential for violence.

Members are opposed to this legislation, which would expand political activities at the polls by allowing candidates to state the office they are seeking and their party designation with the caveat that the candidate not attempt to influence the voter. Clerks purport that this would lead to more conversations or questions regarding the candidate's position on specific issues. Previously, candidates have said it is awkward to introduce themselves but not be able to share that they are on the ballot. The awkwardness will simply shift to them being unable to answer position questions after stating they are on the ballot and their party affiliation. It is disingenuous to allege that this is not intended to influence voters at the polls.

Municipal clerks noted that the current law allowing candidates at the polls to greet voters results in the most complaints received from voters on Election Day. Voters are unable to avoid the candidates when voting in person and routinely question why they are allowed to be there. Based on this common theme, clerks respectfully request that consideration be given to designate a specific area where candidates can be located when at the polls so that they can be positioned in such a manner that voters who wish to speak to them could do so while those who do not can easily avoid them. Moving candidates to a designated area was done during the pandemic and resulted in fewer complaints from voters.

Candidates often say that they enjoy being at the polls to see their friends and neighbors making it a party-like event. Clerks feel that Election Day is for the voters, not for the candidates, and that campaigning should be finalized by that point. Candidates who truly want to see their friends and neighbors can do so while campaigning in their districts' neighborhoods.

Past testimony from this association requested the prohibition of candidates from the restricted area of 250' around the polling location on Election Day where voter influence is prohibited, since it is likely the main reason that some candidates are at the polls. Clerks and Wardens are often spending valuable time monitoring candidates and fielding complaints regarding candidates, rather than focusing on servicing the voters.

The Maine Town & City Clerks' Association appreciates the opportunity to share its testimony with the Committee. Should any questions arise, please feel free to contact me at 207)680-4210 or by email: [pdubois@waterville-me.gov](mailto:pdubois@waterville-me.gov) .