

Sarah Shepro
Portland
LD 349

Good Morning,

I am a work and voter in Portland, ME. I have worked in the food industry and nonprofit industry, two large sectors in Portland, and know first-hand the struggles of engaging civically when there are significant trade offs to taking time off of work to do so.

Although employers must allow time to vote, they don't have to allow time for registration, which can make it difficult to register days besides election days. This might mean sacrificing hourly income or incredibly limited paid time off to get registered, or spending your limited free time registering. For example, last summer I worked three part-time jobs in the food and nonprofit industries, which made it incredibly hard to handle any things I needed to do in my own life, let alone be civically engaged.

I also have seen first-hand how complicated and frustrating it can be to sift through government websites and information. I frequently do it for my job and as a citizen. Fortunately, I have a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, which gives me a better leg to stand on. However, most people aren't able to spare the time or money to gain this background knowledge. In-person registration is crucial for folks who may need more help navigating civic engagement - having a person at the table to help you with the forms, tell you what you need, is so valuable.

I urge you to reconsider this bill and the impacts it will have on meaningful civic engagement in Maine. We don't need more barriers to civic engagement, especially now.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sarah