



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

**LD 1232: An Act To Require the Secretary of State To Automatically Register Nonregistered Persons Who Are Qualified To Vote through Records of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles**

April 18, 2017

Senator Mason, Representative Luchini, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 1232: An Act to Require the Secretary of State To Automatically Register Nonregistered Persons Who Are Qualified To Vote through Records of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

My name is Anna Kellar, and I am the Program Director for Maine Citizens for Clean Elections.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over twenty years, and one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections. We are proud of our national reputation, but we are all Mainers, and our mission has always been with and for the people of this state.

We testify in favor of LD1232.

While MCCE has historically focused on campaign finance issues, our larger mission is to ensure that Maine's campaign finance laws, elections, and government serve the public interest, both in principle and in practice. We support Automatic Voter Registration because this policy increases fairness, opportunity, and inclusion when it comes to our most fundamental political right: the right to vote.

A secure, modern voter registration process helps voters and election officials alike. It's good for people, and it's good for the process. Most importantly, it ensures that all eligible Mainers who want to vote are able to exercise that right as efficiently as possible.

We Mainers are justifiably proud of our high voter turnout. It is just one measure of our robust civic culture. We pride ourselves on having a very engaged electorate, yet there are many people – especially seniors, veterans, and rural voters – for whom registering to vote can be a hassle. In addition, we have witnessed the long lines – sometimes so long that potential voters are turned away or simply leave after too many hours spent waiting – when enthusiastic first-time voters flood the polls to both register and vote. Let's simplify their lives and the lives of clerks who deal with these challenges, and make voter registration a part of our routine, not an extra hurdle to clear.

We like to talk about Maine's motto of "Dirigo – I lead" – and how Maine's democracy leads the nation. But on this particular commonsense reform, six states have gotten there before us. It's time for Maine to follow the lead of Oregon, Alaska, West Virginia, and others, and begin the process of implementing automatic voter registration.

Thank you very much. We will be present for the work session.