



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114 · Tel: 617-523-2999 · Fax: 617-248-0881

Email: lwvma@lwvma.org · Website: www.lwvma.org

In Support of H.63

A proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution relative to voting by qualified voters of the Commonwealth

Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Elections
By Linda Freedman, LWVMA Specialist on Election and Voting Rights

March 26, 2013

The League of Women Voters has for over 90 years been an active supporter of election laws that, while continuing to assure the security of the vote, encourage the fullest participation of all qualified voters.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports this constitutional amendment to allow no-excuse absentee voting. The current criteria for voting absentee - being out of town on Election Day, holding religious beliefs that prevent casting a ballot on Election Day or having a physical disability - are growing increasingly insufficient.

Many qualified voters cannot get to the polls on Election Day but do not meet these three criteria for absentee voting. Elderly but otherwise healthy citizens who have difficulty waiting in long lines and/or dealing with severe weather, others with irregular work and educational schedules and difficult commutes, many care givers with fragile dependents, and even volunteers working at the polls can have difficulty getting to their polling places during the hours they are open.

During the November election in 2012, long lines were observed in several cities including Boston, Worcester and Springfield. Many voters, upon seeing long lines at the polls, are discouraged from voting. It takes physical stamina to stand in line for several hours. Elderly citizens and others with physical limitations have difficulty with this. I have arthritis in my legs and can't stand in line more than a few minutes. Standing in long lines also requires sufficient time. A busy parent or someone holding multiple part-time jobs may not have enough time between work, attending to children's needs, or numerous other family and work responsibilities.

There is also the potential for voting absentee to help reduce problems with registration, since errors in the poll books could be discovered in advance of Election Day and corrected.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts strongly urges you to vote positively on H.63.

Thank you for your time.