



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

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In Support of S.327

An Act Reforming Election Laws

Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws

By Linda Freedman, LWVMA Specialist on Elections and Voting Rights

April 3, 2013

The right of all citizens to vote is at the heart of our democracy. S.327 is a comprehensive vehicle to increase participation in our elections and improve the integrity of our voting systems.

The League of Women Voters is a strong supporter of post election audits of the vote, increased training of election officials, improvements in registration, an online portal for voters to check their registration and early voting with rules, security and counting of early voting ballots. LWVMA is honored that we have been included in the election task force established in this bill to study the implementation of audits, registration and its other provisions.

There are, however, some provisions of S.327 that the League would seek to expand:

The League suggests that the election task force would be enhanced by adding qualified experts on computer security and statisticians with an understanding of election results.

Everyone, candidates and citizens alike, needs to be sure that election results are the true intention of the voters. The current language in S.327 does not require expansion when a difference in an audit and the reported election-machine tallies lead to a reasonable doubt about accuracy. The League recommends making additional audits a requirement by replacing “may order audits of additional precincts, offices or ballot questions” with “should order” in Section 18 (h).

In addition, as auditing of the vote is an evolving technology, we would recommend the bill allow pilot studies of other audit methods that could be less expensive and/or more efficient, to be followed by public hearings when changes to audit rules and regulations are proposed.

The League also recommends archiving audit results and data for a minimum of 20 years. This would facilitate studies that can lead to improvements in audit practices.

S. 327 call for only one statewide ballot item to be audited. Because there may be multiple ballot questions that can impact state budgets and oversight of important policy decisions, we feel the bill should allow audits of multiple ballot issues when appropriate.

We hope the members of this committee will consider these recommendations, but as always, the League understands there are often multiple steps to achieve a desired result, and we are confident this Committee will move this bill on a positive vote.

Thank you for your consideration.