



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws  
in support of S.321/H.651, S.320/H.559 and H.630  
related to Election Campaign Financing Disclosure and Reform

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The League of Women Voters has historically focused on issues related to voting rights, transparency in governance and fairness in elections. The need for measures to improve transparency and disclosure is even greater in the aftermath of the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision.

Since that decision, LWVUS and its state and local Leagues have urged the passage of the Disclose Act at the federal and state levels and local campaign finance reforms to help rebalance the court's decision in favor of citizens, which is consistent with the Supreme Court ruling which made clear that requiring disclosure is constitutional.

Bills being considered in this hearing relate to the issues of transparency and the rights of the citizens to be heard by their government and to know the monetary extent of support received by candidates and elected officials. Each of the bills LWVMA supports addresses a particular aspect of corporate, individual and/or PAC influence that currently is not readily available for citizens to view.

LWVMA actively supported "Massachusetts Disclose Act," which the legislature came very close to passing in the 2011-2012 session and continues working to obtain a favorable outcome this session. S.321 and H.651 make publicly available in a timely fashion the source of funding for specified election campaign communications and restrict these sources from working in conjunction with candidates' election committees and consultants.

We agree that corporate shareholders and association membership have a right to know and approve how their funds are being used. S.320 and H.559 seek to assure that corporations spending corporate dollars to fund a political campaign or ballot issue must report this to their shareholders. In addition, sums in excess of \$5000 made by corporations and specified associations must be approved by either the board of directors or executive committee, whichever is appropriate.

H.630 seeks to redress a recently-discovered loophole in existing state campaign finance regulations adding a restriction on value of contributions other than money (which is already restricted under MGL) that a political party may contribute to an individual candidate. In addition, it limits the amount of money an individual can contribute to a town or ward election outside the jurisdiction of the donor's primary residence. In the 2012 Massachusetts election cycle, 34 local races were influenced by significant contributions from outside the candidate's community. LWVMA strongly urges passage of H.630 so that in future elections local races will principally be funded locally.

This is an extensive agenda, but with the well-documented loss of confidence in all our elected bodies, transparency in the funding of our elections is essential. We realize this is a complex, and therefore controversial, matter. However, LWVMA requests this committee give its positive support for legislation that will help restore the public's confidence in its elected officials.

Thank you for your consideration.