



In support of S.203 and S.254
An Act to involve youth in civic engagement

Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Education
By the LWVMA Education Committee
October 31, 2013

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) and its Education Committee have previously provided testimony supporting the inclusion of a civics curriculum and service learning for grades K-12 in the Massachusetts history and social studies frameworks as supported by our past legislative actions in education and by League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) representative-government positions and actions in civic education and engagement.

Since the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1993, LWVMA has monitored the development of statewide curriculum frameworks and has written to the Board of Education supporting a strong civics component in the social studies framework.

We now write in support of S.203 and S.254 – acts to involve youth in civic engagement – to provide youth input in the development of a curriculum to provide the means for students to be knowledgeable and informed and encourage active engagement in the democratic process. In addition we support the inventory of school district compliance with section 2 Chapter 71 of the General Laws in S.254.

The mission of the League of Women Voters is to inform citizens and encourage their participation in the democratic process, and in pursuit of that mission, we strongly support civic engagement and education throughout grades K-12. The urgency of this mission was recently underscored by the results of a National Assessment on Educational Progress (NAEP) National Civic Exams and reported:

“Fewer than half of American eighth graders knew the purpose of the Bill of Rights on the most recent national civics examination, and only one in 10 demonstrated acceptable knowledge of the checks and balances among the legislative, executive and judicial branches....The scores indicated that only about a quarter of 4th- and 12th-grade students, and about one-fifth of 8th graders, ranked at the proficient or advanced levels.” http://nationsreportcard.gov/civics_2010/civics_2010_report/

We urge your support for S.203 and S.254 so that schools and students in Massachusetts will have the knowledge and skills to truly participate in a constitutional democracy such as ours. It is imperative that students from grade school into high school and beyond understand our country’s principles and institutions.

Thank you for your consideration.