



*Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
In support of S.365 An Act restoring financial transparency in presidential elections
By Linda Freedman, LWVMA Specialist, Elections and Voting
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports S. 365 An Act restoring financial transparency in presidential elections, which would require candidates for president and vice president of the United States to disclose federal tax returns in order to be on the ballot in Massachusetts. The bill would codify practices that have, to now, been customary and expected, but not required. When a state determines that financial information from candidates is desirable to enable voters to make an informed choice in an election, the state should put that determination into law, making such a requirement clear to candidates in advance.

The League of Women Voters of the United States affirms that citizens should be well-informed about candidates, stating: *“We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.”* LWVMA feels that this bill will provide Massachusetts voters with important information about presidential and vice presidential candidates.

LWVMA agrees with Secretary of State Galvin that, while the Constitution specifies the qualifications for president, states are allowed to determine rules for ballot access. The Secretary noted that statewide candidates for office must already provide full financial disclosure, far beyond what is required for presidential candidates. He also noted the state already sets rules for ballot access such as requiring Congressional candidates to provide a given number of signatures, and the requirement to disclose tax returns would be another ballot access requirement.

Presidential candidates must already meet a variety of specific filing requirements and deadlines, known as ballot access laws, which are set by the individual states.

We urge the committee to report this bill favorably, and we hope the legislature passes it in time for the 2020 Presidential election.

Thank you for your consideration.