



**Testimony Submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
In opposition to H.677 An Act relative to the elimination of public campaign financing
By Linda Freedman, LWVMA Election and Voting Laws Specialist
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts opposes this bill. The League supports the current program of limited campaign finance for statewide offices in Massachusetts and would prefer that it be expanded. A goal of the League's campaign finance reform strategy is to build support for public financing as the best long-term solution for having open and honest elections and for maximum citizen participation in the political process. If Section 1 chapter 55C is repealed, Massachusetts would no longer offer matching public funds for the statewide offices of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Treasurer and Receiver General, Secretary of the Commonwealth, and Auditor.

There is flexibility in the current system. Candidates can choose to opt in or out of the matching program. The matching funds are provided by voluntary contributions of \$1 from state income tax filers. The program is administered by the Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance, which issues reports on the distribution of funds and campaign spending.

At a time of massive changes in campaign finance and increasing funding from large donors and activist groups, it is important that this program be retained. It helps to mitigate the influence of well-funded special interests and provides encouragement for citizens to seek public office.

If this program were abolished, candidates would need to raise even more funds from non-public sources. Candidates in the primaries and in the general elections could become increasingly responsive to the interests of large campaign donors and PACs.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, believes that the current program should be expanded. The option to check this box on state income tax forms should be publicized, and citizens should be encouraged to participate. The amount of the check off could be increased to help move Massachusetts toward public financing of elections.

We urge the joint committee to reject this bill. Thank you for your consideration.