



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Michael J. Willette
The Honorable Representative Roland Danny Martin, Co-chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: February 4, 2015

RE: LD 6 Resolve, To Implement Recommendations of the Government Oversight
Committee To Strengthen the Ethics Practices and Procedures for Executive
Branch Employees

My name is Polly Ward. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am a resident of Freeport. I am here today as a volunteer member of the League's Advocacy Committee in support of LD 6 which would direct the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to develop a consolidated code of conduct for State employees. It would, further, authorize the Government Oversight Committee to submit legislation required to implement the code.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people and that it should be free from undue influence, bias, and the perception of bias.

We applaud the intent of the Resolve to include provisions to address ethical situations not addressed in existing standards, including but not limited to gifts, personal and business relationships affecting impartiality, post-state employment, use of government property, and conflicting outside employment and activities. We are concerned that, under the current laws, public officials in the conduct of their government service might be influenced by implicit or explicit promise of future employment by those they regulate or that they might be perceived by the public as being so influenced.

The recommendations contained in the Report on Ethics Laws for Executive Branch Employees and the Resolve itself in Sections 2 and 3 place emphasis on the development of a training and communications plan for State employees, monitoring of State employee awareness, and the ability of State employees to seek guidance regarding compliance with the code. There is no explicit language in the Resolve to address enforcement of the Ethics Code. We urge you to include enforcement provisions, including potentially an independent agency, to enforce the provisions of the Ethics Code.

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We encourage you to support LD 6. Strengthening our ethics standards for State employees will help to sustain public confidence in the effective administration of our government for the general public.

Polly Ward
Advocacy Committee Member
League of Women Voters of Maine