# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# STATE OF MAINE

132ND LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR AND FIRST SPECIAL SESSIONS

Disposition of bills and summaries of all laws enacted or finally passed

# JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

August 2025

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## LD 1702 An Act to Amend Election Polling Place Candidate Restrictions

### ENACTED LAW SUMMARY

Public Law 2025, chapter 331 adds new restrictions regarding signatures and campaign contributions and clarifies existing restrictions in current law applying to the political activities of a candidate for public office at a voting place on election day.

The law prohibits a candidate or the candidate's representative, on public property within 250 feet of the entrance to the voting place as well as within the voting place itself, from collecting or soliciting voter signatures on a petition in support of the candidate's candidacy, campaign contributions in support of the candidate's candidacy or qualifying contributions under the Maine Clean Election Act for an office the candidate is seeking in that election year.

The law also clarifies that at or within 250 feet of a voting place a person may not influence or attempt to influence a voter's decision regarding a candidate for an office that is on the ballot for the election, whether or not the candidate's name is on the ballot and clarifies that the provision also applies to write-in candidates running for an office that is on the ballot.

Public Law 2025, chapter 331 was enacted as an emergency measure effective June 17, 2025.

## LD 1787 An Act to Increase Seed Money Contribution Limits for Gubernatorial Candidates Under the Maine Clean Election Act

### ENACTED LAW SUMMARY

Public Law 2025, chapter 296 increases the contribution limits for gubernatorial seed money contributions to $250 per individual.

## LD 1977 An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Elections

### ENACTED LAW SUMMARY

Public Law 2025, chapter 397 makes the following changes to the election laws.

1. It replaces uses of the term "polling place" in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 21-A with the defined term "voting place."

2. It amends the definition of "closed period" to make it consistent with the statutory provision allowing a voter to register to vote in an election through automatic voter registration within a portion of the closed period.

3. It changes the deadline for submitting an online voter registration application from midnight on the 21st day before election day to 5 p.m. on the 21st day before election day.

4. It makes nonsubstantive revisions to Title 21-A, sections 121 and 121-A, relating to voter registration procedures, to improve clarity and readability. It also adjusts the deadlines for the Secretary of State to transfer voter registration applications received from outside agencies, imposing differing deadlines depending on how close to election day the application is received.

5. It requires registrars to treat changes and withdrawals of enrollment as filed on the 15th day before the election if the 15th day before the election is a holiday and the change or withdrawal of enrollment form is filed on the next business day after the holiday.

6. It designates new agencies as outside voter registration agencies and clarifies which programs within those agencies must provide voter registration services.

7. It amends the provision governing use of central voter registration data by clarifying the permitted uses of voter data for purposes of evaluating, monitoring or seeking compliance with certain laws, designating certain types of data as highly sensitive, removing certain prohibitions on transfer or publication of central voter registration data and specifying new civil violations for certain misuses of central voter registration data.

8. It enacts provisions governing treatment of qualifying and qualified political parties that fail to attain or lose qualified status. The provisions allow for immediate disenrollment of voters who enrolled in an unsuccessful qualifying party while allowing established parties that are disqualified to retain their enrolled voters by filing a notice for up to one full election cycle while they seek to enroll additional voters to reach the enrollment threshold necessary for qualified status.

9. It creates a new process allowing a qualified party to voluntarily dissolve by filing a notice signed by the statewide chair following an affirmative vote by the party's state committee with the Secretary of State. For a party without a state committee, the written request must be signed by an authorized representative of the party. This provision is retroactive to January 1, 2024, allowing the Secretary of State to act on notices of dissolution received after that date.

10. It permits parties to elect to allow unenrolled voters to sign their candidates' primary nomination petitions by filing a notice with the Secretary of State. The notice may be only filed following an affirmative vote by the party's state committee. For a party without a state committee, the determination must be made through an authorized representative of the party.

11. It requires municipalities to make a municipal officer available to certify names on candidate petitions on the day that primary petitions are due to the Secretary of State.

12. It clarifies that the Secretary of State may not accept a candidate consent form unless it contains the required certification by the registrar of the candidate's enrollment.

13. It clarifies that the Secretary of State must accept party and nonparty candidate petitions if they contain more than the maximum permitted number of valid signatures, but that the Secretary of State may not validate those signatures above the maximum.

14. It provides for direct appeals to the Law Court from a decision by the Secretary of State to validate or invalidate a party or nonparty candidate petition in response to a challenge.

15. It enacts a new provision allowing for substitution of party-nominated presidential electors if a nominated elector dies, withdraws or becomes disqualified before the election.

16. It creates an exception to the requirement of holding a primary election as part of the process to fill a vacancy in the office of representative to Congress if the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives invokes a federal law requiring expedited election procedures if there are more than 100 vacancies in the United States House of Representatives.

17. It requires a candidate wishing for the candidate's name to appear differently on the ballot than it does on their candidate consent form to notify the Secretary of State no later than 70 days prior to the election.

18. It allows the Secretary of State to prepare neutral instruction materials and posters for posting at the voting place to the extent the Secretary of State determines them to be necessary to assist voters.

19. It repeals requirements that the Secretary of State produce and disseminate a guide to election law and conduct a training program for new municipal clerks.

20. It amends the provision requiring the Secretary of State to implement a system for collecting and logging concerns from members of the public regarding the conduct of elections to clarify that the system is for collecting and logging reports from residents of this State of alleged violations of Title 21-A related to the conduct of statewide or federal elections. It specifies that the reported alleged violations must be categorized and that the log must include any action taken to address the alleged violations, if applicable. It also adjusts the reporting of this information in the report submitted to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over elections matters every two years.

21. It requires a municipal clerk to post or have posted a notice of election, attested by the clerk, in a conspicuous public place in a municipality at least 21 days immediately before election day and at each voting place in the municipality on election day.

22. It changes the deadlines from 60 days before the election to 90 days before the election for a municipality to request approval of a new voting place and for a party to file a complaint concerning the size of an existing voting place.

23. It clarifies that the restrictions on certain advertising at the voting place and on public property within 250 feet of the entrance of the voting place on election day include apparel.

24. It clarifies that wardens may limit or disallow signature gathering at the voting place as may be necessary to prevent violations of the ban on certain political activities at the polls.

25. It prohibits any person other than an authorized municipal official to distribute or collect voter registration applications inside the voting place or on public property within 250 feet of the entrance of the voting place on election day.

26. It consolidates into one new section several existing provisions regulating activities at the voting place on election day, including poll watching, signature gathering, charitable activities and election observing.

27. It clarifies that a declared write-in candidate for President must file consent forms for each of the presidential electors with the Secretary of State no later than 5 p.m. on the 70th day before the election.

28. It changes the deadline by which municipal clerks must make absentee ballot applications available for primary elections from three months before the election to two months before the election.

29. It amends the provision identifying the facilities subject to in-facility absentee voting to include mental health residential facilities, residential facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and state mental health institutes.

30. It allows municipalities that receive multiple requests for public inspection of absentee ballots before processing, either on election day or in the seven days before election day, to reasonably limit the time and manner of public inspection and give priority to authorized representatives of parties and candidates.

31. It clarifies that a vote for a write-in candidate for President is attributable to that candidate's designated presidential electors.

32. It makes various changes to the provisions governing the electoral college to conform to the federal Electoral Count Reform Act. It clarifies that the Governor must issue the certificate of ascertainment of appointment of electors no later than six days before the meeting of electors. It also provides, in accordance with the Electoral Count Reform Act, that the meeting of electors must happen on the Tuesday after the 2nd Wednesday in December following their election. It specifies that the certificate of ascertainment of appointment of electors must contain a security feature selected by the Secretary of State in addition to the state seal.

33. It eliminates language governing the use of electronic tabulators providing for secrecy envelopes for ballots.

34. It changes the format and updates certain language of the provision governing closing of voting places that use electronic tabulators.

35. It provides that test ballots used to test electronic tabulating equipment must be marked in red ink rather than blue or black ink.