



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1048 – Election Law – Permanent Absentee Ballot List

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl & Richard Willson, Co-Presidents

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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. One of the League's fundamental principles is that election systems should help increase voter participation. **We support HB 1048 because we believe it can help make voting more accessible and give voters control over how and when they vote.**

The League took a position in 2014 to support the development and maintenance of a permanent absentee ballot list giving voters the choice to receive their ballot in the mail on an ongoing basis. While absentee voting can be a convenience for all voters, it particularly benefits voters with transportation problems, certain disabilities, and parents and other caretakers. Voters are not restricted to voting only during the hours a precinct or voting center is staffed, so voting need not interfere with anybody's work schedule, whether it's someone working multiple jobs or a senior executive.

The 2020 General Election demonstrated that expanded absentee voting is feasible and acceptable to voters. Approximately 50 percent of voters—in a year of very high turnout—voted by absentee (mail-in) ballot. Voters effectively followed instructions and, according to the State Board of Elections (SBE), only 0.24% of mail-in ballots were rejected. Furthermore, the more than 1.5 million voters who used mail-in voting in the fall of 2020 gave the SBE a good start on updating the voter registration list, a common concern voiced about ballots by mail. The provision in HB 1048 to contact voters prior to an election also supports continuous updates to the list. And although this bill refers to a "permanent" list, voters would be able to remove themselves from the list should their circumstances or preferences change.

The LWVMD, representing 1,500 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, urges a favorable report on HB 1048.