



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SB 171 General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committees - Procedures

Position: Favorable with Amendments

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports Senate Bill 171, requiring transparency in the process of selecting a candidate to fill a seat in the General Assembly when it is left vacant by the Central Committees.

Since 1985, the League of Women Voters has supported additional statewide standards regulating the central committee nominating process to fill legislative vacancies, public notice of meetings within the vacated district for public input, the public announcement of candidates prior to that meeting, and a publicly recorded vote of each committee member. SB 171 would support this position.

With Maryland having such a high rate of appointed legislators creating a transparent process of how those who are appointed would allow voters to know who is representing them and allow them to participate in public meetings before the appointment.

LWVMD would respectfully request an amendment to this bill that would ensure when a name is put forth for an appointment, along with their application, there shall be a disclosure to attest to how the candidate may know any member who sits on the committee in a professional or personal capacity.

Since 1985, the League of Women Voters of Maryland has supported the use of special elections to fill vacancies in the office of Senator or Delegate. We strongly believe that legislative representatives should be selected by their constituents rather than potentially serve nearly a full four-year term based on appointment by the Governor. While SB 171 does not allow for special elections, LWVMD is pleased that it shows a positive step in that direction and creates more transparency around the process.

We urge a favorable report, with LWVMD's proposed amendment, on SB 171.

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