



Testimony to the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

HB 509 - Campaign Finance - Contributions by Gas and Electric Utility Companies - Prohibition

POSITION: Support

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that free and fair elections depend on transparency, accountability, and safeguards that protect the democratic process from undue influence. The League supports campaign finance policies that help ensure government decisions are made in the public interest – not influenced by the political spending of companies with a direct financial stake in state policy.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland **supports HB 509**, which would prohibit gas and electric utility companies that do business in the state from making campaign contributions to candidates for state and local public offices. This prohibition will help ensure that decisions about essential public services are made in the best interests of Maryland residents.

Gas and electric utilities in Maryland operate as state-granted monopolies. Their rates, service obligations, and infrastructure investments are shaped by laws passed by the General Assembly and oversight by the Maryland Public Service Commission. Because legislative and regulatory decisions can directly impact the profitability and financial interests of these companies, campaign contributions from regulated monopoly utilities create a significant risk of conflicts of interest for policymakers.

HB 509 would strengthen public confidence in the utility regulation process, and support a fair and more transparent campaign finance system. Protecting the integrity of the policymaking process is critical to ensuring that government decisions reflect the public interest.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland and its 2,000 members strongly **urge a favorable report on HB 509**.