



**League of Women Voters
New Hampshire**

January 13, 2016

Senator Regina Birdsell, Chair
Public and Municipal Affairs Committee
Re: SB 346, AN ACT relative to hours of polling

Dear Senator Birdsell and members of the committee,

Since its founding more than 90 years ago, the League of Women Voters has worked to see that the Constitution's guarantee of the right to vote is a reality for all of our citizens. We have promoted laws that would make voting more accessible and spoken against laws that create unnecessary barriers that discourage or even prevent qualified citizens from being able to register to vote or cast a ballot.

Senate Bill 346 is an uncomplicated and sensible improvement to our election laws that will make it possible for more people to be able to get to the polls while they are open on Election Day.

Most countries hold elections on weekends or they have a voting day holiday. Our elections are held on a Tuesday, a workday for almost everyone who is eligible to vote. If we aren't going to change the day – and it doesn't seem like we are – we need to make it easier for people to get to the polls.

New Hampshire is one of the few states that doesn't have standard polling hours. Thirty-eight states require all the polls in the state to stay open for the same hours. In New Hampshire, people commuting home after work hear on the radio that the polls are open until 8:00 p.m., which they are in a few larger communities, only to find when they get to the polls in their own town that the polls closed at 7:00 p.m. The way people in New Hampshire commute, often driving an hour or more each way, and sometimes meeting traffic jams during rush hour, requires the Legislature to make concessions to help them to be able to get to the polls. With New Hampshire's very strict absentee voting rules – far stricter than most states – people do not have the option to vote absentee.

The League of Women Voters believes the right to vote should not depend on which community you happen to live in. Setting standard hours for voting will allow people to know when their local polls are really going to close. We urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on SB 346.

Thank you,
Liz, Tentarelli, President
Joan Flood Ashwell, Election Law Specialist
League of Women Voters NH