



**League of Women Voters
New Hampshire**

February 4, 2015

Rep. Kathleen Hoelzel, Chair
House Election Law Committee
Re: HB 659-FN-L, An act allowing all voters to vote by absentee ballot

Dear Chairman Hoelzel and members of the committee:

The League of Women Voters NH is a nonpartisan organization that works to encourage citizens to take an interest in politics and to vote. After study by its members, the League often advocates for legislation and public policies that serve the public interest. We are particularly interested in election reform measures that make voting more accessible to our citizens.

The League supports HB 659 which would remove restrictions on using an absentee ballot and allow all voters to use them. We believe this reform would make voting more accessible to citizens, especially those who have work or family obligations which can interfere with attempts to vote.

Most states allow absentee voting for all voters. Other states have a variety of restrictions, often not as comprehensive as ours. In this state, you can only be excused from voting in person if you will not be in your voting district during the time the polls are open, if you have a physical disability, or if it would interfere with your religion. The law doesn't make allowance for people who might think they won't be able to get to the polls but who don't actually know in advance what their commitments will be on Election Day.

The 2014 House Election Law Study Committee heard many requests for the committee to support absentee voting for all. Many of the people appearing before the committee were election officials who were well aware of the frustrations their constituents have with not having an option to make sure they get to cast a ballot.

Many people enjoy going to the polls on Election Day and sharing the sense of community and commitment that comes from voting. The League certainly appreciates this but we also realize the world has changed. Voters used to live and work in the same community and most worked the same hours. Setting aside one day for everyone to go and vote made sense then but it's not realistic in this day and age. It simply isn't always possible for people to take time from work and to arrange their family's lives to be free to go to the polls when they're open. We need to make sure people who live less structured lives can still vote.

The League of Women Voters NH urges the committee to vote OTP on HB 659-FN-L.

Thank you,

Liz Tentarelli, co-president
Sally Davis, co-president
Joan Flood Ashwell, election law specialist
League of Women Voters NH