



**League of Women Voters
New Hampshire**

January 27, 2016

Senator Regina Birdsell, Chair
Public and Municipal Affairs Committee
Re: SB 509-FN, AN ACT relative to voter registration forms and relative to voter identity verification

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.

The League opposes SB 509-FN and urges the committee to vote this bill "*Inexpedient to Legislate.*"

Senate Bill 509 makes the voter registration form more confusing for both voters and for election workers. What does NEW REGISTRATION mean? Does it mean someone who has never voted before or does it mean someone who has never voted in a town or ward in New Hampshire? The current voter registration form already asks voters if they have ever been registered to vote anywhere else so this new checkoff is unnecessary.

What is the purpose of the other two checkoffs? Neither provides information that isn't already included on the registration form. The League believes Online Voter Registration would make it unnecessary for someone who is already registered to vote in NH to have to go through the entire registration process again just to change an in-state address or a name. As far as a change of address in a town or ward, ballot clerks make that change on election day.

The most serious problem with SB 509 though, is that it gives the Secretary of State, Town Clerks and Supervisors of the Checklist power to conduct criminal investigations. The League does not believe the Secretary of State or town elections officials are properly qualified to take over the duties of our law enforcement agencies. The voters who are subject to their investigations have legal and constitutional rights which must be protected. If a local election official failed to protect the rights of a voter under investigation, that town official would be subject to legal action.

Voters who don't have current drivers' licenses or similar documents can sign an affidavit, a legal document, and swear they are qualified to vote. This Legislature has chosen to assume anyone who does that is probably a criminal and needs to be investigated. After more than 4,000 investigations after the 2012 election alone, not one person has been found to have lied on an affidavit. If this legislature wants to continue wasting taxpayers' money this way, they will have to continue the process with the proper investigating agency which is the Attorney General's office.

The League of Women Voters recommends the committee vote *Inexpedient to Legislate* on SB 509.

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