



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
NEW HAMPSHIRE

[www.LWVNH.org](http://www.LWVNH.org)

4 Park St. Room 200  
Concord, NH 03301

March 7, 2017

re **SB 3—relative to domicile for voting purposes and its proposed amendment**

To Chair Senator Regina Birdsell and members of the Senate Election Law Committee:

As you know, the League of Women Voters is a non-partisan grassroots organization that has been working for 97 years to encourage voting and informed participation in government. In this legislative session in particular we have been following bills that seem aimed at tightening voter eligibility as a reaction to unsubstantiated rumors and allegations of widespread voter fraud.

The League regards the right to vote as the most important right we have, because by voting we have a voice in all the other actions of government that affect us. Any attempt to deny that right, just because a person does not have the same kind of permanent home nor typical photo ID that you and I likely have, is an attempt to pass judgment on the very people who may need a voice the most.

We appreciate that the amendment attempts to list a number of ways for voters to demonstrate domicile. For some of us, no problem. For others, however, the effect is much more serious: on a potential voter who may be unemployed and living with a friend for a while, or a potential voter with a disability who may not understand each element of the lengthy forms submitted, or a potential voter who is scratching his head wondering why in his old state his word was good enough but New Hampshire demands written proof ASAP—the effect is to make voting seem somehow the bastion of privileged “others.”

Today various people will address some of the technical details that make this bill unworkable. League wants first to make the human argument: Filling out two lengthy forms, signing and initialing in multiple places that I understand voter fraud is a punishable crime, will turn voting from a joy that we live in a democracy to a fear-inducing event that the police will come knocking on my door because I forgot to bring some paperwork with me, as though I committed a criminal act. And if I were one of those people whose paperwork is never organized, I would be highly unlikely to find the documentation easily and get it copied and to the town clerk in the allotted time. My grandson’s best buddy comes to mind...

I will leave it to others to explain how hard it can be to prove domicile when mail goes to post office boxes, when a passport does not have an address, when getting a new drivers license to show address change costs money (think poll tax), and when a deed or mortgage or property tax bill proves only ownership, not domicile.

To touch on only one technical point of the amendment: Supervisors of the checklist are not authorized to drive around town, come onto someone’s property, knock on the door and ask who lives there. Not only is this something most supervisors would be loath or fearful to do, one must wonder what the result of a “yes” or “no” answer would be. Would a supervisor trust the word of whoever answered the door more than the sworn statement of the applicant for a ballot? Why? And if the friend who had been living there has since moved on, does a “no” answer indicate a fraudulent vote or merely a normal

amount of moving around?

Instead the local police could drive around and knock on doors, the amendment suggests. This might be safer and even legal, but is it the best use of our local police? Seems like yet one more unfunded state mandate passed down to localities.

We realize the bill's sponsor would reply that supervisors and local police are not required to do this; they can send the affidavits to the Secretary of State if a voter does not return with acceptable documents in the time frame allowed. But this is exactly what election officials do now, as soon as they process the affidavits, so we ask why this revision is needed. It would, in fact, delay passing along affidavits to the Secretary of State by at least 30 days.

If the intent of this bill is to deter potential voters, the bill will do that. If the intent is to slow down lines at the polls and at town clerks' offices, it will do that with the repetitious elements on applications and affidavits. If the intent is to create more work for supervisors of the checklist so that people will not even run for that office, it will do that. If the intent is to enroll local police into a voter fraud investigative unit, it will do that, as an unfunded state mandate passed down to local communities.

But if the intent is to restore integrity to New Hampshire's election process, I would ask what more could one look for in terms of integrity than to examine the results of last November's election: we elected a Republican Legislature and Governor and a Democrat Senator and cast our electoral ballots for a Democrat for President. In typical NH fashion, we voted independently. I hope that this committee and this legislature are not questioning the validity of their own elections.

I ask the committee to consider why this cumbersome and discriminatory bill is needed. Will it be like the infamous Polaroid cameras purchased two years ago to take mug shots of voters without IDs, to be affixed to ID affidavits? How did that one work out, other than someone at the Secretary of State's office thinking "Liz was having a really bad hair day on November 8." Before we can fix a problem, we need to figure out what the problem is. This bill does neither.

**The League of Women Voters NH urges a vote of "Inexpedient to Legislate" on SB 3.**

Respectfully submitted,

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