

Jan. 15, 2022

To Senate Election Law chair Sen. Jim Gray and the Committee

From Joan Ashwell, Durham

Re: **SB418**

I just read SB 418. There are many things wrong with it but, most appalling, it eliminates the secret ballot. As the introduction to the bill says, many elections in New Hampshire are decided by one vote or they are tied. If a town has one "affidavit" ballot on election day, and if that person doesn't successfully complete the incredibly complicated ritual described in the bill, the vote made on the colored ballot will be rejected and all the ballots recounted. In a tie or one-vote election, it will be obvious to everyone how the person who cast the "affidavit" ballot voted.

New Hampshire has many small towns so the idea of one "affidavit" ballot in a town would not be unusual.

In addition, I believe the bill violates New Hampshire's requirement that all ballots be counted when the polls close. In reality, towns with affidavit ballots would only *provisionally* count their ballots. The real count would not be done until all the paperwork is received from the Secretary of State sometime later. (Note that the Secretary has taken an average of 90 days to mail out the current follow-up letters. Many people don't respond because in those three months they've moved, and the letters aren't forwarded.)

New Hampshire was exempted from Motor Voter because it agreed to offer same-day registration and it agreed that it would not have *provisional* ballots; all the ballots would be counted when the polls close. Despite the twists and turns in this legislation, I think it violates that agreement.

I urge the committee to vote **Inexpedient to Legislate on SB 418**.