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To Senate Election Law Chair Gray and the Committee

From Liz Tentarelli, president, League of Women Voters NH
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SB418 is another attempt to make voting procedures more complicated in order to discourage people from voting. We must not let the innocuous “verification of voter affidavits” in the title lull us into thinking this bill won’t change things much. It will create provisional ballots. The fancy name doesn’t mask what it is. Voters don’t like provisional ballots. The election results are delayed. Already overworked town clerks will have additional chores. Please recommend SB418 Inexpedient To Legislate.

The bill’s editorial first paragraphs make this sound like a solution to a crisis. We do not have a crisis of fraudulent voting.

In 2017, the legislature passed SB3, which was ultimately declared unconstitutional by the courts, at a cost to the state of millions of dollars and hundreds of hours of staff time.

Because the ongoing lawsuit stayed the SB3 process, SB3 was operational in only one election. Since then we’ve had multiple local, state, and federal elections.

Without SB3 in effect, voter fraud has not increased. It remains at just a few cases of confused first time voters, a couple of old people also confused about whether they’d also voted absentee, and one case of a stubborn coot who believed that owning homes in two towns entitled him to two votes.

But rampant voter fraud was the threatened outcome if SB3 were not enacted. That assumption has been disproven.

The only reason for changing a process that has been working well, with just a tiny number of non-compliant voters in elections with huge voter turnout, is to suppress the vote. That is what this bill will do in several ways.

The sponsors will argue that we must “restore the public’s faith in our elections.” Putting ballots bar codes on some ballots will NOT restore confidence in the election system. Handing a voter a receipt will NOT restore confidence. Having a voter cast a ballot of a different color

than everyone else's will NOT create trust. Rather it will create doubt about the privacy of the election process.

Like SB3, this bill will create additional paperwork for voters and for town election officials. More paperwork means more time spent with each voter at the polls on election day, amidst noise and confusion.

How many election workers will we lose from the frustration of trying to explain why a voter is getting a bar-coded ballot of a different color from everyone else?

How many potential voters, who have heard from friends and neighbors that "in New Hampshire, you can register on election day at the polls" will feel hoodwinked?

How many voters will declare "Never again!" in frustration?

And what is the voter likely to do who is given a packet of information about what to do to verify his/her ballot? Upon leaving the polling place, I predict most will simply toss the packet in the car or stuff it in a pocket and continue on the day's errands, and forget entirely that the harried election official prescribed next steps.

We already take photos of people who vote without a photo ID or other identification. The Secretary of State already processes those people's affidavits, and the Attorney General already does a follow-up. Must we make this even more complicated?

I respectfully ask this committee to save everyone grief by **recommending SB418 Inexpedient To Legislate**. Voter fraud is extremely rare in New Hampshire, voter turnout is the envy of many other states, and this bill is not needed.