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To House Election Law Committee

From Liz Tentarelli, president, League of Women Voters NH

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Re: **HB502**, in support

HB502 seeks to repeal last year's SB418, which was another attempt to make voting procedures more complicated in order to chase the phantom of the white van with Massachusetts voters visiting our state biennially. Despite its innocuous name, SB418 created provisional ballots. Voters don't like provisional ballots. The election results are delayed. Already overworked town clerks will have additional chores following elections. The supervisors of the checklist will be tasked with individually explaining what someone must do, right before or after that person has apparently voted. Confusing? Yes. **Please recommend HB502 Ought To Pass**, to get rid of last year's bad law.

I would like to testify in favor of HB502 from the perspective of the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan organization whose mission is empowering voters.

We produce fliers and brochures for public distribution that explain in the simplest language we can use what a person must do to register and to cast a ballot. That challenge gets harder every time legislators tighten laws as a solution to a crisis that does not exist. We do not have a crisis of fraudulent voting that demands extreme measures. Had SB418 been in effect already, it would not have prevented one of the 2022 congressional candidates from voting in both the New Hampshire and the New Jersey presidential primaries in 2016. Nor would it have stopped the stubborn coot a few years ago who believed that owning homes in two towns entitled him to vote in each town.

What SB418 will do is confuse and ultimately disenfranchise eligible voters. We can stop that confusion now, by passing HB502 to overturn SB418 before it has to be applied.

The burden of trying to clear through the confusion of an "affidavit ballot" will fall not only on the League of Women Voters in advance of elections, but on every supervisor of the checklist in New Hampshire. Note that the last section of SB418 decrees the Secretary of State "shall provide training for supervisors of the checklist on how the nonpublic data in the statewide centralized voter registration database may be used to satisfy voter identification requirements." Okay. But please also note that supervisors of the checklist are elected officials and are not required to take training. Nor, to my knowledge, has such training been provided, and we are only **three weeks away from a special election in Rochester and six weeks away from many municipal elections**. So will the database be used as it might be to prove ID of someone who doesn't have a photo ID with them? Will individual supervisors feel comfortable affirming IDs this way? Or will they hand packets to the voters who have forgotten/lost/don't possess photo IDs and say, "Read this, fill it out, mail it back within 7 days"? Honestly, I don't think supervisors would do this so cavalierly, but instead they would try in the middle of the confusion of the polling place to explain exactly what the voter must do so his/her vote is not

“uncounted” in ten days. And the voter, eager to get home and get dinner on the table for the kids who are pulling on coat-tails through all this, will say “Sure, I should be able to do that.”

I’ve started thinking about my own town’s March town meeting, the “business” portion that is held the night after the balloting for town officials. We’ve got a big bond issue warrant article this year in my town.

Supporters are trying to get their friends and neighbors out to vote, some of whom are new to town or not regular voters. They may not choose to vote for selectboard or library trustee on March 14—often there are no contests—but they might come and try to register to vote in person on March 15, so they can vote for or against the library expansion.

If these new voters don’t bring ID, will they be allowed to vote? Will they be given a different; y colored little paper ballot so that it can be “un-counted” if they don’t show up within 7 days with an ID? Will they have to wear orange mittens for hand votes so theirs will be provisionally counted? What an introduction that would be to voting in New Hampshire!

How many potential voters registering for the first time in the Granite State, who have heard from friends and neighbors that “in New Hampshire you can register on election day at the polls,” will feel hoodwinked if they haven’t brought every single paper proof requested?

How many voters will declare “Never again!” in frustration?

How many election workers will we lose from the frustration of trying to explain why a voter’s ballot will get an identifying bar-code or number? How much anger and confusion will arise when the coded ballot is put in a side pocket rather than going thru the machine? “Will my ballot be counted?” is the logical reaction to being treated differently.

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?

Voter fraud is extremely rare in New Hampshire, voter turnout is the envy of many other states, SB418 passed but is not needed. And even the Secretary of State had serious reservations about SB418 last year. I respectfully ask this committee to save everyone grief by **recommending HB502 Ought To Pass**, to get rid of the unnecessary complication of SB418.