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To Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

From Liz Tentarelli, president, League of Women Voters NH LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com

Re: SB 73 requires the secretary of state to establish a grant system for cities and towns to access monies from Help America Vote Act grants for the use of improving election security and technology.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 was passed by the United States Congress to make sweeping reforms to the nation's voting process. HAVA addresses improvements to voting systems and voter access that were identified following the 2000 election. No one wants a repeat of the 2000 presidential election, when "hanging chads" and interminable recounts were dinner table conversation.

HAVA created new mandatory minimum standards for states to follow in several key areas of election administration. The law provides funding to help states meet these new standards, replace voting systems and improve election administration.

Here in New Hampshire most of us are proud of our election process, and we value our election workers. But it is clear that new ballot counting machines are needed, and trials with e-poll books have shown that they are valuable in larger towns and cities.

This bill seeks to loosen the purse-strings so that towns and cities can access grants of HAVA funds to make improvements locally. Those local improvements may go a long way to getting the election skeptics to see the election process successes we all want.

A friend stored some of her antiques and furniture in my basement when she moved about ten years ago. Eventually I tried to convince her that hoarding those things in my basement, which she visited only once a year or so, was not letting that furniture live its life to the fullest. Chairs are meant to be sat on; tables want to have dinners served on them. Last summer I issued an ultimatum: she sold or gave away nearly all them, and we both like to imagine the joy those furnishings are bringing to other families right now.

The HAVA money that sits in an account, unspent, must be as sad as my friend's chairs were. Yes, the state needs to have funds available, such as for more audit machines. But look at what HAVA stands for: Help America Vote. It is the technology improvements locally that will actually Help Us Vote.

Please vote Ought To Pass on SB 73.