



FEBRUARY 17, 2021

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN SC: DANGEROUS TURN FOR SEC CHANGE

On February 16 the House Judiciary Committee adopted a report from their Elections Subcommittee that makes a very dangerous change in H.3444, a bill to restructure the State Election Commission (SEC) and expand its powers (<https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php?billnumbers=3444>). Although the League did not oppose the bill in its original form, we strongly oppose passage of this bill in its current form and hope that other concerned organizations will join us.

The bill as originally written would have established partisan balance in the SEC, even allowing opportunities for the appointment of independents and representatives of smaller political parties. However, as amended the bill would create an extremely partisan SEC, clearly designed to be responsive to the needs and wishes of a party rather than South Carolina's diverse electorate.

When combined with other provisions of the bill, this imbalance becomes very dangerous. H. 3444 instructs the SEC to "standardize the performance, conduct, and practices" of the county boards, and provides authority to establish regulations to achieve this. The League supports the ability of the SEC to ensure consistent interpretation of state election law. However, the very broad powers enumerated in H.3444 are not needed to achieve that legitimate goal. This was demonstrated in 2020 when the SEC quickly and effectively moved to end inconsistent interpretations of election law when it learned of them. The very partisan SEC that would be created by H.3444 in its current form does not need and should not have the much broader powers provided by this bill.

H.3444 will now move to the House Calendar. We hope that concerned organizations will notify their members of the dangers presented by this bill and encourage constituent outreach to legislators in opposition to the bill.

Thank you to everyone for all that you do!

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