



Testimony
House Privileges & Elections Subcommittee on Election Administration
Monday, January 22, 2024

[HB44](#)

Absentee voting; absentee voting in person, available beginning 30 days prior to election.

The League of Women Voters opposes HB 44. The bill unduly restricts early in-person voting to 30 days. Since ballots must be ready 45 days before an election for mailing to military and overseas voters, there is no reason to make voters at home wait longer. Many of those voters work long hours, work multiple jobs, care for children, or care for elders, including some combination of those demands. Many who are themselves elderly must rely on others to get to the polls. Many voters have long commutes and cannot be sure they could get to their polling place on Election Day. Yet, they prefer to vote in person. They should not be deprived of the opportunity they already have to vote conveniently.

[HB 79](#)

Special elections; elections permitted to be held on the same day as a primary election.

The League of Women Voters opposes HB 79. If special elections are held the same day as a primary election for only one political party, voters from the party that is holding the primary are more likely to turn out to vote, which could significantly skew the results of the special election. No party should have an unfair advantage over another.

[HB 393](#)

Election reform.

ORAL TESTIMONY

The League urges you to vote no on HB 393, a bill that not only steps backward from recent election reforms that make it easier to vote but also introduces novel requirements that are burdensome to election officials and could lead to voter harassment and intimidation. Virginia

voters would lose the advantages of same day voter registration and no-excuse early voting, which would be curtailed. No drop boxes would be allowed but photo IDs would be required.

Brand new burdens would be placed on election officials, for no real purpose other than to expose online any gift of goods or services the registrar's office might have received, even though such gifts are prohibited, who has registered or been removed from the voter rolls, and who voted in the most recent election. Voters would feel threatened. They would be upset and angry. You would hear from them.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

This bill includes about a dozen provisions that either reverse current rules that facilitate all voters' exercise of their right to vote or introduce new measures that impose new burdens on our election workers and administrators. Some provisions would intimidate voters. The League of Women Voters urges you to vote no.

The bill would revoke or restrict such benefits to voters as same day registration for anyone other than military and overseas voters, drop boxes, and the permanent absentee list. Only military and overseas voters could return a ballot postmarked by election day but arriving by a later deadline and only those particular voters would benefit from 45 days of early voting. Everyone else could only avail themselves of early voting for ten days and would need an excuse to vote early. Photo IDs would be reintroduced, even though they were the rule for only six years in the voting history of the Commonwealth. None of these current rules have been proven to have a negative impact on the legitimacy of elections in Virginia and, as such, turning back the clock is not only unnecessary but suppresses voting. Voters who work long hours or multiple jobs, who care for children or the elderly, who have long commutes, or who are themselves dependent on others to transport or assist them—all these voters would find their voting options minimized.

The new measures include eliminating the Central Absentee Precinct and requiring that all early voting ballots be collected and distributed to precincts for tallying, putting new burdens on officers of election at the end of a very long day. The general registrars would have to post online the source of any gifts their offices receive, which is absurd, given that such gifts are prohibited. They would also be burdened by monthly online posting the names of newly registered voters and also everyone who voted in an election. This would expose real people to harassment and intimidation. Voters would be upset and angry, increasing distrust in elections.

The apparent intent of this bill is to discourage voter fraud. There is no history or evidence of voter fraud that affects the outcome of elections in Virginia. All this bill accomplishes is to make it harder to run an election and, for many Virginians, makes it harder to vote.

[HB565](#)

Voter registration; registration of Department of Motor Vehicles customers, automatic update.

The League supports HB 565 because it will help ensure that voters who are already registered to vote in Virginia are registered in the correct precinct. Many people forget to update their voter registration addresses but remember to update their addresses for their driver's licenses. While it is true that eligible citizens can opt out of automatic voter registration, once they are registered, this proposal would make it easier for them to keep their registration current and accurate. Not only would the bill help voters, but it would also assist in maintaining clean voter rolls.

[HB658](#)

Elections; allows for any local or constitutional office to be conducted by ranked choice voting.

ORAL TESTIMONY

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports the expansion of ranked choice voting to all state-wide primary elections, as described in HB 658.

We believe that ranked choice voting, or RCV, would make our elections more accessible, would promote nominees with broad support, and would ensure that every voter's voice is heard. RCV often results in a more diverse slate of candidates who can run for office without the fear of being a "spoiler" or splitting the vote. RCV allows voters to express their choice of candidates fully, without worrying about "wasting their vote" if a preferred candidate drops out before election day, and without worrying about voting for the likely winner, rather than the candidate that most closely represents their personal views. RCV ensures that the winning candidate has the broad support of the majority of voters, rather than just a 22% or 34% plurality of voters.

The League of Women Voters of Virginia asks this subcommittee to move HB 658 to the full P&E committee.

WRITTEN STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports the expansion of ranked choice voting, permitted in HB658. We believe that ranked choice voting or RCV would make our elections more accessible, would promote nominees with broad support, and would ensure that every voter's voice is heard.

RCV has already been used to select candidates for general election races in Virginia, including recent Republican Party primary elections.

RCV is of particular benefit in crowded races, where voters typically may decide to vote strategically to avoid “wasting” their vote on a candidate who has little chance of winning. Additionally, the field can be in flux as candidates drop out, raising the chance that voters will cast a ballot for an inactive candidate. This may be especially true for Virginians who are living overseas, including members of our armed forces, who vote early to help ensure their ballots arrive in time. Giving voters the option to rank candidates in order of preference gives a voter a chance to still have a consequential vote on their ballot.

RCV additionally produces nominees with strong and widespread support, even in a crowded field of candidates. By requiring majority support, RCV incentivizes candidates to build an inclusive campaign and appeal to the broadest group of primary voters. Many voters feel that they must vote strategically in regular elections, by voting for someone whom they believe has the best chance of defeating their last choice in a primary, rather than selecting the candidate who best represents their views.

[HB668](#)

Elections, local; locality by ordinance shift the timing of the election.

The League of Women Voters opposes HB 668. While localities may want greater flexibility in managing their elections, this bill provides too much discretion to those officials whose own elections are involved. Not only would elected officials be given the power to shift their own elections to a lower turnout year, but they would also be extending their own terms by a year without a public vote. Although the bill requires a public hearing, the governing body would still retain the right to change their own elections.

[HB 750](#) (Walker)

Candidates for office; electronic petitions.

The League of Women Voters supports HB750. In today’s world, where all kinds of banking transactions and contracts, even for the purchase and sale of real property, can be executed and ratified electronically, there is no reason why candidate petitions cannot be handled the same way, as long as there are appropriate safeguards in place. This bill provides for proper safeguards and brings into the twenty-first century the process for getting candidates on the ballot.

[HB932](#) and [HB1200](#)

Absentee voting; limits availability of absentee voting in person.

The League opposes [both] HB932 [and] HB1200. The bill[s] reduce Virginia's 45-day early voting period to fourteen days. Federal law requires that the ballots must be ready to be mailed to military and overseas voters forty-five days before an election. Since the ballots are ready, regular eligible voters should be allowed to cast their ballots too.