

Testimony
Senate Privileges & Elections Committee

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

[SB301](#)

Campaign finance, required reports; extension of deadlines and appeal of fines.

While the League of Women Voters of Virginia generally supports the need for updating current rules for candidates' filings, including the passage of a more rationale system for allowing candidates to utilize exceptions for catastrophic problems, we are concerned that some on the terms in this bill, such as "reasonable considerations" are not defined. We welcome an opportunity to work with Senator DeSteph on this important issue.

[SB315](#)

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

The League supports SB 315 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.

[SB377](#)

Campaign finance; prohibited personal use of campaign funds; complaints, hearings, civil penalty.

The League of Women Voters supports SB 377. Currently, Virginia has no legal restrictions on how candidates can use their campaign funds, except for surplus funds at the end of a campaign or term of office. As such, Virginia has rightfully earned its rank of 46 out of 51 on the non-partisan Coalition for Integrity's S.W.A.M.P. Index.

We hope the provision allowing for campaign funds to be used for childcare expenses be expanded to all dependent care, as in previous versions of the bill.

This bill is a welcome step toward strengthening Virginia's campaign finance laws.

[SB406](#)

Political campaign advertisements; advertisements sponsored by a person or nonparty committee

The League of Women Voters supports SB 406. Tightening and clarifying the conditions for producing and distributing sample ballots, and in particular requiring that sample ballots include the names and affiliations of their sponsors, further reduces the temptation to "buy" votes and confuse voters. The League supports increased transparency around sources and content of campaign funding and materials.

[SB428](#)

Elections; conduct of elections; ranked choice voting; locally elected offices; report

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.

[SB527](#)

General Assembly; intergovernmental affairs; delegates to a convention for proposing amendments.

The League of Women Voters urges the Committee to reject any effort to develop mechanisms to organize a constitutional convention under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Constitution is the foundation of the United States' democratic republic. It has made this country great. A constitutional convention would open the entire constitution to unknown, unpredictable propositions. It could endanger or destabilize our system of government.

As for the details of the bill, we contend that any convention should be limited to a specific topic, that delegates must be selected by the citizens, that voting should be by the delegates and not the states, and that the entire process must be transparent, not conducted in secret.

[SB605](#)

Assistance for certain voters outside of the polling place; definition of "disability"; training

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports SB 605. We are committed to removing barriers to voting so that every eligible Virginian has the opportunity to vote in every election. Disability has been called the minority group everyone can join. If entering a polling place presents a problem, the nature of a person's disability should not determine whether they can use curbside voting. SB 605 will include any permanent or temporary disability and will help election officials understand how best to assist curbside voters.

[SB606](#)

Voter registration; list maintenance; data sharing; requiring membership in ERIC

The League strongly supports SB 606. Virginia was one of the founders of ERIC, the Electronic Registration Information Center. ERIC is hands down the best tool for maintaining accurate voter lists. It is managed and directed by its member states, each of which has a seat on the board. ERIC developed exceptionally sophisticated safeguards to secure all states' voter registration databases. It informed our Department of Elections of voters who moved, who might have voted in two states, and who died. Virginia cannot replicate the advantages of ERIC, particularly for the price. The Commonwealth should rejoin ERIC as soon as possible and encourage all other states to join or renew their membership.