



Statement for the Committee on State Government Finance and Policy and Elections

Senate File 514 – Elections Omnibus Bill

Kathy Tomsich, League of Women Voters Minnesota

February 27, 2017

My name is Kathy Tomsich. I have been head election judge for over 12 years in Ramsey County. I am also a volunteer lobbyist for the League of Women Voters Minnesota. League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. We work to ensure that voting is free, fair and accessible for all citizens.

I will be testifying in opposition to the inclusion of SF 1225 in the Elections Omnibus Bill.

We oppose the introduction of provisional ballots in Minnesota. It is an unnecessary and expensive change to our election system, an unfunded mandate that will only make our elections more complicated for the voters and election administrators without improving the integrity of our elections.

No evidence has been presented that tells us our current regulations regarding challenged voters needs to be changed. Our election system, with Election Day registration and the process used to handle challenged voters, has been designed to maximize access to the ballot box while maintaining election integrity. In general provisional ballots make it more difficult for a voter to have their ballot counted since the voter is required to take at least one extra trip to a city or county election office. This voter may have to take time off from work or seek help with transportation. Introducing provisional ballots will make it more difficult for handicapped voters and low income voters to access the ballot box.

We oppose including in the Public Information List data that is now not public. The Office of the Secretary of State testified on Feb. 21, 2017 that this data is only current as of the date the Office receives it and sometimes, unfortunately, the information is not accurate. Our present system allows the voter to correct this status at the polling site in an efficient and uncomplicated manner without the voter being worried about his/her status being made public or concerned about inaccurate information being available for sale to the public. Introducing this data in public information will not enhance the voting experience; instead it will be a detriment.

We oppose making public the party affiliation of election judges. There is no evidence that this is necessary to protect the integrity of our elections and it could significantly reduce a citizen's willingness to be an election judge.

We also oppose the requirement that an election judge be affiliated with a major political party. This provision would prevent a significant number of citizens from fully participating in our Democracy.

The League of Women Voters Minnesota urges members to vote NO on including SF1225 in the Elections Omnibus Bill.

Thank you for your time.