



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

M I C H I G A N

EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Testimony of Sue Smith, President, League of Women Voters of Michigan

Before the Michigan Senate
Local Government and Elections Committee
November 2, 2011

Good afternoon. My name is Sue Smith and I am the President of the League of Women Voters of Michigan. I would like to take this opportunity to address the League's interests in election issues and to comment on some of the proposed bills.

In the area of campaign finance, the League supports timely and full disclosure of all election spending along with strong enforcement and penalties to deter violations of the law. We are concerned about the role of money in elections and the perception that policymakers are beholden to campaign contributors, which contributes to cynicism about government. We believe that unregulated independent expenditures, primarily in the form of television ads, are a priority for campaign finance reform.

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. The League has long supported policies that make voting more convenient and accessible, including no reason absentee voting, early voting, and additional opportunities to register to vote.

Michigan's voting laws need to be updated to serve today's busier, more complex world and fit the needs of today's families. We believe that every registered voter should have the option to vote absentee. Most of Michigan's voters **do not** have this option.

We think that measures to improve election administration should be evaluated in terms of their necessity, costs, and how they affect voters' rights. It is within this context that I present the League's comments on SB 751 and SB 754. I want to specifically address the requirements pertaining to voter identification and third party voter registration organizations.

Throughout its history the League of Women Voters has registered people to vote. Yet, under SB 754, organizations such as ours would be required to register with the Secretary of State's office and participate in training in order to be certified. The League opposes mandatory registration and certification of third party registration agencies because it places burdens on civic organizations and restricts voter registration opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.