



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND, INC.

TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 64 – Voter Registration – Affiliating with a Party

POSITION: Support

BY: Barbara Schnackenberg and Nancy Soreng Co-Presidents

DATE: January 19, 2017

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active citizen participation, and that voting is a fundamental right and responsibility of citizens. The Maryland League has a position that supports a voter registration deadline set as close as possible to primary and general elections, consistent with technology that provides ballot security and makes the administration of the deadline cost-effective. The recently enacted change to Maryland Election Law that allows individuals to register to vote and to vote during the early voting period confirms that our state's election officials have been able to convince legislators that ballot security can be maintained while allowing same day voter registration during the period of early voting. SB 64 would allow unaffiliated voters (a voter who has registered to vote but declined to affiliate with a political party) to change their party affiliation at any time an individual may register to vote including early voting.

As of December 2016, there were 693,791 unaffiliated voters in the state. The passage of this legislation would enable almost 700,000 voters the opportunity to affiliate with a party and vote in primary elections. This could be one way to encourage more participation in the primary election process.

We urge a favorable report on SB 64.