



Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Dear Members of the House & Governmental Affairs Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana writes to **SUPPORT** or **OPPOSE** the following bills scheduled on the agenda of the House & Governmental Affairs Committee of the Louisiana Legislature for hearing at its meeting on Tuesday, March 26, 2024.

HB476 (Carlson) ELECTIONS: ELECTIONS/ABSENTEE VOTE: Provides for the delivery of absentee ballots by a person other than the voter

Louisiana has been losing population in recent years, particularly among its younger population. Elders, retirees, and disabled people without family in-state find it difficult to find people to assist them with completion, witnessing, and delivery of their absentee mail ballots. If an elderly couple with no family in state are housebound, would they have to get two different non-family members to assist them in putting their ballots in the mail?

This bill is one of a slate of bills this legislative session that takes aim at absentee by-mail voting, which has grown in popularity since the COVID pandemics and which seems likely to increase further given our aging population and the large number of disabled voters in the state. It criminalizes good neighbors, religious organizations, social services, and helping professions who might be well-situated to help multiple people in their communities who need assistance in voting. It is both voter suppression and voter suppression by proxy in deterring this assistance

HB261 (Willard) ELECTIONS/POLLING PLACES: Provides for permissible acts within the campaign-free zone at polling places

Overall, the League supports policies and procedures that support and improve polling place management. The League has supported poll observation programs to answer voters' questions and troubleshoot voting problems. The goal of these programs is to ensure votes are successfully cast and counted.

Louisiana allows partisan campaign watchers to be present at polling places, but it has been inhospitable to civil society groups supportive of voting rights and fair elections who wish to monitor polling places, identify barriers to voting, and assist voters who might experience problems. Just this past weekend, voting rights workers fanned out to polling places around the state to monitor for voting problems, ADA non-compliant facilities, and other issues. Louisiana should allow nonpartisan civil society organizations to assist voters within reasonable bounds external to polling places and should not penalize or criminalize such work as "electioneering."

HB 412 (Marcelle) ELECTIONS: Requires publication of proposed recommendations of the State Board of Election Supervisors

In general, the League's position on Representative Government promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive. The League's positions on Citizen Rights, the Right to Know, and Public Participation also call upon government to protect these crucial citizen rights by giving adequate notice of proposed actions and making public records accessible. The League supports openness and transparency in all areas of government, including recommendations, especially regarding elections and voting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Christian Green". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

M. Christian Green
President, League of Women Voters of Louisiana
Chair, LWVLA Voting Rights Committee