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To: Honorable Senator Nichi Farnham
Honorable Representative Michael Beaulieu
The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

From: League of Women Voters of Maine

Re: LD 1150, An Act To Improve the Administration of the Legislative Ethics Laws

Date: May 9, 2011

My name is Michelle Small, and I live in Brunswick. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Maine, and I am here as a volunteer to testify in support of LD 1150, An Act To Improve the Administration of the Legislative Ethics Laws. In particular, the League is in favor of granting the Ethics Commission the authority to investigate possible violations of legislative ethics on its own motion, without a complaint by a third party.

The League of Women Voters of the United States, a nonpartisan political organization with 50 state Leagues and more than 800 local Leagues, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

For a democracy to work properly, the electorate needs to feel confidence in its representatives. To promote this confidence, representatives must be accountable to citizens and transparent in their operations. It is of the utmost importance that representatives refrain from behavior that calls into question their ability to conduct government business honestly and impartially.

The Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices is charged with investigating and making advisory recommendations concerning apparent violations of legislative ethics. Currently, only a third party may file a complaint with the Ethics Commission to launch an investigation.

Commission							
Florida Commission on Ethics		X	X	X	X		§ 112.324(1)
Georgia State Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X		§ 21-5-6
Hawaii State Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 84-31
Idaho	No ethics commission						
Illinois Office of the Legislative Inspector General		X					5 ILCS 430/25
Indiana Lobby Registration Commission		X	X	X	X		
Office of the Indiana Inspector General and Indiana State Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X		§ 4-2-6-4
Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 68b.32b
Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X		§ 25-4160
Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X		§ 6.686
Kentucky Executive Branch Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 11A.080

Louisiana Board of Ethics	X	X	X				§ 42:1141
Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices	X	X	X	X	X		§ 1013
Maryland State Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 15-401
Massachusetts State Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X		§ 268B Sec. 4
Michigan State Board of Ethics	X	X	X	X	X		§ 15.345
Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board		X	X	X		X	§ 10A.02
Mississippi Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X		§ 25-4-19
Missouri Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X		§105.957
Montana Commissioner of Political Practices		X	X	X	X		§ 13-37-111
Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission		X	X	X	X	X	§ 49-14,124
Nevada Commission on Ethics	X	X				X	§ 281A.440
New Hampshire	No ethics commission						
New Jersey Election Law Enforcement		X		X			

Commission							
New Mexico	No ethics commission						
New York State Commission on Public Integrity	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 94-12
New York State Legislative Ethics Commission	No Response						
North Carolina State Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X	X	§ 138A-12
North Dakota	No ethics commission						
Ohio Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 102.06
Oklahoma Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X	X	§ 257:30-1-4
Oregon Government Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X		§ 244.260
Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X	X	§ 1108
Rhode Island Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X		§ 36-14-12
South Carolina Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 8-13-20
South Dakota	No ethics commission						
Tennessee Bureau of Ethics and Campaign Finance	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 3-6-201 § 3-6-210
Texas Ethics Commission	X	X	X	X	X		§ 571.122
Utah Independent		X*	X*				JR 6-3-101

Ethics Commission							
Vermont	No ethics commission						
Virginia	No ethics commission						
Washington State Legislative Ethics Board	X	X	X	X	X	X	§ 42.52.410, LEB Rule 1B
Washington Public Disclosure Commission	No response						
West Virginia Ethics Commission		X	X	X	X	X	§ 6B-2-3a
Wisconsin Government Accountability Board	X	X	X	X	X		§ 5.05(2m)(c)2.a
Wyoming	No ethics commission						
Total:	26	44	42	39	37	20	

* The Utah Independent Ethics Commission requires that two or more members of the House of Representatives file a complaint against a Representative; two or more members of the Senate file a complaint against a Senator; and permit two or more registered voters to file complaints against members of either the House or Senate.