



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

TESTIMONY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUNDAY, JULY 23, 2017

I am Cinde Weatherby, testifying as a member and on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas in OPPOSITION to Senate Bill 5. Thank you for the opportunity to share our positions with you today.

Voting is at the very core of our organization. We speak representing the more than 5,000 members and supporters throughout the state of Texas and League members across the country. The League is dedicated to ensuring that all eligible voters – particularly those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities -- have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote. We believe that SB 5 would result in the elderly and those with disabilities, in particular, fearing they might unintentionally do something wrong that could lead to imprisonment or a fine and not vote at all.

We share your concerns about mail-in ballot abuse. Chair Huffman called your attention to the issue and offered solutions in the regular session through amendments to two House bills. Your committee approved them, both houses passed the bills, and the Governor signed HB 658 and HB 1735. They will, respectively, become law September 1, 2017 and January 1, 2018. Perhaps not all of the Senators and Representatives are aware of these major changes.

The improvements in the mail-in ballot process for nursing homes and residential facilities and the increased penalties for deliberate vote harvesting by wrongdoers will be a sea change that should be sufficient. SB 5's additional penalty increases appear to be excessive and unnecessary.

An area that is still deserving your attention is the mail-in ballot and carrier envelope design. An easier to understand ballot and envelope will result in better compliance with the law, meeting your goal of reducing or eliminating problems. It would certainly help lower the number of unintentional violations.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

For additional information, please contact: Cinde Weatherby, Voting/Elections Issue Chair, cindeweatherby@gmail.com, 512.560.1334.

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan citizens' organization that has fought since 1919 to improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. It represents more than 5000 members and supporters throughout Texas.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The member-driven organization of women and men encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy of positions based on extensive issue study and consensus.

