



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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TESTIMONY OF REP. BRUCE WHITE PRESENTING

L.D. 1437, RESOLUTION, *Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine Concerning Alternative Signatures Made By a Person with Disabilities*

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veteran and Legal Affairs, my name is Bruce White, and I am the state representative for House District 109, which comprises part of Waterville.

I am pleased to present this constitutional resolution for your consideration. In my conversations with the Secretary of State, this legislation represents a united front in our shared desire to fully integrate the participation of all citizens in the mechanics of our democracy. I am committed to opening doors and removing barriers to any citizen who wishes to add their voice to our public discourse, and to me, this one is easy.

As a first-term legislator, I have learned a great deal already about the work you and your predecessors have done to structure some of the best election laws of any state in the country, and I only want to do what I can to further that. The Department of the Secretary of State will provide you with the statutory history of how both state and Federal law make many accommodations for people with disabilities to vote as independently as possible, both in-person and by absentee ballot. This legislation addresses a constitutional contradiction in that historic work that prevents people with some disabilities from participating in the process of petitioning their government, as the Constitution requires that signatures for initiatives and people's vetoes must be original signatures, made by the voter themselves.

This is an obvious problem for people who, for example, are quadriplegic, or have Parkinson's, or have no hands at all. This proposal would give the Legislature room to make allowance for alternatives to original signatures on citizen initiatives and people's vetoes, such as proxies and self-inking stampers, for example, as are allowed for in other sections of the law. Again, this amendment would not be prescriptive, but would leave it to the Legislature to amend the law or for the Legislature to direct the Secretary of State to address the issue through rulemaking.

I'm proud to stand up for my fellow Mainers so that all of them can participate in our democracy. I will make the best effort to answer any questions you may have.