LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

TO: The Honorable Senator Lisa T. Marraché
        The Honorable Representative John L. Patrick, Co-chairs
        The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs

RE: LD 854 An Act To Extend Term Limits for the House of Representatives
                                                    Sponsor: Senator Mills

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The League of Women Voters of Maine ("LWVME") is pleased to submit the following testimony concerning LD 854. Promoting an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive is key to our democracy and central to the mission of the League of Women Voters. We believe that term limits adversely affect the representativeness, accountability, effective performance of the Legislature. We favor repeal of term limits, and we urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 854.

While extending the terms may mitigate some of the negative consequences of term limits in the House, it is not clear that it will provide a cure for all of the problems that term limits have introduced. In addition, there may be unintended consequences of extending term limits rather than repealing them outright.   Advocates originally suggested that competition for seats would increase with less-entrenched incumbents. This has not occurred. Instead, potential challengers wait to run until there is an open seat once a legislator has been term limited. In addition, the number of primaries has decreased substantially thereby limiting competition.[1] We believe that extending the number of consecutive terms a member of the House of Representatives may serve will not change this trend and may serve to exacerbate this problem.

For these reasons, on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine, I urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 854.

Ann Luther, President
League of Women Voters of Maine
May 4, 2007

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[1] *First in the Nation: Term Limits and the Maine Legislature*, Richard Powell & Rich Jones, National Conference of State Legislatures' Joint Project on Term Limits, 2004, p. 6