



127th Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 30

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**Testimony of Senator Amy Volk before the
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**

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**LD 1012, RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of
Maine to Increase the Length of Terms of Senators**

Senator Whittemore, Representative Martin, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Senator Amy Volk, and I represent three communities in Cumberland and York Counties. I am before you today to present LD 1012, *RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Increase the Length of Terms of Senators*.

I am, again, submitting this amendment to Maine's Constitution which would increase the length of our State Senators' terms. I believe that this amendment could greatly benefit the state of Maine. Maine is one of only 12 states that still limit their Senators to serving only two years at a time. I feel there is a real disadvantage not only in having State Senators dedicate so much time to campaigning but also in there being the potential for new leadership in both bodies of the legislature every two years. Leadership upheaval every two years is very counterproductive. Most other states, 30 in fact, already give their Senators four year terms, and the other eight states allow their Senators to serve a 2-4-4 term cycle. I have provided a document highlighting this information for you from the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The way it stands right now, the Senate spends more time out of session preparing for the campaign season and campaigning than they do in session.

- During the first regular session, the Senate is in session for Swearing-In week in December and the months of January through mid-June (about 5 ½ months). This leaves **6 ½ months** out of session to campaign during the first year of their term.
- During the second regular session, the Senate is in session the months of January through mid-April (3 ½ months). This leaves **6 ½ months** (until the November election) out of session to campaign during the second year of their term.

- This gives the Senate just **9 months in session** while they spend up to **13 months campaigning**.

When the time given to campaign outweighs the time in session every election cycle, we cannot spend as much time on the issues that our constituents sent us to Augusta to take care of. What message are we sending to the voters by spending more of our time out holding fundraisers to raise money for our re-election campaigns than doing the job they elected us to do? There needs to be a better balance between in-session work and campaigning. If we were to increase the length of our Senate terms, we would have more time to dedicate to committee and legislative work and not have to focus so heavily on campaigning until the end of that four-year term.

Another benefit of increasing the length of terms would be the financial savings the state would see from Clean Election campaigns. I received the following information from the Maine Ethics Commission. The first chart details how much the Maine Clean Election Act (MCEA) spent total on Senate campaigns during the primary and general elections of 2014. The second chart details how much each Senate candidate received for their campaigns from the MCEA.

Maine Clean Election Act Participation and Payments in 2014			
	Total Candidates	MCEA Candidates	MCEA Payments
Payments for Primary			
Senate - Contested	10	6	\$44,154
Senate - Uncontested	70	36	\$65,916
Senate Total for Primary	80	42	\$110,070
Payments for General			
Senate - Contested	76	50	\$1,087,450
Senate - Uncontested	0	0	\$0
Senate Total for General	76	50	\$1,087,450
Total MCEA Payments for Senate in 2014			\$1,197,520

2014 MCEA Payment Amounts per Candidate	
Primary Elections	
Senate - Contested	\$7,359
Senate - Uncontested	\$1,831
General Elections	
Senate - Contested	\$21,749
Senate - Uncontested	\$7,177

If we were to increase the length of our Senate terms, these MCEA payments would not be needed every two years. We could spend the same amount every four years that is currently spent every two years and save the state and our voters a substantial amount of money.

Finally, I would like to propose a change to LD 1012. I know that increasing term lengths has not always been a popular discussion in the past in Maine, but I feel that this change may prove to be more favorable than simply increasing the term length to 4 years. To ensure that no districts have elections during every Gubernatorial election year or every Presidential election year, I would like to make the following changes:

- Separate the 35 Senate districts into two classes: Class I and Class II. The best way to do so would be to simply make all odd numbered districts Class I and all even numbered districts Class II. (There would be 18 Class I districts and 17 Class II districts)
- Beginning with the 2016 General Election, the Class I districts would be elected for a 2 year term and the Class II districts would be elected for a 4 year term.
- In the 2018 General Election, the Class I districts would be elected for their four year term, and the Class II districts would continue to serve the 4 year term they were elected to in 2016.
- Each Senator could still serve 8 years total, but they would be doing so in 3 terms instead of 4.
- Using this method, only half of our Senate seats would be up for election/re-election during each General Election. Also, proposing a change to the 2-4-2 term cycle would still allow each Senator to serve no more than 8 years total while allowing them to serve one longer term and skip having to go through one campaign cycle.

- Below, I have included a small chart of what this 2-4-2 cycle would look like for the next nine election cycles.

	Class I	Class II
2016	2	4
2018	4	
2020		
2022	2	4
2024	4	
2026		
2028	2	4
2030	4	
2032		

[The language for this amendment will be available to the Committee members for the work session.]

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of LD 1012. I am happy to attempt to answer any questions you may have now or in the upcoming work session.

Length of Terms (in years) for State Senate from NCSL

SENATE			
State	Term*	State	Term*
Alabama	4	Montana	4
Alaska	4	Nebraska	4
Arizona	2	Nevada	4
Arkansas	2-4-4	New Hampshire	2
California	4	New Jersey	2-4-4
Colorado	4	New Mexico	4
Connecticut	2	New York	2
Delaware	2-4-4	North Carolina	2
Florida	2-4-4	North Dakota	4
Georgia	2	Ohio	4
Hawaii	2-4-4	Oklahoma	4
Idaho	2	Oregon	4
Illinois	2-4-4	Pennsylvania	4
Indiana	4	Rhode Island	2
Iowa	4	South Carolina	4
Kansas	4	South Dakota	2
Kentucky	4	Tennessee	4
Louisiana	4	Texas	2-4-4
Maine	2	Utah	4
Maryland	4	Vermont	2
Massachusetts	2	Virginia	4
Michigan	4	Washington	4
Minnesota	2-4-4	West Virginia	4
Mississippi	4	Wisconsin	4
Missouri	4	Wyoming	4

* Note: In order for all terms to be completed within the 10-year apportionment cycle, a combination of two 4-year terms and one 2-year term may be used.

- > States with a 2 year term: 12
- > States with a 4 year term: 30
- > States with a 2-4-4 term: 8