



To: House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs

From: Sue Racanelli, President, League of Women Voters of Vermont

RE: Draft Bill 24-0461

February 21, 2024

The League of Women Voters of Vermont (LWVVT) supports draft bill 24-0461, which would establish a uniform Municipal Code of Ethics.

In our work since 2017 to establish and strengthen our state Ethics Commission, we learned that the Secretary of State's office frequently received complaints and questions about possible ethics issues at the municipal level that they had no authority to respond to.

It only makes sense there should be a uniform code that covers all Vermont cities and towns, making it easier for everyone to understand what is expected of our elected and appointed officials. That it closely follows that State Code enables a common understanding of the rules and simplifies ethics training of officials at every level. An appointed ethics liaison from each community would coordinate with the Vermont State Ethics Commission on education and training of town officials.

The number of offices that would be covered by this code and the variety of their powers and duties, makes it obvious that an ethics code must cover more than just "conflict of interest" as understood by the proverbial person on the street. Clear general guidance regarding prohibited conduct and employment restrictions are also included in this bill.

As noted above, and in our endorsement of 24-0229, LWVVT has worked from the beginning to have the Vermont State Ethics Commission established and strengthened over time. This is one more step toward bringing better government accountability to the citizens of Vermont at every level.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont urges your support and passage of this valuable bill.

Thank You.

*Susan Racanelli*