



To: Senate Committee on Government Operations

From: Sue Racanelli, President, League of Women Voters of Vermont (LWVVT)

RE: H.875, an act relating to the State Ethics Commission and the State Code of Ethics

April 11, 2024

The League of Women Voters strongly supports H.875 which, among other valuable provisions, will grant the Vermont State Ethics Commission powers to perform supplemental investigations and hearings, strengthen enforcement powers, and modify disclosure requirements for candidates for State office and office holders. The bill also proposes to create a uniform Municipal Code of Ethics.

In 2017, the League was instrumental in passing legislation establishing the Vermont State Ethics Commission. This was a significant victory for the people of Vermont but it still lacked a state Code of Ethics and investigative and enforcement powers.

In 2020, we supported the establishment of such a Code in law, which was accomplished in 2022. This new bill (H.875) now proposes to fill the large gap left in 2017: investigative and enforcement powers for the Commission and an increase in staffing.

Further, it only makes sense that 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 the State Code enables a common understanding of the rules and simplifies ethics training of officials at every level.

As noted above, LWVVT has worked from the beginning to have a State Ethics Commission established, and to have it 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 of this valuable bill. Thank you.

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