



To the Chair and members of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont (LWVVT) opposes the passage of H.1, An act relating to accepting and referring complaints by the State Ethics Commission.

This bill proposes to exempt the House and Senate Ethics Panels from the requirement to consult with the Executive Director of the State Ethics Commission on any complaint referred to the Panels by the Commission.

After barely an hour-and-a-half of testimony late last week, H.1 is now scheduled for a possible vote, two working days later. Having attended last Thursday's meeting, it appears to LWV that this bill is being rushed through without adequate testimony and deliberation.

In this time of ever-increasing distrust of government institutions, it is counterproductive to fast-track H.1. The purpose of the bill, to evade consultation with the Ethics Commission on questions of possible malfeasance by members of the General Assembly, does nothing to reassure the public.

- If you have trouble with your computer, you go to a professional for help.
- Even skilled gardeners are not reluctant to seek advice from an expert.

Consultation with the State Ethics Commission results in advice only. The Legislative Ethics Committees are not required to take that advice.

In 2017, the League was instrumental in passing legislation establishing the State Ethics Commission. That 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, which was finally accomplished in 2022.

We have worked since to strengthen the Commission, to bring it more closely in line with other states' effective Commissions.

H.1, An act relating to accepting and referring to complaints by the State Ethics Commission, is a step backward.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont wants an effective Ethics Commission for Vermont, not a Commission in name only. Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Vermont cannot support H.1

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