

Hi – my name is Dottye Ricks. First I would like to say - **Thank you** for your time and consideration and for your service to our state and to us.

I am here today as a representative of the League of Women Voters of Vermont. As set forth in a previous letter to this committee from the League, **we oppose the passage of H.1**. This bill does not advance knowledge and transparency. It will prevent consultation between legislative Ethics Panels and the State Ethics Commission on complaints directed to the Panels by the Commission. Consultation can only increase knowledge and understanding of the ethical issues presented. A lack of consultation can lead to hasty and possibly flawed decisions. Incomplete information is not in the interest of public disclosure. The public has a right to accurate, thoroughly examined, and informed/thoughtful decisions – and we hold those expectations of you, our representatives.

The League is concerned that H.1 is being expedited through the legislative process without adequate deliberation. **We oppose fast-tracking H.1**. Fast tracking a bill that evades thorough consultation and consideration does not lead to good law or good policy. On the contrary, it serves neither the public interest nor the legislators who would benefit from the input the Ethics Commission could share with the legislative panels.

The League has advocated for a strong state Ethics Commission since before the establishment of that Commission in 2017. Then, in 2017 we were instrumental in helping pass the legislation that established that Commission. While the Commission was a step forward in protecting the people of Vermont from unethical actions by politicians, it still lacked a state code of ethics and investigative and enforcement powers. We supported the establishment of such a code in 2022. We are proud of how far Vermont has come in promoting governmental ethics, and of our role in that process. H.1., however, appears to be a regression in that process – moving us backward instead of forward.

The people of Vermont deserve greater transparency in government, which in turn promotes trust in government. We are a state that has been the first in many actions – the first to ban slavery in 1777; and the first to legalize gay marriage in 2009. For a state with such forward-looking people, we have lagged sorely behind other states when it comes to ethics accountability and provision of a process for insuring such. **Please Reject H.1** as it is not in the interest of the people you serve – this is a bill that would certainly have little to no public support if people were aware of it.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont wants and has always advocated for an effective Ethics Commission for Vermont. H.1 undermines the Ethics Commission rather than strengthens it. For these reasons the League of Women Voters of Vermont cannot support H.1 and encourages you to **reject it**.