

Vermont Senate Committee on Government Operations

Vermont State House

115 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: Support for S.279 – Mobile Voting Opt-In Legislation

Dear Members of the Senate Government Operations Committee,

I am writing in support of **S.297**, which would allow Vermont municipalities to opt in to secure mobile voting for local elections.

I live and work at Earthfire Abbey, an interfaith abbey and working farm in southern Vermont, and I am honored to serve on the Pownal Select Board. Through both my faith-based work and my service in local government, I have seen firsthand how vital civic engagement is to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Vermont's tradition of local democracy is one of our greatest strengths. Town meetings, municipal elections, and community participation are central to how we govern ourselves. However, in many rural areas, participating in elections can be challenging. Long travel distances, limited transportation, demanding work schedules, and seasonal weather conditions can make it difficult for residents to reach polling places or fully engage in local civic life.

These barriers are not a reflection of disinterest, but of geography and circumstance. When people are unable to participate, our local governments lose valuable voices and perspectives that are essential to thoughtful and representative decision-making.

Allowing municipalities the option to offer secure mobile voting would provide another tool to support participation, particularly in rural communities like ours. When implemented with strong safeguards and transparency, mobile voting could help ensure that more residents—especially elders, working families, and those with limited mobility—can remain connected to their local government.

From my experience on the Pownal Select Board, I know how important it is for local leaders to have flexibility in meeting the needs of their communities. S.297 respects local control while encouraging responsible innovation that can strengthen trust and engagement in our democratic institutions.

As a person of faith and a public servant, I believe that participation in civic life is both a right and a responsibility. Expanding access to voting honors that responsibility and affirms the dignity of every voter.

I respectfully urge you to support S.297 and give Vermont's municipalities the option to explore secure, accessible ways to deepen civic engagement—especially in our rural communities.

Thank you for your service and for your thoughtful consideration.

With gratitude,

Rev. Jeannie Alexander