



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Stan Gerzofksy  
The Honorable Representative Mark Dion, Co-chairs  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

DATE: April 8, 2013

RE: LD 997 An Act to Establish Restrictions on Ammunition Feeding Devices and  
LD 1240 An Act to Promote the Safe Use and Sale of Firearms

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My name is Val Marsh. I'm a resident of Pittsfield, and I work as a volunteer for the League of Women Voters of Maine. The League of Women Voters of Maine submits the following testimony in support of LD 997 and LD 1240.

In 1990, by consensus of our hundreds of thousands of members nationwide, the League of Women Voters adopted a position on gun control. Immediately following the adoption of this new position, the League wrote to members of Congress, urging passage of stronger gun laws. For over twenty years since then, the League has continued its push for common sense solutions to gun violence. We supported the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban and urged that the ban be renewed in 2004. We supported a measure before the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress mandating background checks for all gun show purchases. And now, we are supporting federal legislation to close the gun show loophole by requiring background checks and to place limits on the size of high capacity ammunition magazines. By a natural extension of that history, the Maine chapter of the League of Women Voters is here today to advocate for these measures at the state level, as well.

Curbing gun violence is a critical matter of public safety, public health, and public confidence. Placing limits on magazine size is a common sense solution to shootings that kill many people at once. This limit should include magazines and other ammunition feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. These devices allow shooters to fire numerous rounds in rapid succession without having to stop and reload, and they have played a central part in the mass killings of recent years. Maine law already limits magazine size for hunters to five rounds. The League of Women Voters, along with 63% of those recently surveyed right here in Maine,<sup>1</sup> support a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets, and we urge you to pass LD 997.

We also join with the 89% of Mainers – and 95 % of Maine women – who support requiring a background check for all gun purchases.<sup>2</sup> While we are fortunate to live in a

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<sup>1</sup> Pan Atlantic SMS Group, 51<sup>st</sup> Omnibus Poll, Spring 2013

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

state with a low crime rate, Maine is not immune from gun violence. And a recent study ranked Maine 25th in the nation for our crime-gun export rate.<sup>3</sup> While we are a small state by population, we are a big player in gun trafficking. Recently, a gun connected to a shoot-out with police in New York City was traced back to Maine. It had been sold through the pages of Uncle Henry's to a convicted felon with no background check run.<sup>4</sup> As our neighboring states like Connecticut and New York tighten their gun laws, Maine will attract even more criminals looking to buy guns with no background checks and no record-keeping, and looking to buy large capacity ammunition magazines no longer available in their home states.

America faces an epidemic of gun related violence. Every day, approximately 288 people are shot. More than 80 of those people die from their gunshot wounds. Every day, 37 children and teens are shot. That's more than 13,000 children and teens each year.<sup>5</sup> Maine's weak gun laws make it easy for dangerous guns to fall into the wrong hands. Curbing gun violence is a critical matter of public safety and public health. This issue is too important to ignore any longer. The League of Women Voters urges you to vote Ought to Pass on both LD 997 and LD 1240. These common sense solutions to gun violence will save lives.

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<sup>3</sup> Center for American Progress, "America Under the Gun," April 2013

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Miller, "[Many sales of firearms in Maine fall under the radar](#)," Portland Press Herald, February 2, 2013

<sup>5</sup> Center for Disease Control, Fatal Injury Report, 2010, [http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate10\\_us.html](http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate10_us.html) [as of April 7, 2013] and Center for Disease Control, Nonfatal Injury Report, 2010, <http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/nfirates2001.html> [as of April 7, 2013]