



House Finance Committee
Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Scott Y. Nishimoto

Friday, 2/27/2015 at 1:30 PM in Room 308
HB612 HD1 Relating to Elections

TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT
Carmille Lim, Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and members of the House Finance Committee:

Common Cause Hawaii supports HB612 HD1, which would essentially prevent releasing ballot counts in a postponed election, and require registered voters in affected precinct to vote by absentee-ballot, within seven days of the postponement.

Two hurricanes (which were then recategorized as tropical storms) were set to hit Hawaii on primary election day – August 9, 2014. The Puna area of Hawaii Island was expected to be impacted the hardest by the storms. As a result, voting and two precincts in the Puna area were postponed. Meanwhile, election results for all races were released primarily election evening, which we believe undermined the outcome of our elections by influencing how certain candidates campaigned, and influencing how remaining voters cast their ballots.

In particular, the August 9, 2014 ballot results showed a narrow margin between the two Democratic party U.S. Senate candidates. The following week, both candidates were seen heavily campaigning in Puna. This included both candidates hosting their own “relief” efforts for citizens affected by the storms. By knowing their current status with voters, these candidates were given an unfair advantage to target their campaigns specifically toward the districts.

Releasing ballot results “early” skews votes in another way: a voter may feel pressure to vote a certain way based on the viability on a candidate. S/he may also simply choose not to vote if the results are not to her/his liking.

To ensure fairness in our elections, and preserve its integrity, we must ensure that ballot results are not released until voting for the postponed election has concluded.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony **supporting HB612 HD1**.



LATE

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2015, 1:30 p.m. Conference Room 308
HB 612 HD1 RELATING TO ELECTIONS
TESTIMONY

Susan Irvine, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair, Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii would like to provide testimony of support with comments on HB 612 HD1 which prohibits disclosure of votes cast in a postponed election; authorizes discretionary withholding of election results unrelated to postponement; clarifies Governor's emergency postponement authority; and limits postponement period to seven days after an election.

The League of Women Voters supports requiring that, in the event that an election is postponed due to natural disaster, election results be withheld until affected precinct votes are received or polls are closed. Living in Hawaii, we are all keenly aware of the fact that, nationally, election results are often released before our polls close. This is not desirable for voters or candidates involved.

The League of Women Voters opposes the statement under section 3, which limits the postponement of an election for no more than 7 days. No one can predict exactly the consequences of any given natural disaster, so it would be wise to keep options open and use a term such as "as soon as possible." During the 2014 Primary Election in Puna, it was extremely difficult for many residents to move about or receive mail for longer than 7 days, and Iselle was not the most debilitating hurricane Hawaii has ever seen.

League supports amending HB 612 HD 1 to say "as soon as possible," rather than a number of days for conducting an election after a natural disaster. The sooner after a natural disaster the election process is completed, the better, but flexibility is needed.

We urge you to consider our comments on, and support for, this bill and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.