



The League of Women Voters

A Voice For Citizens, A Force For Change

P.O. Box 90079, Anchorage, AK 99509-0079

January 23, 2017

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Dear Representative Claman, Chariman of the House Judiciary Committee,

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The League of Women Voters of Alaska urges you to support HB 44 and send it on to its next committee of referral with a "Do Pass." Transparency in government is important to the League at all levels--local, state, and national. When an elected official has a conflict of interest, that official should not be voting on the legislation under consideration.

One of democracy's greatest challenges comes when citizens no longer think government represents or cares about them and, in response, fail to participate. We can see this erosion of confidence in the declining numbers of citizens who participate in our elections..

Part of what restores confidence is making it clear that legislators do not use their position for personal gain. We applaud the bill's sponsor for seeing that one way to restore confidence is to change the rule that has allowed legislators with a conflict to be excused from not voting. In this way, voters can be sure that the vote cast is not done for personal benefit.

We often hear supporters of the current practice say that to not vote is to deprive a district of its voice. The answer to that is that a vote cast under a cloud also deprives voters of knowing that the vote was cast for the benefit of the district and the state.

Again, thank you for giving the League the opportunity to speak in support of a bill that strengthens our democracy.

Sincerely,


Pat Redmond, President

League of Woman Voters Alaska

cc. Representative Jason Grenn