



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF NEBRASKA

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LB 125 and LB 382

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Senator Avery and Members of the Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska believes every citizen should be protected in the right to vote. Women were denied their right to vote for 144 years after the birth of our nation. We understand what it is like to be disenfranchised, and the League has worked in a sustained effort to expand the right to vote to other groups who are underrepresented in the voting process.

People who may not be active in the political process or who miss the registration deadline are sometimes labeled lazy, apathetic, disinterested or even too ignorant to cast a vote. But if you go out and actually talk to people, as we do in the League, you will find there are valid reasons why they have not registered, not voted, or have missed deadlines.

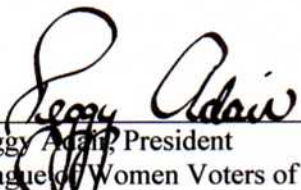
During the last election season I was talking to a woman who runs a nonprofit that works with adults who have mild developmental disabilities. She was touting her organization's efforts to include these adults in the mainstream of the community: they live in their own apartments, hold jobs, take public transportation, gather for social events. I asked her if she made sure they were registered to vote. She looked at me, stunned. It never occurred to her that voting is part of community participation. The deadline to register had already passed, so these adult citizens, who live in Nebraska, work, and pay taxes, could not vote in the last election. Election day registration would have provided them with the power and the dignity of the vote.

I took a call last year from a woman in Otoe County. She was an ex-felon and wanted desperately to vote in the election. After I asked her some questions I told her she was indeed eligible to register and vote, but that day was the deadline date and she had to get to the county clerk's office by 5 o'clock to register. She was a bit deflated, but then I told her she could also *vote*, at the same time she registered. Same day registration and voting provided her with the power and the dignity of the vote.

She was ecstatic, thanked me profusely, and then went into a five-minute diatribe about how "I just can't stand that Obama!"

I am relating this story because there is sometimes a covert resistance to helping certain groups gain access to voting because there is an assumption that they will vote either against the needs of the local community or the prevailing political party. Our experience in talking to real disenfranchised people is that they run the political gamut and one cannot judge them or their voting preference by their presence in a particular group.

Election day registration is a safe, simple and proven way to assure underrepresented citizens can secure their right to vote. We urge this committee to send these bills to the floor for full debate.



Peggy Adams, President
League of Women Voters of Nebraska