



# **THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND, INC.**

## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 241 - ELECTION LAWS – STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS – CAMPAIGN FUND-RAISING DURING GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION – CIVIL PENALTY**

#### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

**BY: BARBARA SCHNACKENBERG AND NANCY SORENG  
CO-PRESIDENTS**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2016**

The League of Women Voters supports efforts to limit the influence of money on political decisions as well as measures that strive to create an equal playing field for all candidates. State officeholders are prohibited from fundraising for campaigns for state office during the General Assembly session to avoid the influence (or the appearance of influence) of donors on their decision making during session. When candidates violate these rules, they should be held accountable.

This bill would authorize the Board of Elections to impose a civil penalty on a candidate or campaign entity that violates the campaign finance rules regarding fundraising during the General Assembly session. Current law allows the State Board, represented by the State Prosecutor, to institute a civil action in the circuit court. Allowing the Board of Elections to issue a citation would expedite the process of holding elected officials accountable for their actions. Those who receive citations would have the option to request a trial in District Court, in much the same that one may appeal a traffic citation. This bill also states that all fines paid would be deposited in the Fair Campaign Financing Fund which is the fund that provides public funds for gubernatorial candidates.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 241.