



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND, INC.

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1201 – ELECTION LAW – CAMPAIGN FINANCE – COORDINATED EXPENDITURES

POSITION: SUPPORT

BY: BARBARA SCHNACKENBERG & NANCY SORENG CO-PRESIDENTS

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Ever since the Citizens United decision, the League of Women Voters has been seeking ways to limit the influence of money on elections. The 2012 and 2014 election cycles have witnessed a surge in independent expenditures. In 2014 at the state and local level alone there was more than \$5.6 million reported in independent spending.

This legislation would more clearly define what is and is not a coordinated expenditure. This is important because coordinated expenditures are subject to contribution limits but independent expenditures have no limits. This legislation impacts independent expenditures that are spent on political campaign communications that expressly advocate the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate. Theoretically such expenditures cannot be made in cooperation or consultation with the candidate or the candidate's authorized election committee or political party. However, without a clear definition of when coordination has taken place, it is difficult to hold parties accountable for using this loophole that allows them to exceed contribution limits.

We urge a favorable report on HB1201.