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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR

Wednesday, February 4, 2015, 9:00 a.m., Conference Room 016
SB 622 RELATING TO ELECTIONS COMMISSION
TESTIMONY

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

Chair Keith-Agaron, Vice Chair Shimabakuro and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii would like to support the intent SB 622 which requires the elections commission to conduct a performance evaluation of the chief election officer after each election and submit a written report regarding the evaluation to the legislature.

The League of Women Voters supports the Elections Commission evaluating the performance of the Chief Elections Officer after an election cycle, but this bill, specifies an evaluation “after each election.” If the last election were a Primary, the evaluation would take place at the height of preparation for a General Election, so we feel that this bill should be amended to mandate an evaluation, “after each General Election.”

A performance evaluation is likely a personnel matter, and not available to the public, so submitting “a written report regarding the evaluation to the legislature” may be problematic.

We urge you to consider our testimony and then support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



House Judiciary Committee
Chair Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Maile Shimabukuro

Wednesday 02/04/2015 at 9:00 AM in Room 016
SB622 Relating to the Elections Commission.

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

Dear Chair Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Shimabukuro and members of the Senate Judiciary and Labor Committee:

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB622, which would require the elections commission to evaluate the chief election officer's performance after each election, and submit a written evaluation report to the state legislature.

During the 2012 and 2014 elections, there were several examples of perceived underperformance from the chief elections officer – including late opening/closing of polls, ballot shortages, and delayed tallying of votes from a misplaced electronic voting card. These events coupled with lack of communication from the Chief Elections Officer has led to low public opinion – and lack of confidence – in the Office of Elections.

Further public frustration ensued upon learning* that Hawaii's elections law only allows the Elections Commission to hire and advise the CEO, but does not empower the Commission to take disciplinary action toward the CEO if and when needed. The Elections Commission is currently not required to conduct a performance appraisal for the CEO. Thus, the Elections Commission does not have a formal record of the CEO's performance.

We believe that requiring a performance evaluation is a constructive way to help the CEO improve her/his performance. Requiring a performance review would also give the Elections Commission a basis for holding the CEO accountable for performance shortcomings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB622.

*Note-- Media report: "Chief election officer grilled by commission, many call for his ousting" KHON2, August 22, 2014:
<http://khon2.com/2014/08/22/chief-election-officer-grilled-by-commission-over-primary-problems/>