



May 8, 2025

Members of the Omnibus State and Local Government and Elections Policy and Appropriations Conference Committee
c/o Mikayla Mtanous, Committee Administrator
Room 123, Minnesota Capitol
95 University Ave W
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Testimony in Support of Expanded Prohibitions on Bribery, Treating and Solicitation in Elections in SF 3045

Chairs and Members of the Conference Committee,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. Together, we envision a democracy where the voice of each person is heard equally; where voters are provided sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices; and where elections are not distorted by the influence of spending by wealthy individuals and organizations.

LWV Minnesota supports expanding the prohibition on Bribery and Treating in Elections as stated in the Senate State Government and Elections Omnibus

The emerging practice of offering cash awards, or entry into sweepstakes for potentially large awards, to voters for signing petitions, pledges, or other shows of support for candidates or candidate positions presents a new, singular challenge to the integrity of our elections by the direct injection of money to influence the outcome of elections. These practices are not campaigning and are not speech as this practice does not attempt to persuade or influence voters through communication to the voters about the candidate, their positions, or other aspects of a contested election. Rather this is direct provision of money to voters to influence their support. This is a practice many people would expect to be illegal under existing laws; however, it is not explicitly forbidden.

Concerns with the practice of giving money or potentially large cash awards to voters in election-related activities include:

- Creates the appearance and perception that voters are being rewarded (bribed) through the receipt of money or gifts in exchange for expressions of support for specific candidates or candidates' positions;

- Enables very wealthy individuals or organizations to exercise an outsized influence on voters' perceptions and campaign messaging through introduction of direct payments to potential voters.
- Creates further distrust and disillusionment by voters in elections due to the disproportionate spending and influence of very wealthy individuals.

The proposed language in the Senate version of SF 3045, Omnibus State and Local Government and Elections bill, provides a reasonable expansion of the existing prohibitions on bribery and treating to address this issue. Such a change would prevent this practice from occurring in Minnesota and would prevent erosion of the power of voters' voices and their trust that elections truly represent the will of the people.

If left unaddressed, this activity will result in a significant escalation in the direct use of money or other items of value to influence voters by individuals and groups on all sides of elections.

LWV Minnesota strongly encourages you to support adoption of the Senate version of SF 3045 for Election Bribery, Treating and Solicitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Huffman", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Huffman, Election and Redistricting Policy Coordinator
League of Women Voters of Minnesota

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