



250 South 5th St, Suite 800 | Boise, ID 83702
Ph: 866.295.7284 | Fax: 208.336.0070 | TTY: 877.434.7598
aarp.org/ID | IDaarp@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpidaho
facebook.com/idaho

February 16, 2024

Testimony in support of SB 1273, a bill to establish content and form requirements for voters' guides

Chairman Guthrie and members of the Committee:

My name is Lupe Wissel, State Director for AARP Idaho, the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan member organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our more than 186,000 Idaho members, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony. Today I am testifying to express support for Senate bill 1273, a bill to establish content and form requirements for voters' guides.

Idaho voters should be able to exercise their right to vote freely, easily, and safely in the manner they choose. Policymakers should support outreach to educate, inform, and assist voters in exercising their constitutional right.

AARP has a long history of non-partisan voter education and engagement, providing voters with information on the voting process as well as where the candidates stand on issues important to our members and their families, so they can make their own decisions on election day.

AARP works to protect the right of all Americans to vote in local, state, and federal elections. We have long advocated for fair and straightforward election procedures that help increase the participation of voters 50+.

In general, older voters turn out overwhelmingly in every election. An AARP survey conducted shortly after the 2022 midterms showed that in 63 of the most competitive races for the U.S. House of Representatives, voters 50+ made up 61 percent of the ballots cast.

We ask you to support outreach to educate, inform, and assist voters in exercising their constitutional right and a voter guide is an essential element for voters to learn about each candidate before casting their vote. Access to information on candidates is important and is why I ask for a "Do Pass" on Senate bill 1273.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak this morning and I stand for questions.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Ron Pisaneschi. I live here in Boise and I serve on the Board of Directors of the non-profit, non-partisan organization What the Vote, Idaho. I come before you as a private citizen representing that organization and in support of Senate Bill 1273.

For more than five years, What the Vote Idaho volunteers have gone to classrooms in high schools and colleges throughout the area to register students to vote who are 18 or older. We regularly hear from these young people who are seeking information on the candidates and ballot measures, but don't know where to go to find that information. As a non-partisan organization, we are very careful to not tell them how to vote, but it would be very valuable to be able to make available to them an Official Idaho Voter's Guide produced by the Secretary of State's office. These young new voters are hungry for independent information as they engage in the democratic process. An Official Idaho Voter's Guide will be a very valuable resource for these newest voters, as well as ALL voters throughout Idaho. I encourage you to vote yes on Senate Bill 1273. Thank you.

The best bill yet in the 2024 Idaho Legislative Session just arrived on the scene as Senate Bill 1273, titled "Voter Guide Bill." We see no downsides to this bill. It will inform and educate all Idaho citizens by providing information about all candidates in both the primary and general elections, and there are no additional costs associated with it.

The Idaho Constitution tasks the Secretary of State's office with producing and distributing a voters' pamphlet with information about initiatives or referendums on every ballot. The Voter Guide Bill would expand this resource by also including information about candidates running for federal and state offices and providing election information about voter registration and voting requirements. Every candidate can submit a personal statement, contact information, and a recent photograph to be included in the guide.

This uniform distribution of information across the state regarding issues, measures, and candidates will aid Idaho citizens in educating ourselves before we vote, leading to less voter frustration and nonparticipation.

We are members of the Idaho chapter of MWEG (Mormon Women for Ethical Government), a non-partisan, non-profit organization that peacefully advocates for principle-driven government. We support the proposed Voter Guide Bill as an embodiment of the following principles of a strong democracy.

Firstly, MWEG believes that citizens have a duty to participate in representative government by casting an informed vote. Another MWEG principle states that electoral systems should be designed to maximize participation by citizens. Additionally, MWEG promotes the principle that individuals should educate themselves about government and current events by seeking reliable sources of information.

The unbiased nature of the proposed Voters' Guide is the kind of reliable information source that leads to more peaceful discussions of issues and candidates. We believe that healthy societies depend upon citizens engaging in civil discourse with their fellow citizens in good faith. If we want to lower the temperature of public conversations, we need a way to understand one another's perspective.

This Voter Guide appeared in the 2023 Legislature and easily passed in the Senate. However, it was never heard in committee nor presented to the House for a vote. We believe that this bill provides the kind of education and transparency that are vital for democracy. We wholeheartedly endorse S1273.