

League of Women Voters of Maine Successfully Intervenes in Justice Department Lawsuit in Defense of Voter Privacy

The League of Women Voters of Maine, represented by Campaign Legal Center, Brennan Center for Justice, and Johnson & Webbert LLP, continue their work to protect voters' personal data, such as driver's license numbers and the last four digits of Social Security numbers.



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[Voting & Elections](#)

The United States District Court for the District of Maine granted a motion on Friday allowing the League of Women Voters of Maine (“LWVME” or “the League”) to intervene as a defendant in *United States v. Bellows*. The U.S.

Department of Justice [sued](#) [\[link-1\]](#) the State of Maine and its secretary of state, Shenna Bellows, in September for access to Maine’s statewide voter file. That file includes voters’ personal data, such

as driver's license numbers and the last four digits of voters' Social Security numbers.

"The League of Women Voters of Maine is proud to represent our members and Maine voters in this case of overreach by the federal government," said [Jill Ward](#) [\[link-2\]](#), **president of the League of Women Voters of Maine**. "The League is committed to safeguarding the private data of our fellow Mainers, and we will continue defending Maine voters against intrusions that run counter to the highest democratic principles and values."

By intervening in the case, the League seeks to protect the privacy of Maine voters and defend the longstanding state and federal safeguards governing voter data. It is represented by Campaign Legal Center, the Brennan Center for Justice, and Johnson & Webbert, LLP, a leading civil rights firm in

Maine that specializes in cases standing up against abuses of power by the government.

"The League applauds the court's decision to allow LWVME to intervene on behalf of League members and Maine voters," said [Caren E. Short](#) [\[link-3\]](#), **director of legal and research for the League of Women Voters**. "Every voter deserves the guarantee that their sensitive information is protected from nefarious actors, and the League is proud to fight for the right to privacy for voters in Maine and beyond."

In July, the Justice Department sent a request for Maine's statewide voter registration list, along with questions regarding the state's compliance with federal voter list maintenance laws. Secretary of State Bellows responded to the questions but declined to provide the complete voter file, citing state and federal privacy protections. The

Justice Department sent another request in August reiterating its demand for the data. Secretary Bellows refused. The Justice Department [filed suit](#) [\[link-4\]](#) on September 16.

“These ongoing attempts by the federal government to retrieve sensitive voter data without justification are an attack on Americans’ privacy and freedoms,” said [Sejal Jhaveri](#), [\[link-5\]](#) **senior legal counsel for litigation at Campaign Legal Center**. “Our elections have numerous safeguards in place to make sure only U.S. citizens participate, a responsibility that election officials across the country and here in Maine take seriously. The immediate impact of these DOJ lawsuits will be to deter people from registering to vote. Our democracy works best when every voter has a chance to participate in the electoral process, and we look

forward to continuing the fight to protect Americans from the administration’s attempts to limit the freedom to vote.”

United States v. Bellows is one of 18 [lawsuits](#) [\[link-6\]](#) the Justice Department has filed since September against states demanding their complete voter files.

“This state-by-state campaign by the Justice Department to collect voters’ personal information is part of the Trump administration’s broader effort to undermine American elections,” said [Eileen O’Connor](#) [\[link-7\]](#), **a former attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department and Brennan Center senior counsel**. “Amassing data like driver’s license numbers and partial Social Security numbers from every registered voter in the country creates serious risks. It

could be turned into a national database and exploited to fabricate false claims of voter fraud or to remove eligible voters from the rolls improperly. States have long protected voter privacy, and the Justice Department's demands represent a dangerous federal overreach that threatens election security and public trust."

In addition to Maine, the League of Women Voters, Campaign Legal

Center, and the Brennan Center are working together against the Justice Department's similar lawsuits seeking voter files from [New York](#) [\[link-8\]](#) and [Oregon](#) [\[link-9\]](#). The League is also active in additional suits where the DOJ has sued California, Minnesota, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

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Links

link-1: sued <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-sues-oregon-and-maine-failure-provide-voter-registration-rolls>

link-2: Jill Ward <https://www.lwvme.org/board>

link-3: Caren E. Short <https://www.lwv.org/about-us/staff-leadership/caren-short>

link-4: filed suit <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-sues-oregon-and-maine-failure-provide-voter-registration-rolls>

link-5: Sejal Jhaveri, <https://campaignlegal.org/staff/sejal-jhaveri>

link-6: lawsuits <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/tracker-justice-department-requests-voter-information>

link-7: Eileen O'Connor <https://www.brennancenter.org/experts/eileen-oconnor>

link-8: New York <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/coalition-working-protect-sensitive-voter-information-seeks-intervene>

link-9: Oregon <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/league-women-voters-oregon-and-aclu-oregon-file-amicus-brief-defend>