

**LPC Poll – March 7, 2025  
(N=18)**

	<b>LD 873 Utility Pole Permits</b>	<b>LD 888 Veterans Exemption</b>
<b>Support</b>	67%	28%
<b>Oppose</b>	0%	28%
<b>NFNA</b>	22%	39%
<b>Track</b>	6%	6%
<b>No Position</b>	6%	0%

**Comments**

[LD 873](#) *An Act to Expand Municipal Authority over Utility Pole Permits* (Sponsored by Rep. Abdi of Lewiston)

**Support**

- The threshold number is too high and should be lowered or removed.
- Should be true for all municipalities. Irresponsible utilities leave ghost poles all over the state. They can be dangerous and should go away just as community cleaning.
- Home rule.
- Not that my town has this concern, but I know that this can cause issues for some towns and the population of 30,000 would assist other communities.
- I think this makes sense – at least from reading the summary. The ability to remove a pole from dangerous locations seems prudent. Recommend support.
- But/and, advise that reducing the population threshold from 40,000 to a number even lower than 30,000 (i.e. 10,000 or 20,000) because reducing to the proposed 30,000 likely ends up only adding a couple more municipalities that meet that threshold.
- I support this bill because any opportunity for municipalities to gain more local control is beneficial.
- I feel that towns should have a say in placement of poles, especially if it comes down to transmission lines.
- Nothing much to say here. This bill seems to expand the eligible municipalities from just Portland to include Lewiston and Bangor. Sure, why not?

**Oppose**

## **NFNA**

- This obviously only applies to the larger cities. Why not allow all municipalities the authority to oppose a pole's location? NFNA will allow us to take a stand if we're so inspired.
- Our population is so far away from the 30,000 threshold that I will go with what the municipalities whom this affects say.
- I feel like this is to benefit Lewiston. Based on the 2023-2024 Directory Lewiston and Bangor's populations are above 30,000 and then Portland is above 40,000.

## **No Position**

- Only affects Lewiston.
- This only affects two municipalities (Bangor and Lewiston). Not best use of MMA resources to submit testimony.
- Sit this one out; let the Cities of Lewiston and Bangor send their own advocates. There is no benefit for the municipal association to burn resources on a special interest request that benefits two out of 482.

## LD 888 *An Act to Expand Property Tax Relief for Veterans and Survivors of Veterans* (Sponsored by Rep. Hymes of Waldo)

### **Support**

- Support the idea of this bill but I would like to see all veterans receive the \$6,000 exemption regardless of whether they served during a wartime period or not. I don't agree with the disability rating system exemption unless the state reimbursement is 100%.
- I believe All Veterans are deserving of the exemption benefit, regardless of their age or the time period(s) in which they served. But/and, I believe it would be simpler if all veterans were granted the same \$6,000 eligibility (vs. \$5,000 if younger than 62, and \$6,000 if 62 or older). Furthermore, a higher amount, like \$10,000 would be advisable, as the current \$6,000 often translates to very little in terms of actual tax savings annually.
- With 100% funding.

### **Oppose**

- Someone needs to pay taxes. Enough exemptions.
- 1) Significant fiscal note. Is the state going 100% reimburse the lost value? Clearly a new exemption. 2) Logistical burden will be significant, lots of new categories to track. In addition to numerous new applications, it will likely require reviewing all

existing veteran exemptions to determine if they qualify for a greater benefit. 3) Equity, 100% evaluation equals the same benefit as paraplegic?

- Shifting tax burden on other residents. Unless the state funds at 100%, oppose.
- Not to be hard hearted but we have a few disabled veterans and we are losing funds for free vehicle registrations. I see that some veterans really benefit and others are just buying brand new very expensive vehicles. Some veterans feel guilty taking from their community, others are gleeful and working full-time well-paid jobs at the same time. There should be a better way to make this fair and equitable. The tax burden shifts in a seemingly unfair way.
- The more and more you give exceptions to individuals the more the other residents have to make up the difference. The idea behind property tax relief is to lower property taxes not your value and just keep increasing the mil rate to make up the difference.

#### NFNA

- I'm not opposed to the policy, but the State should reimburse the municipality for 100% of lost property tax revenue if they are to expand this benefit.
- Not sure about this. It appears to expand the number of veterans who would be eligible. That sounds great, but what is that cost? Some other Mainer will need to absorb that funding shortfall. I'd like to know the cost before we support.
- Currently there is a \$6,000 exemption for veterans who are 62 or older, their unremarried spouse, minor child (who receives a pension), or parent (who receives a pension). This adds a \$5,000 for veterans under the age of 62. We will have to review their applications annually so we can revise the rate when they turn 62. There are no veterans still alive who served in or before WW1. Currently Paraplegic Veterans who received a federal grant for a specially adapted housing unit is eligible for an exemption of \$50,000 from the just value of their home. This bill would change that to veterans who have a VA disability receive a higher rate based on their disability rating. The rates are between 60% and 100%. The VA often changes the disability rating on a veteran, and we would need to have the veteran bring in their yearly letter stating their rating to us every year. This will be hassle. Some will be good about doing it and others won't and then will be mad when they didn't get an increased exemption when their VA rating changed. And they definitely wouldn't let us know if their rating was lowered. Should just stick with the paraplegic veterans.
- I asked our assessor for his thoughts on this bill. These are his comments: *I am all for whatever legislation increases the benefits of veterans. My concerns with LD 888 are that it removes the requirement of serving in a recognized war period. There is no replacement defining what constitutes a "VETERAN" in the bill. Anyone who enters and leaves active duty will receive a DD214. That means someone who enters active duty*

*and is released a week later can be qualified as a veteran and receive the exemption. Right now, to qualify, we review the veteran's DD214, which shows when they served in active duty, and whether they served during a recognized war period. With the new bill and no definition of what constitutes a veteran, anyone with a DD214 will qualify, whether they really served or not. I do not believe this is fair to the men and women who indeed served their country. Someone who intended to serve but was not able to do so for one reason or another should not be classified similarly and receive the same benefits. The intent is good, but not a substitute for actually serving. The additional exemption for service-connected disability is great, but I think it is missing the qualifying factor. The current standard Veterans exemption requires the veteran to be at least 62 years of age or older, but if the veteran is 100% disabled, the age requirement is waived. Will any veteran who qualifies for 60% or more disability be waived from the age requirements? If we use 100% as a factor for one waiver, wouldn't it also make sense that the other levels are waived? So, if you're a veteran with no service-related disability, you will have to wait until 62 to qualify, but if you are disabled at least 60% or more, the age requirements are waived. The disabled veterans are the ones that need the additional help. That's my two cents, coming from an Assessing standpoint and a Veteran. I have to vote NFNA, just on the basis of these comments and being able to address these concerns in testimony.*

- Does this expand the vet exemption to property owners younger than 62 years of age at the \$5,000 rate? If so, I do support that. I have always thought that all vets should receive the exemption not just over 62 and in the war period. Once again, there are people that have served that could benefit from the exemption that are not over 62 or disabled. I am not in support of the different brackets for disability ratings. I feel like that would be too hard to track as ratings are always changing and people are not great at updating staff of changes to ratings. 100% disabled vets are currently able to receive benefits and are able to be excise exempt on all vehicles they have registered in their name. I would rather see just the over 60% rating at \$10,000.
- Generally, I'd be opposed, but this isn't worth fighting. I have always been a strong advocate of veteran benefits, but the state has opened up the floodgates of added benefits, which come at the expense of everyone else. I truly appreciate their service, but we keep adding and adding (I believe, largely because the Federal VA seems weak in supporting vets). Might we propose removing the wartime qualification and leave the balance of the program as it is?
- Pending understanding whether these exemptions will be reimbursed to the town. (Apologies for my ignorance.) I have no problem extending benefits to people who didn't serve during actual times of conflict, but I am concerned if the towns won't be reimbursed for these extra/expanded exemptions. If the towns are NOT reimbursed 100%, then I would like to see that added. If the towns ARE reimbursed 100%, then I would support this. I am tired of municipalities losing money because of well-meant but poorly executed tax exemptions handed down from Augusta.

## **Track**

- While opposing this bill may appear unpatriotic, I have concerns. Currently, the reimbursement for veteran exemptions is based on an MRS formula and is not 100%. Most veterans receiving this exemption fought in a war, and I don't think that qualification needs to change. If the war period requirement is removed, a minimum service time requirement should be added. Additionally, the benefit's inconsistency with other veteran benefits, like license plates, which are not transferable to surviving spouses, is problematic. These benefits should be standardized across the board.