

An Act to Establish Election Day Registration

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The League of Women Voters urges you to support “An Act to Establish Election Day Registration.” The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy, and voting should be as easy and accessible as possible.

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem and Rep. Gloria Fox

Background: Election Day registration (EDR) is currently working in nine states – Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In the 2007-2008 session the bill passed in the Senate by a 33 to 5 vote. It remained in the House Ways and Means Committee, but failed to reach the House Floor before the end of the 185th session.

Concerns were expressed that, due to the pending national election and the potential for long lines of voters, the addition of the Election Day registration process would place a significant burden on city and town clerks and poll workers. The current bill would be implemented at statewide elections in 2010, when voter turnout is expected to be significantly lighter. In addition, the bill has been modified to meet concerns expressed by city and town clerks.

Purpose of the Bill: The bill will allow any eligible voter to register and vote in local, statewide, and national elections at their local polling place on Election Day. At the time of registration, the individual must provide proof of identify and residency. The voter must also sign an oath as certifying citizenship, age, and lack of any impediments that would prohibit him/her from voting.

Talking Points:

- EDR increases voter participation - In 2006, 5 of the 7 states with EDR made the year’s list of top 10 voter-turnout states; and EDR states had a turnout rate of 50.9%, non-EDR states had a turnout rate of 41.6%
- Voters benefit from EDR - It allows students, young adults, and new residents to vote in greater numbers and alleviates the problem of registered voters being turned away because of inaccurate or incomplete voter lists. A 2003 MIT/Caltech Voting Technology Project report found that 122,000 registered Massachusetts voters did not cast ballots in 2000 due to registration problems.
- Election officials benefit from EDR - It shifts the administrative burden of processing new voter registrations from the busy pre-election session to after Election Day, a much less hectic time for election officials. Election officials in EDR states report that the work of adding newly-registered voters to the rolls has been manageable and relatively inexpensive.

- EDR does not increase voter fraud - Multiple independent studies by, among others, the Brennan Center for Justice, Demos and the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office, found that voter fraud is as low in EDR states as it is in non-EDR states.