

An Amendment to the Constitution Allowing Absentee Voting – HD 733

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The League of Women Voters urges you to support “An Amendment to the Constitution Allowing Absentee Voting”– HD 733. Voting is a right and not a privilege, and voting should be as easy and accessible as possible. The restrictions now placed on absentee voting are unnecessary and complicate what would be a straightforward process.

Lead Sponsor: Rep. Garrett Bradley

Background: In Massachusetts absentee voting is restricted to voters who:

- Will be absent from their city or town on Election Day
- Are disabled and unable to get to the polls
- Have religious beliefs that prevent them from going to the polls

Twenty-eight states allow no-excuse voting, four allow permanent no-excuse voting, and thirty-one states allow no-excuse early voting.

The Constitutional amendment to allow no-excuse absentee voting passed the first Constitutional Convention in 2006. It failed to reach the floor for a vote in the 2007-2008 legislative session for procedural reasons.

Purpose of the Bill: The bill removes conditions from absentee voting that are currently required by the Massachusetts Constitution. This legislation, drafted by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, amends Article XLV to remove the conditions placed on absentee voting. Removal of the conditions will allow the Legislature to pass a law mandating unconditional absentee voting and early voting by absentee ballot prior to elections.

Talking Points:

- Allowing people to vote by absentee ballot, both by mail and at local election offices prior to Election Day, will increase voter turnout and remove barriers for those who wish to vote absentee for whatever reason.
- Many groups, such as election workers, at-home caretakers of small children and seniors, and many commuters, are unable to legally apply for an absentee ballot under current law.
- The current law is not enforceable.
- Twenty-eight states have provisions for absentee voting without conditions.
- More and more voters are using absentee voting to avoid long lines at the polls or when their employment or other matters prevent them from going to the polls on Election Day.

