



*Testimony in support of
H. 2091/S.373 - An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards
against fraud
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
By Nancy Brumback, LWVMA Vice President, Advocacy
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts urges you to support H. 2091/S.373 - An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud. The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental citizen's right that must be guaranteed. In support of that right, LWVMA has historically backed legislation to remove administrative obstacles to voting and voter registration. By automatically registering eligible citizens to vote unless they opt out, this bill would remove a substantial obstacle to voting.

A report from the Pew Center on the States indicated that about 25% of those eligible to vote are not registered. Oregon and California were the first states to pass automatic voter registration (AVR) laws, in 2015, with the strong support of their state Leagues of Women Voters. The total is now up to eight states with AVR, and at the end of May, the Illinois legislature approved AVR by unanimous votes in both houses. Alaska passed AVR on a ballot initiative by a wide, bipartisan margin. In Oregon, AVR registered 230,000 voters in the first six months after it went into effect and updated over a half-million inaccurate registrations. The state said almost 100,000 of those newly-registered voters participated in the November 2016 election. So far, legislation supporting AVR has been introduced in 32 states this year.

Automatic voter registration should be set up in a way that prevents ineligible people from registering to vote and that provides a clear way for people to opt out of being registered, and we feel that this bill addresses both of these issues. An automatic voter registration system should also draw from sources beyond the Registry of Motor Vehicles so that citizens who do not drive are also automatically registered. This bill has provisions for transactions with social service agencies to be used to automatically register eligible citizens.

The provisions in this bill to update voter registration information will improve the accuracy of voter rolls and create a more efficient and reliable system, which should help control the costs of voter registration over time and improve the voting process on Election Day.

Massachusetts should be among the leaders in making it easier to vote. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts strongly urges the Joint Committee on Election Laws to report H.2091/S.373 out of Committee with a positive recommendation and bring automatic voter registration to our state.

Thank you for your consideration.