



*Testimony in support of
H. 3937 - 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. 3937 - An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud. The League of Women Voters of the United States 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, H.3937 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. As you may know, Oregon and California passed automatic voter registration laws last year, in both states with the strong support of the state League of Women Voters. Oregon estimates the law that went into effect on January 1, 2016, has the potential to register an additional 300,000 voters in that state. Among other benefits to such legislation, it would free up the resources the League and other voter advocacy organizations now use to register voters to educate voters, protect voting rights and encourage citizens to vote.

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 H.3937 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. H.3937 has provisions for transactions with social service agencies and for the annual city and town censuses to be used to automatically register eligible citizens.

We would encourage the Committee to add a provision to adequately fund the voter registrars' offices, which perform these new duties in the cities and towns.

Automatic voter registration bills are pending in 16 other states. 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.3937 out of Committee with a positive vote.

Thank you for your consideration.