



Legislation Summary:

An Act to establish election day registration, An Act to establish election day registration, An Act relative to same day voter registration

Initial bill numbers: [S371](#), [H353](#), [H2093](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. Cynthia Creem, Rep. Jennifer Benson, Rep. Elizabeth Malia

These bills allow any eligible citizen 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 identity and residency. The voter must also sign an oath certifying citizenship, age, and lack of any impediments that would prohibit him/her from voting. The bills include substantial penalties for giving false information. LWVMA urges the legislature to pass some version of an Election Day registration bill.

Benefits of Election Day Registration:

- EDR increases voter participation. In 2006, five of the seven states with EDR at that time made the year's list of top 10 voter-turnout states. EDR states had a turnout rate of 50.9%; non-EDR states had a turnout rate of 41.6%. The Brennan Center for Justice reported that Maine, Minnesota and Wisconsin had average voter turnout rates that were 12% higher than the national average.
- In 2014, states with Election Day Registration (EDR) increased voting. Voter turnout in the EDR states averaged 48%, 12 points above voter turnout in non-EDR states. Four states used EDR for the first time in a midterm in 2014, bringing the total number of states using EDR to 13.
- Registered voters benefit from EDR. It alleviates the problem of registered voters being turned away because of errors in poll books or incomplete voter lists, delaying the voting process. 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. The MIT/Caltech Project estimated that as many as 3 million US citizens were disenfranchised by wrongful purging of voter rolls or failure to add newly registered voters to the lists. With EDR, they could have re-registered at the polls.
- EDR has administrative benefits. It shifts the burden of processing new voter registrations from the busy pre-election season to after Election Day, a less hectic time for election officials. Election officials in EDR states report that adding newly-registered voters to the rolls has been manageable and relatively inexpensive.
- EDR does not increase voter fraud. Multiple independent studies by the Brennan Center for Justice, Demos, the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office and others, have found that voter fraud is as low in EDR states as is in other states. The amount of voter fraud has been greatly exaggerated by

opponents of EDR. Most voter misconduct is due to confusion and ignorance rather than any intent to deceive. Penalties for voter fraud by individuals are very severe and serve as a deterrent. Instead, voter purges by election officials, errors in poll books and poor or inadequate voting equipment cause substantial losses of votes.

- EDR would protect voters in case of cyberattack on registration records. Cyber criminals could manipulate registration lists and cause significant purges in future elections. The national security agencies found attempts to gain entry to registration lists in a number of states prior to the November 2016 election. While reported as failed attempts, these attacks are likely to continue and could become successful in penetrating state voter rolls. EDR could help restore those lost to unlawful voter purges and accidental omissions.
- EDR may reduce or eliminate the need for provisional ballots. These ballots have been controversial and are not always counted. Uncounted provisional ballots can be problematic in close elections.
- Voting should be as easy as possible. EDR allows students, young adults, new residents and others who change addresses to vote in greater numbers. Estimates from the Brennan Center are an average increase of 5-7 % in the number of voters when EDR is implemented.
- EDR is not a partisan issue and has not been a burden where used. With proper consultation with election officials and poll worker training, it can be implemented and used effectively.

League Position: “The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen’s right that must be guaranteed. (1982) The 1986 LWVUS Convention affirmed an essential element for protecting the right to vote was encouraging participation in the political process. The 1990 convention affirmed that the LWVUS should continue emphasis on protecting the right to vote by working to increase voter participation. LWVMA reaffirmed that.”

“LWVMA has supported legislation to remove administrative obstacles to voting and/or registration.” *Where We Stand, p. 13*