



Legislation Summary:

An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud

Initial bill number: [S373/H2091](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. Cynthia Creem, Rep. Peter Kocot

This bill establishes a system of automatic voter registration to increase the efficiency and limit the total cost of voter registration for the Commonwealth and its municipalities, ensure that every eligible citizen of the Commonwealth who wishes to be registered to vote is registered, increase the completeness and accuracy of the register of voters, prevent erroneous disenfranchisement of eligible citizens, promote greater participation of eligible voters in elections, and reduce the incidence of voter registration fraud. It:

- Directs “registration agencies” (already defined as state agencies that must register voters under the federal “motor voter” law) to collect registration information for citizens who transact official business and transmit it to local Registrars of Voters.
- Directs local Registrars of Voters to add to their official register of voters, if not already registered: (1) the names of eligible citizens transmitted to them by registration agencies; and (2) the names of eligible citizens found in their annual street listing of residents.
- Allows citizens to enroll in a political party, or to decline to be registered for any reason.
- Provides that agencies which do not collect reliable citizenship information in their regular course of business must provide an opportunity at the point of service for each person to decline to register to vote; an opportunity for those who register to attest to their citizenship and other eligibility; and only transmit voter registration information for those who meet the qualifications to register to vote and do not decline.
- Provides several new anti-fraud measures:
 - Joins the Electronic Registration Information Center, a national clearinghouse that collects state registration information to prevent registration and voting in more than one state;
 - Requires local Registrars to notify new registrants’ last place of registration, and to remove the names of voters who register elsewhere; and
 - Imposes a criminal penalty of up to a \$10,000 fine or 5 years’ imprisonment, or both, for anyone who knowingly provides false registration information.
- Gives the Secretary of the Commonwealth oversight over the entire system, including the power to issue regulations and guidelines, and requires the Secretary to make an annual public report of the system’s registration statistics.

League position: “The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen’s right that must be guaranteed. (LWVUS) (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*