



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Action Alert! Help Strengthen a Weak Election Reform Bill

Recently the Joint Committee on Election Laws reported out [H.3647](#) – An Act relative to election laws – that is intended to incorporate several election-related bills, including [S.327](#) – the omnibus election laws reform bill proposed by Sen. Barry Finegold, which is supported by LWVMA and other members of the Election Modernization Coalition.

Several significant components of S.327 have been changed or removed, and LWVMA thinks this new bill is considerably weaker. Since H.3647 is likely to be taken up by both houses of the legislature in the next week or two, **please call or email your state Senator and your state Representative and urge them to restore the following provisions contained in Senator Finegold's election laws reform bill:**

Early voting: S.327 allows early voting for any election, establishes guidelines for multiple polling places, and requires all polling locations to be open eight hours on weekdays and include at least eight weekend hours.

H.3647 allows early voting only in Presidential elections and primaries starting in 2016; requires only one early-voting location for all towns and cities, no matter how large; and allows early voting only on weekdays during regular business hours.

Please emphasize to your legislators that (1) early voting should be available for state and municipal elections, as well as Presidential elections; (2) early voting should be available in multiple locations in larger cities and towns, and (3) early voting should include some evening hours and at least one weekend before an election.

Post-Election Audits: S.327 provides for random post-election audits of 3% of precincts after every election. The League has long advocated such audits, and they could be funded with federal dollars through the Help America Vote Act.

H.3647 does not include a provision for audits, calling only for a task force to study the issue, despite the fact audits are already being done in 26 other states and the Massachusetts House has already passed audit bills in the past.

Please urge your legislators to restore a provision for audits to the election laws legislation to increase voter confidence in the reliability of the voting system.

Pre-registration of 16- and 17-year olds: S.327 allows 16- and 17-year olds to pre-register with the information held in a state database and transferred to the appropriate city or town clerk when the applicant turns 18. Eight states already do this, and it would increase turnout among young people and help create lifelong voters.

H.3647 does not contain a provision to pre-register teens to vote.

Please urge your legislators to restore a provision for pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds.

Inactive Voter Reform: S.327 changed “failure to respond” to annual city and town census mailings as the sole basis for being placed on the Inactive Voting List to failure to respond for “two consecutive years” or “failing to vote in any election” during those two years.

H.3647 does not moderate current restrictions on maintaining active voter status, which requires annual reporting of residence.

Please urge your legislators to restore this provision, which will reduce the number of voters who have to go through a time-consuming process to be able to vote on Election Day.

Other states have much more progressive election laws than Massachusetts. It is time to enact *meaningful* election reforms.

Please call or email [your state Senator and Representative](#) today and urge them to strengthen H.3647 and to vote for a bill making it easier for citizens to register and to vote.