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Contact: Ian Kea, MassVOTE, ikea@massvote.org | 617-542-8683

Election Day Registration (EDR) Presented to State Election Laws Committee

BOSTON, MA –Organizations dedicated to enhancing voting rights from around the Commonwealth gathered at the State House on Thursday, June 20, to testify in support of Election Day Registration, also known as Same-Day Registration.

The EDR legislation introduced by Rep. Jen Benson, Rep. Liz Malia and Sen. Cynthia Creem (H. 636, H. 685 and S. 396) aims to ensure that all Massachusetts voting eligible citizens with proof of residency are able to register or fix errors in their current registration on Election Day and during the early voting period and subsequently cast their ballot. The policy has found continuous success with 21 states having passed the measure since 1973.

Election Day Registration has received support from Massachusetts leaders including Secretary of State William Galvin and Attorney General Maura Healey. On the federal level, the entire Massachusetts Congressional Delegation has supported HR1, which includes EDR.

“Anybody can find themselves on the wrong side of the voter registration deadline, especially renters who have recently moved, people working multiple jobs, people with disabilities, and people with less reliable transportation. But these factors mean there’s definitely a racial equity issue here, and Election Day Registration levels the playing field so all qualified voters can have their ballots counted,” said Rahsaan Hall, Director, Racial Justice Program, ACLU of Massachusetts.

“The League of Women Voters strongly supports Election Day Registration because it reduces barriers to voting, making it easier for citizens to fully participate in our democracy. Massachusetts has made progress in enacting common-sense election reforms such as Automatic Voter Registration. The next logical step is implementing Election Day Registration,” said Mary Ann Ashton, president, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts.

“It has never been more important to protect and strengthen our democratic institutions, Election Day Registration is a simple and common sense reform that will increase voter participation and ensure that every eligible voter can cast a ballot. It has been working well in 21 other states and will do so here in Massachusetts” said Pam Wilmot, Executive Director, Common Cause Massachusetts.

“Given that the average American moves more than 11 times over the course of their lives, moving near Election Day could lead to disenfranchisement under the current system. Likewise, given the stress of school, work, family, and myriad other commitments, many voters may first start to learn about an election after the registration window has passed. Election Day Registration is a simple, proven solution,” said Jonathan Cohn, Issues Chair, Progressive Massachusetts.

“We are starting to feel a little bit like Horton the Elephant, to be honest. We have been sitting on this bill for too long. We truly hope it is the year that this bill hatches into a much needed law,” said Janet Domenitz, Executive Director, MassPIRG.

“Implementing EDR in Massachusetts is a critical step to curbing deep structural barriers to the ballot box for voters of color in the Commonwealth,” said Sophia Hall, Supervising Attorney, Lawyers for Civil Rights.

“When poll watching last November, we saw countless people turned away from the polls or issued provisional ballots because they moved recently. Election Day Registration will help thousands of voters cast their ballots, including young people moving to Massachusetts in search of opportunities and communities of color, working families, and low-income people displaced from their homes because of rising rents,” said Beth Huang, Director, Massachusetts Voter Table.

“EDR is an effective means to extend the vote to the millions of Americans who are disenfranchised due to the simple fact that they missed an unnecessarily early voter registration deadline. Requiring voters to register well in advance of an election simply does not work for many citizens. Allowing voters the ability to register and vote on Election Day and during the early voting period is the single reform that most effectively remedies the problems we witness every election,” said Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, Executive Director, MassVOTE.

The Election Modernization Coalition is led by ACLU of Massachusetts, Common Cause Massachusetts, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, MASSPIRG, MassVOTE, the Massachusetts Voter Table, and Progressive Massachusetts.

Quick Facts

- A 40-year track record of success.
- States adopting EDR see on average a 4 to 7 percent increase in voter participation (*National Conference of State Legislators*)
- In the last two years nine new states have implemented or enacted the policy – California, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Washington, Utah, and Vermont