



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
In Support of H.685/S.396 An Act relative to Election Day Registration
And H.636 An Act relative to Election Day Registration (satellites)
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts thanks this committee and the legislature for passing Automatic Voter Registration in the last session. That law will go a long way toward the goal that every eligible citizen is registered to vote.

We ask you now to add Election Day Registration to the list of voting reforms in place in Massachusetts. Election Day Registration (EDR) complements Automatic Voter Registration, making it convenient for people who do not deal with the Registry of Motor Vehicles or a state social services agency to register to vote. And over half of the people who use EDR in the 21 states which have adopted it are actually already registered to vote but encounter a problem with their registration—a wrong address, a typo in their name—when they show up to vote. EDR lets these people make the necessary changes and vote without resorting to a provisional ballot.

LWVMA prefers that this joint committee support H.685/S.396, which will permit citizens to register on Election Day at their own precinct polling places and then vote. That system is most widely used and makes the most sense for voters. We also, however, support H.636, which would permit cities and towns to establish separate, satellite locations for Election Day Registration to move that process out of precinct polling places, provided that citizens registering in these satellite locations can then immediately vote in the same location without having to go to a different precinct polling place.

We feel strongly that EDR should be available during early voting periods.

EDR ensures that qualified voters cannot be turned away at the polls or allowed to vote only by provisional ballots – which may not be counted. 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.

Benefits of Election Day Registration:

- EDR increases voter participation. The six states ranking highest in voter turnout in the 2016 election all offer EDR—in order Minnesota, Maine, New Hampshire, Colorado, Wisconsin and Iowa. Voter turnout in states with EDR was seven points higher than in states without the option, consistent with every election since the policy was first introduced in the 1970s, according to a [study](#) by Nonprofit Vote.
- EDR has administrative benefits. It reduces the number of provisional ballots and shifts the burden of processing new voter registrations from the pre-election season to after Election Day. Costs are offset by less provisional balloting and cleaner and updated voter rolls. States with EDR view it as more a reorganization of resources than an additional cost.
- 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 it is in other states. 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.



- Cyber criminals could manipulate registration lists and cause significant purges in future elections. 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 the right to vote to those affected by unlawful voter purges and accidental omissions.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, strongly urges the Joint Committee on Election Laws to report a strong bill to implement Election Day Registration with a favorable recommendation and do everything you can to make it the law in Massachusetts. We look forward to supporting such a bill.

Thank you for your consideration.