



Voting Rights Advocates Applaud Progress on Comprehensive Voting Bill

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Boston, MA --Voting rights advocates, public interest groups and a network of state and local organizations praised the decision Monday by the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Elections Laws to send [the VOTES Act](#) to the Senate Ways and Means Committee, the first step in bringing the comprehensive voting bill up for a vote.

The VOTES Act will make several permanent changes to Massachusetts' election laws, including: allowing voters to vote by mail without an excuse; expanding early voting options; establishing same day voter registration; ensuring that the Commonwealth joins the 30-state [Electronic Registration Information Center](#) (ERIC) to keep voter registration rolls up-to-date; implementing risk limiting audits, the "[gold standard](#)" of post-election audits; making sure that eligible voters who are incarcerated are able to request a mail ballot and vote; and more.

The VOTES Act is strongly supported by the Massachusetts Election Modernization Coalition, an umbrella group working to modernize the Commonwealth's election laws.

We are delighted that the VOTES Act is one step closer to becoming law. We'd like to thank the bill's sponsors, Rep. John Lawn and Sen. Cindy Creem, for all their work on the bill – and we'd like to thank the chairs of the Committee on Election Laws, Sen. Barry Finegold and Rep. Dan Ryan, for their support of it. It is refreshing to see that the Massachusetts state legislature wants to make our democracy more accessible and equitable," said **Geoff Foster, Executive Director of Common Cause Massachusetts**.

"We are thrilled Beacon Hill has taken this key step in supporting the VOTES Act," said **Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, Executive Director of MassVOTE**. "With voting rights under attack nationwide, Massachusetts must send the message we are dedicated to protecting and expanding the right to vote. We may do this best by passing mail-in voting, same day voter registration, and all of the reforms included in the VOTES Act."

"The League of Women Voters applauds the election laws committee for moving quickly to position the VOTES Act for a vote. It is important for the legislature to pass a permanent, comprehensive voting bill to assure full access by all eligible citizens and continued smooth functioning of our election process," said **Patricia Comfort, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts**. "At a time when too many states are restricting voting access, we are proud of the direction our legislature is taking."

"As we address twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice, passage of the VOTES Act is an important step to strengthening our democracy," said **Beth Huang, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Voter Table**, a coalition of community organizations. "Expanding voter access through same-day voter registration and mail-in voting will help advance racial equity."

"The forward momentum of the VOTES Act sets the vision for the type of open and accessible democracy for all that we demand to see in the Commonwealth," said **Sophia Hall, Lawyers for Civil Rights**. "It is all of our responsibility to ensure that elections are accessible to all, particularly those most historically disenfranchised."

"We applaud the Election Laws Committee for advancing the VOTES Act," said **Rahsaan Hall, director of the Racial Justice Program for the ACLU of Massachusetts**. "Our democracy works best when everyone can participate, and this legislation increases access to the ballot for all eligible voters in the Commonwealth. It is particularly important for lawmakers to ensure that the provisions of this bill that uniquely improve access for voters of color and low-income voters are passed into law. Establishing same day registration and improving ballot access for incarcerated voters will help ensure all eligible voters can vote in practice."

"This bill is the gold medal of voting reforms, and we've been in training to win for years. Now is our time. We thank the Election Laws Committee for getting us a step closer, and we look forward to working with the Legislature to get over the hurdles ahead, quickly. Our democracy will be the champion when the VOTES Act becomes law," said **Janet Domenitz, Executive Director of MASSPIRG**.