

# Election Day Registration



Massachusetts

COMMON CAUSE

S. 341—SEN. CREEM, H. 579—REP. FOX

## What is it?

Currently, Massachusetts residents must register 20 days prior to an election. Election Day Registration would allow residents to register and vote on Election Day.

**Election Day Registration counteracts arbitrary registration deadlines** that disenfranchise those who do not register weeks in advance of an election. In 2006, 40% of election news stories were aired within a week of the midterm elections—after the registration deadline in Massachusetts and 40 other states.

**It all but eliminates the need for provisional ballots** since voters who have moved, who have misspelled names, or have been purged from the rolls can just re-register on the spot. In 2008, nearly 1 million provisional ballots were discounted.

**States with Election Day Registration typically have 3-12% higher voter participation than those without it.** That means that 100,000 more people in Massachusetts would vote—roughly the population of Worcester.

## Other states do it.

**Eleven states have passed Election Day Registration**—California, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Fifteen more are considering it.

## It's cheap.

Elections in states with Election Day Registration are no more costly than those in non-Election Day Registration states. **Overall expense does not increase, but is instead shifted**—for instance, more resources may be needed on Election Day, rather than before or after.

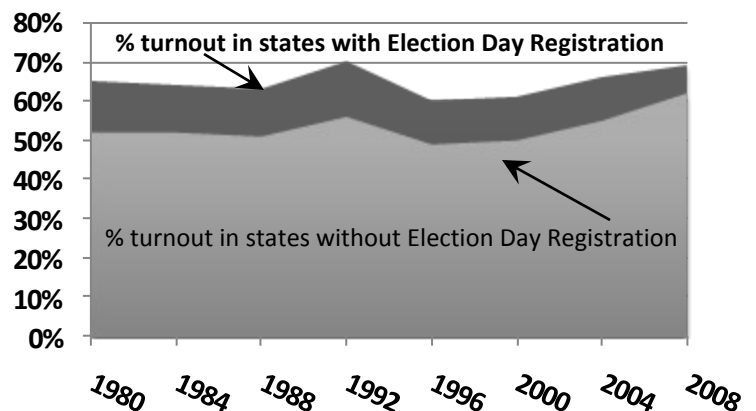
In Iowa, Election Day Registration was implemented without allocating additional funds. The boards of elections in both New Hampshire and Maine reported a cost of \$100-250 per precinct to train and hire poll workers. In Massachusetts, it will likely cost \$250 per precinct.

## It's easy.

**The consensus among officials in states with Election Day Registration is that it actually makes the election process easier to administer.** After an election, officials often spend extra time and effort to comb voter registration records and determine whether a provisional voter has actually registered and whether their ballot should be counted. This process can take days or weeks. Election Day Registration spares election officials this work, and ensures that voters can cast ballots that will be counted.

## It works.

**In the 2012 election, states with it averaged voter turnout 12% higher than states without it.** Nationwide, over 1 million voters registered on the day of the election and in Idaho alone 17% of voters used the system. The top five voter turnout states all use Election Day Registration.



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Currently, Massachusetts residents must register 20 days prior to an election. Election Day Registration would allow residents to register and vote on Election Day.

## It's proven.

**There are nine other states using Election Day Registration**—Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Twenty-four more are considering it.

## What does it fix?

**It all but eliminates the need for provisional ballots** since voters who have moved, who have misspelled names, or have been purged from the rolls can just reregister on the spot. In 2008, nearly 1 million provisional ballots were discounted.

**Election Day Registration counteracts arbitrary registration deadlines.** In 2006, 40% of election news stories were aired within a week of the midterm elections—after the registration deadline in Massachusetts and 40 other states.

**States with Election Day Registration typically have 3-12% higher voter participation than those without it.** That means that 100,000 more people in Massachusetts would vote—roughly the population of Worcester.

**States with Election Day Registration have higher rates of voter registration.** In Massachusetts, a study based on U.S. Census data shows that could mean over 225,000 new voters.

## It's cheap.

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## It's secure.

In practice, Election Day Registration is as secure as mail-in registration forms, in which the only identification requirement is the last four digits of your social security number. When registering on Election Day, the resident must provide proof of residence, make a written oath, and provide photo identification.

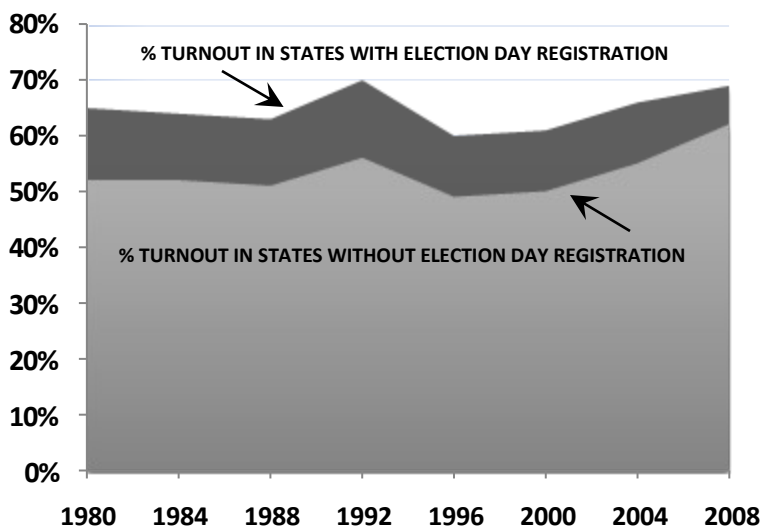
In a 2006 report, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission reported widespread agreement that there is very little evidence of voter impersonation at the polls.

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## Turnout elsewhere.

In the 2008 election, states with it averaged voter turnout 7% higher than states without it. Nationwide, over 1 million voters registered on the day of the election and in Idaho alone 17% of voters used the system. The top five voter turnout states all use Election Day Registration.



## Op-Ed: Never Too Late to Vote

THE NEW YORK TIMES | MAY 11, 2007

...With Election Day registration, all qualified voters can participate in the vital American tradition of voting without finding themselves hampered by arbitrary registration deadlines...

...While opponents are concerned that this option might encourage voter fraud, such crime is exceedingly rare or nonexistent in states that offer Election Day registration.

Citizens of Maine, for instance, have benefited from same-day registration since the early 1970s and no case of voter fraud has ever been attributed to the policy. With simple, fair and safe methods to verify voters, and by relying on effective poll-worker training and sophisticated election administration, our states have ensured the integrity of the process while allowing every eligible citizen to cast a ballot.

...We firmly believe that missing a deadline should not prevent interested and engaged parties from being able to register in person on Election Day. We are committed to leaving no voter behind, including first-time

voters, newly naturalized citizens and those who may have recently changed addresses...

...Other beneficiaries are registered voters inadvertently removed from the rolls, newlyweds who just changed their names and people who, because of whatever mix-up, are asked to cast a provisional ballot instead. In same-day registration states, these folks don't leave the voting booth wondering if their ballots will count equally alongside their neighbors'.

Though one of us is a Republican and one is a Democrat, we can attest that political affiliation isn't relevant here: this is a policy that is good for voters, regardless of party, and good for our democracy. When it comes to elections, America is best served when all eligible voters cast their ballots — even those who missed the registration deadline.

*Ben Ysursa and Matthew Dunlap are the secretaries of*

## Turnout in Massachusetts.

- ☑ Overall turnout in Massachusetts could go up by 4.9%.
- ☑ Turnout among those 18 to 25 could increase by 9.7%.
- ☑ Turnout for those who have moved in the last six months could increase by 7.9%.
- ☑ Turnout for African Americans could increase by 5.6%.
- ☑ Turnout among the poorest citizens could increase by 5.6%.