

No Excuse Absentee Voting

S. 12—SEN. MURRAY, H. 63—REP. STRAUS

Early Voting

H. 615, H.650—REP. MICHLEWITZ & WALSH, S.327—SEN. FINEGOLD



Massachusetts

COMMON CAUSE

The problem.

There are many reasons why individuals cannot vote on Election Day. Since Election Day is not a national or state holiday, some people are not able to leave work in order to cast a ballot, others may find crowds and lines daunting or are sick, out of town, or just too busy.

Yet, in Massachusetts, the current law only allows voters to cast absentee ballots if they are out of town, physically disabled or religiously forbidden.

Ironically, election workers themselves are often unable to legally cast their own ballots because they start work before the polls open and finish before the polls close yet technically are not out of town and therefore do not meet the requirement for receiving an absentee ballot.

All these restrictions mean more lines on Election Day, which in 2012 reached up to three hours in some urban locations. This is unacceptable!

Two solutions.

Early voting

Early voting would allow Massachusetts residents to vote in person up one week before Election Day, at city or town hall or at a satellite site. While the satellite sites vary by state, they may include other county and state offices, schools, shopping malls, and libraries. Early voting is usually conducted with the same equipment used in the regular election. In 2012, 32 states and Washington D.C. utilized early voting.

No excuse absentee voting.

No excuse absentee voting would allow Massachusetts residents to vote an absentee ballot for any reason. Because it requires a state constitutional amendment, it must be approved by two successive legislatures and the voters. 27 states and Washington D.C. have no-excuse absentee voting.

Benefits.

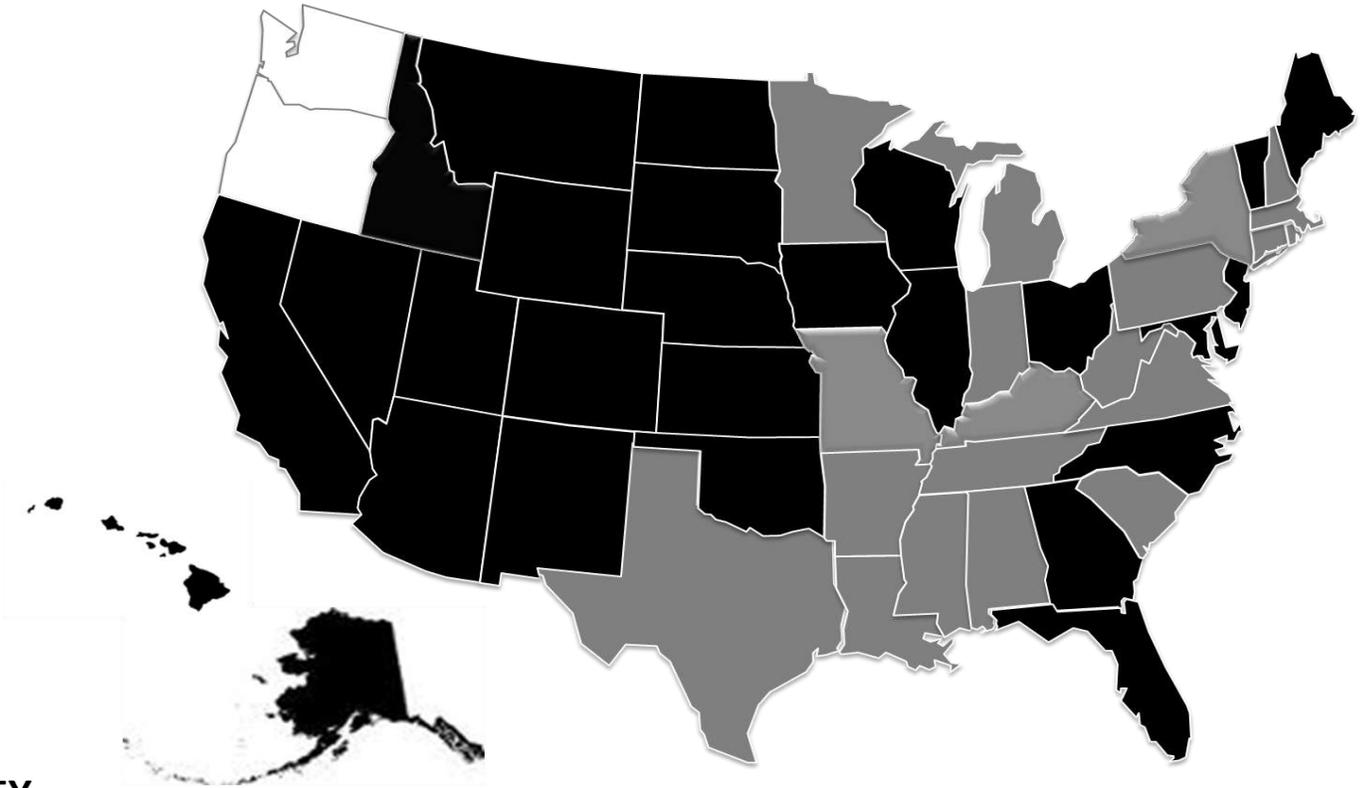
- Relieves congestion on Election Day—especially during typical peak times before and after normal work hours.
- Allows voters the flexibility to fit voting into busy schedules filled with work, child care, and errands.
- The increased accessibility of elections improves voter retention.
- Voters like it - In 2012, 33-40% of voters nationwide voted early or by mail.
- Impedes some forms of voter disenfranchisement. For instance, if a voter forgets a identification, the voter will have an opportunity to return with it.
- Makes elections more manageable for officials and staff.
- Moderately boosts turnout among registered voters. It is not shown to increase the registration rate.

Long lines, busy lives — Mass. needs early voting

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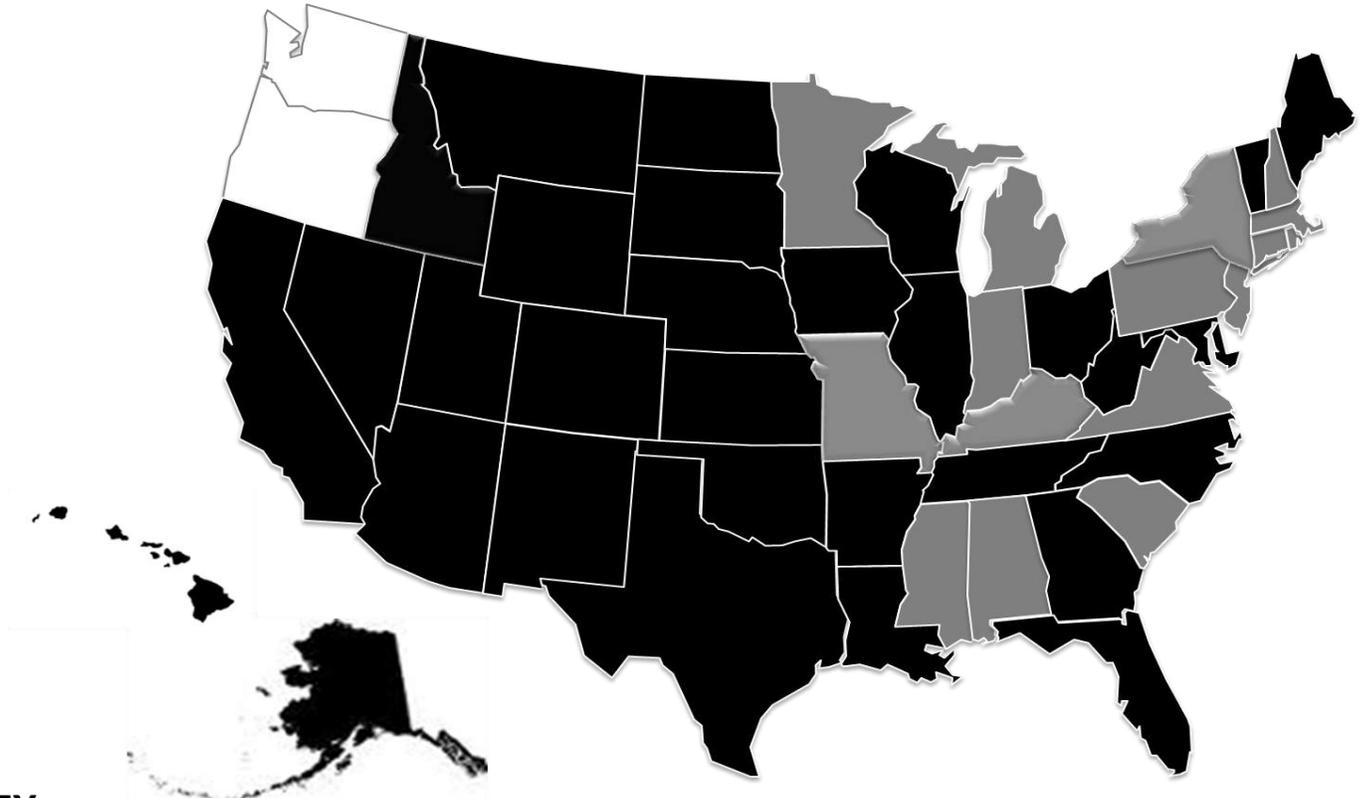
It's time to allow weekend voting for those who are simply unable to abandon their work or family responsibilities for an hour or two to vote on Tuesdays,...access must be substantially equal in every community, whether urban, suburban, or rural.

Deliberate or no, the long waits are a stain on the process. Access to the ballot shouldn't be a game; it should be an effort to enable the largest possible number of voters, and that means finding ways around the practical barriers that keep so many Americans from the polls.



KEY

- No excuse absentee voting
- Excuse absentee voting
- All mail voting



KEY

- State has early voting
- State does not offer early voting
- All mail voting