

No Excuse Absentee Voting

H. 773—REP. BRADLEY, H. 574—FALZONE, H. 661 MURPHY

Early Voting

H. 689—REP. WALSH



The problem.

There are many reasons why individuals can not 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, especially during before and after typical work hours. Some voters are sick, out of town, or just too busy on Election Day. In urban areas tight schedules and long commutes make it difficult for some workers to come to the polls and in rural areas citizens may live far from their polling places.

Yet in Massachusetts, the current law only allows voters to cast absentee ballots in person or by mail if they are out of town or unable to get to come to the polls because of a physical disability or religious restriction.

Ironically, election workers themselves are often unable to 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.

Two solutions.

Early voting

Early voting—H. 689—would allow Massachusetts residents to vote in person up to two weeks before Election Day, usually at an election official's office or at a satellite site. While the satellite sites vary by state, they may include other county and state offices, grocery stores, schools, shopping malls, or libraries. Early voting is usually conducted with the same equipment used in the regular election.

No excuse absentee voting.

No excuse absentee voting—H. 773, H. 574, and H. 661—would allow Massachusetts residents to vote by mail or at a town hall without providing a reason they won't be able to make it to the polls. Because the current restrictions are in our state constitution, this law must be approved by two successive legislatures and the voters.

Benefits.

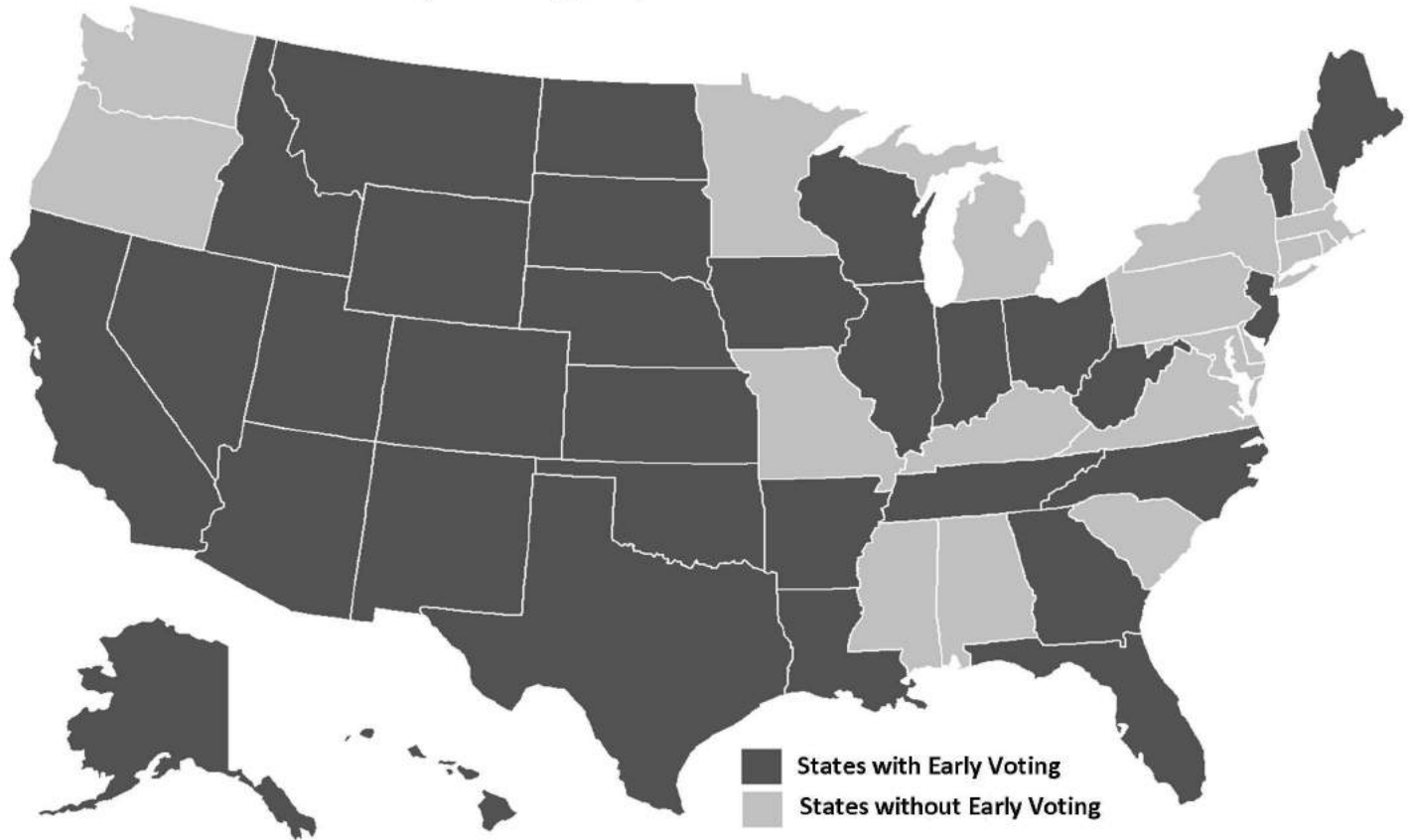
- Relieves congestion on Election Day—especially during typical peak times before and after normal work hours.
- Allows voters the flexibility to fit voting into busy schedules filled with work, child care, and errands.
- The increased accessibility of elections improves voter retention.
- Persuades voters who might miss an odd election to vote more regularly, and may increase turnout in non-federal elections.
- Impedes many known forms of voter disenfranchisement. For instance, if a voter is turned away for not having identification, they will have an opportunity to return with it.
- Makes elections more manageable for officials and staff.
- There is no evidence of fraud since voters personally cast ballots in supervised locations using the same mechanisms used on Election Day.
- Moderately boosts turnout among registered voters. It is not shown to increase the registration rate.

The Success of Early Voting

NEW YORK TIMES | OCTOBER 29, 2008

Now that it is clear how successful the early-voting process has been, the states that have not adopted it...should do so. Today, the idea that all voting must occur in a 15-hour window, or less, on a single day is as outdated as a punch-card voting machine.

States that allow early voting in person.



States that allow no excuse absentee voting.

