

THE BEAT

Hawaii Ranked No. 32 in State Voter Turnout

A new analysis crunches 2014 midterm data and explains what helps turnout.

MARCH 15, 2015 • By Chad Blair   

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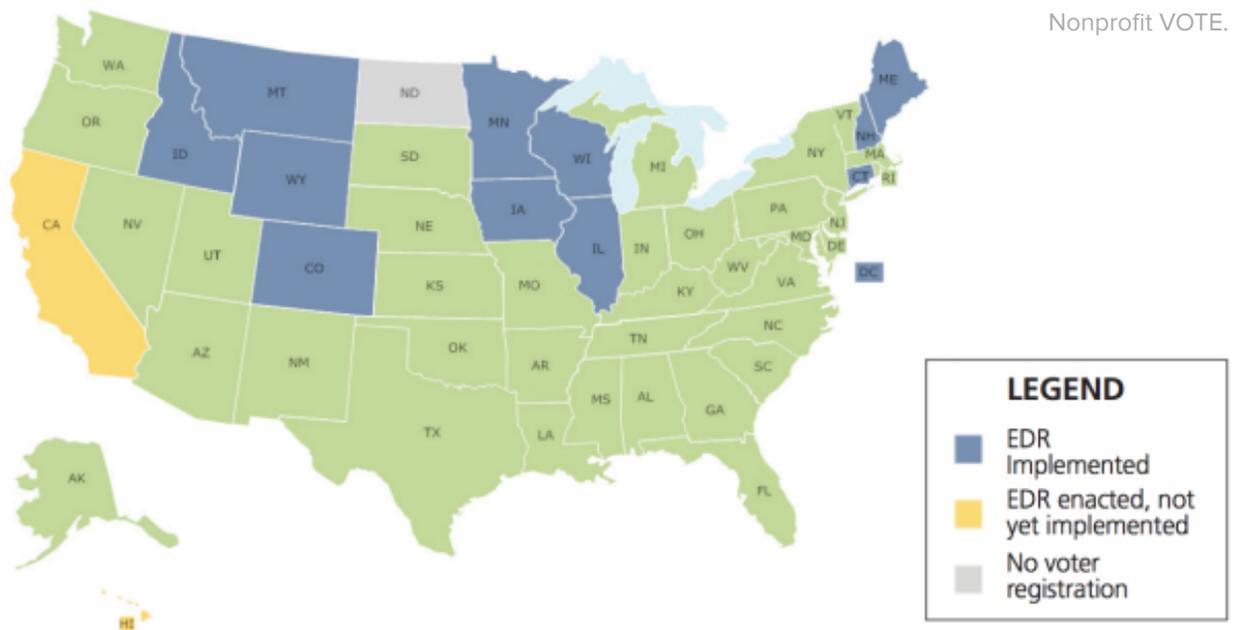
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Hawaii's voter turnout last year ranked it at No. 32 across the country.

That's up from the No. 36 position we held in 2010, according to [a new analysis](#) from [Nonprofit VOTE](#).

All told, Hawaii had a turnout of 36.5 percent among citizen eligible voters in 2014.

Still, that's a far cry from top-ranked Maine, which saw 58.5 percent of its eligible voters going to the polls. Wisconsin was not far behind, followed by Colorado, Alaska and Oregon.



States with election day registration.

The worst turnout — 28.8 percent — was in Indiana, with Texas, New York, Tennessee and Nevada not doing much better.

After adjusting for population growth, however, the District of Columbia, Louisiana and Wisconsin had the largest increase in voter turnout: increases of 21 percent, 13 percent and 8 percent in 2014. Hawaii saw a 9 percent drop in this category, ranking it at No. 25 in the nation.

A key factor in voter turnout appears to be whether a state has election day registration, something seven of the Top 10 states allow. Hawaii will have that distinction in 2018.

(UPDATE: The state Office of Elections informs me that people will be able register to vote at early votes sites starting 2016. Early vote sites are open during a 10-day prior to each election.)

Online voter registration seems to help as well, something the Nonprofit VOTE report says 24 states have implemented or passed legislation to allow for online paperless voter registration. (Hawaii is one of those states that hasn't implemented it yet, but the Office of Elections tells me it should be available next year.)

To get a good voter turnout, it also helps to have competitive statewide races.

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Tom Greenleaf · Western New Mexico University

One thing you missed Chad is that a number of these states have ballot measures (initiatives and referendums). Maine, Alaska, California, Colorado, Wisconsin all do. Colorado legalized marijuana, as did Alaska. California always has interesting measures. Maybe if the voters felt their participation mattered they would actually vote. 3 ideas to boost voter turnout: 1) Amend the state constitution to allow voter sponsored ballot measures (initiatives). 2) Public financing of elections would give a wider number of voices to be heard. 3) Make election day a paid holiday. You vote you get the day off with pay. You don't vote you work. Works elsewhere.

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Chad Blair · Works at Honolulu Civil Beat

Tom, that's a very good point, thanks.

Like · Reply · 1 · Mar 16, 2015 11:37am



Jim Shon · Director at Hawai'i Educational Policy Center

It also helps to have an educated civically literate electorate. Citizenship cannot flourish if the media does not do its job, particularly TV. Just reading the headlines and reporting on the weather three times every half hour is not enough.

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Lana Ah Lan DeSilva

Which shows that these people refuse to vote for the clowns. This is a good thing.

They are not obligated to vote for clowns despite the herd trying to bully them to vote for the clowns. They are exercising their right to vote... not to vote for clowns.

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Laurie Cicotello · Kapaa, Hawaii

There is a widely held belief in this country that anyone convicted of a felony is no longer allowed to vote.

There needs to be a strong campaign to let people know that people who have been convicted of felonies ARE allowed to reregister to vote in Hawai'i and are allowed to vote

as long as they are not incarcerated on election days.

This is not true in many other states and greatly impacts the number of eligible voters, especially in certain populations.

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