



Election Omnibus Amendment 01 to SB172 – Testimony  
Brian Gladstein, Common Cause IL  
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My name is Brian Gladstein and I am the Director of Programs and Strategy for Common Cause Illinois.

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization founded in 1970 by John Gardner as a peoples lobby to empower Americans to participate in the political process and to preserve our democracy. Over forty years later, Common Cause Illinois is keeping true to our original vision by engaging our over 10,000 supporters statewide.

For nearly two years, Common Cause Illinois has been advocating, with our partnering organizations, reforms that will improve the lives of the people living in our state and policies that will preserve our democracy. Most notably, we have been working throughout the state to educate and advocate for the creation of an Election Day Registration program in Illinois.

Common Cause believes the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democratic society. Therefore, it is imperative that we adopt reforms to increase turnout rates; provide increased access to the ballot box; and create a culture of political engagement and involvement, especially among people living in marginalized communities of color.

Of all the possible election reforms that a state could adopt, Election Day Registration has been proven throughout the country to be the most impactful in terms of increasing turnout and political engagement.

This past Spring I testified to this committee on the merits of Election Day Registration and supported the creation of a pilot program for this year's general election. I also said it did not go far enough to ensure that everyone who is eligible to vote is afforded every opportunity to register and vote in every election.

But now we do have that chance. Amendment 01 to SB172 will make Election Day Registration permanent and available in every precinct. I urge you to pass this bill that, I believe, will have the greatest effect on our electoral system in almost 50 years since the Voter Rights Act was signed into law in 1965.

This past election day, Common Cause members were able to witness first hand what democracy looks like. We spent the day participating in non-partisan poll watching at the Martin Luther King Community Center on the South Side of Chicago. We were by the sheer hundreds of people waiting for hours to register and vote. Some waited up to four hours and stayed late into the night to exercise their right to vote.

Work needs to be done to help local election jurisdictions administer the program effectively and efficiently, but I can say without a doubt that the demand is there.

With Illinois having the second lowest turnout rates in the Midwest, we owe it to our citizens to knock down any barriers that exist at the ballot box. Creating Election Day Registration will accomplish just that and so much more.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today.