

COMMON CAUSE DELAWARE TESTIMONY

Senate Elections & Government Affairs Committee
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Government of the people, by the people, and for the people can only exist if people vote.

Legitimate government requires the consent of the governed, which is expressed at the ballot box. Boosting voter participation not only engages a larger number of citizens in the democratic process but will also help strengthen the public's faith in government. That is why Delaware needs "same-day registration": to increase voter participation and strengthen democracy in the First State.

Common Cause Delaware fully supports HS1 for HB25, a same-day registration bill that would make Election Day the last day that Delawareans can register to vote, update their address or correct mistakes on the voter rolls. We believe *all* eligible voters should have the freedom to vote, unimpeded by early registration deadlines. Even people who do not pay attention until the week before the election or who have recently moved should not be faced with barriers to voting. In fact, the most common reason people use same-day registration (also known as election-day registration) in the [20 states that have it](#) is to update their address, and in Delaware [Census data show](#) that 12% of the population moves every year, so passing HS1 for HB25 would advance the goal of universal voter participation.

Low voter turnout is a chronic problem in the First State and same-day registration would help remedy that problem. For example, consider voter turnout in non-presidential election years, which tends to be low. In 2018, the country as a whole saw record high turnout, averaging [53.4%](#). In Delaware, however, turnout lagged behind at [48.8%](#). In contrast, Maine, Montana, and Wisconsin, all of which have allowed same-day registration for years, saw the highest turnout in the country with 64.5%, 63%, and 62.6% respectively. The same dynamic happened in 2014: Delaware had record low turnout at 36%, while voting in same-day registration states soared.

Same-day registration would remove a barrier to voting that disproportionately affects voters in Black and brown communities, low-income voters, and young voters. People who work multiple jobs or have less autonomy at work, those dealing with health issues, the demands of parenting young children, or any other number of things, could benefit from same-day registration. No Delawarean should be denied the freedom to vote because they missed an arbitrary and pointless early deadline to register.

Finally, we know from the experiences of other states that implementing same-day registration would not be burdensome or costly. In fact, some states have found that the process is easier to manage than accepting and verifying paper provisional ballots. Delaware has a lot of polling places, and so we do not get huge crowds like some other states do. Consequently, it would not be a problem to have a few new people registering to vote at their polling places.

Common Cause Delaware has been working with a broad range of other community groups for years to make same-day registration a reality because, as a state, we should enable people to do their civic duty and vote. There is no good reason not to. And thousands of Delawareans, representing all demographics, could get brought into the political process, ensuring that our representation truly reflects the people served. Let's get it done in 2022.