



Dear Senator,

As organizations that strongly value citizen participation in government, we encourage you to vote in favor of H.4671, Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) when it comes to the Senate floor, hopefully later this week. In the interest of getting the bill through the entire legislative process this late in the session, we also ask that you refrain from amending the AVR bill that came over from the House. While we too support other election law reforms, adding amendments this late in the session could imperil AVR. There is always next session or other vehicles to make further election reforms.

AVR will make vital upgrades to our registration system, keeping our voter rolls more up-to-date, enhancing the security of our electoral process, and encouraging new voters to get involved. However, in order for this measure to be in place for the next Presidential election in 2020, it must be enacted this session—next year would be too late.

For many of the 65 organizations that are part of our coalition, AVR is a top legislative priority. The bill has bipartisan support in the legislature, with 85 House co-sponsors and 23 Senate co-sponsors. It also received a strong bipartisan vote in the House, passing by 130-20 with 14 Republicans, including the top leaders, voting in favor. The Town Clerks Association has stated that clerks are “fine” with the bill and support its goals, and in March, Secretary Galvin hosted a press conference to formally announce his support for the legislation.

A description of the legislation is below, and a flyer is attached.

Automatic Voter Registration has already been approved in 13 other states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia) and is working well in those that have enacted it. Oregon, the first state to implement the reform in 2016, added over 375,000 new voters to the rolls in the first 18 months and updated 265,000 inaccurate addresses in just six months. More than 97,000 new Oregon voters participated in the 2016 election because of AVR, resulting in a 4.1 percent increase in voter turnout—one of the largest increases in the country.

Automatic Voter Registration will cost Massachusetts virtually nothing to implement. In Colorado, AVR implementation was so minimal that the state did not even assign it a cost. In Vermont, the modest expense for updated software (\$473,000) was covered by funds already appropriated by the federal government. Here in Massachusetts, we have \$43 million

already set aside by the federal government for voting improvements like AVR, a fund controlled by Secretary Galvin.

As we approach the midterm elections, and with the next Presidential election only two years away, we need to do all we can to protect and expand democracy. Automatic Voter Registration will make our civic duty to vote more accurate, more secure, and more available to all. It's a win for democracy, it's a win for security, and it's a win for voters.

Please show your support for better elections in the Commonwealth. Cast a vote in favor of Automatic Voter Registration when it comes to the floor and refrain from supporting or opposing amendments. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pam Wilmot, Common Cause Massachusetts
Janet Domenitz, MASSPIRG
Mary Ann Ashton, League of Women Voters Massachusetts
Gavi Wolfe, ACLU of Massachusetts
Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, MassVOTE
Jonathan Cohn, Progressive Massachusetts
Beth Huang, Massachusetts Voter Table
Sophia Hall, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice

How Automatic Voter Registration Works

Automatic Voter Registration is very simple. When Massachusetts residents get a new or updated driver's license or change their address with MassHealth, their information would be matched electronically with the central voter registry run by the State Secretary. If a resident is eligible to vote but not registered—or registered at a different address—the information would be updated and the person would be registered to vote unless they decline. Only information from U.S. citizens would be forwarded to the Secretary and to local clerks. Noncitizens are automatically deleted and would not be registered.

AVR improves the safety and security of the voting process by improving the accuracy of our voting rolls and eliminating duplicate voters and voters who have moved out of state or died. The AVR bill will further clean up the rolls by updating them with the latest information from the RMV and MassHealth and by joining with 23 other states in the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC). ERIC takes each state's voter file and compares it to every other member state's registration and department of motor vehicles records, as well as other databases including the U.S. Postal Service, death notices, and the Social Security Administration. ERIC then sends a detailed encrypted report back to the Secretary of State and local officials, who eliminate or update the erroneous records. This reduces the already very small risk of voters casting a ballot in multiple states or the virtually non-existent risk of voter impersonation. It also reduces costs to the state and political campaigns for mailing to and otherwise engaging with non-existent voters. To date, ERIC has helped voting officials eliminate the records of 8 million individuals who have relocated or died.