



Testimony for the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
Committee  
February 15, 2017

**SB 594 – Elective Franchise – Registration and Voting at Polling Place**

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**SUPPORT**

The ACLU of Maryland supports SB 594, allowing eligible individuals to register to vote at the same time and at the same place as they cast their ballot on Election Day. Election Day Registration (EDR) has the potential to increase voter access to the election process.

**EDR increases voter turnout**

States that offer EDR historically have turnout rates as much as 10 percent higher than states that do not. In last year's presidential election, EDR states accounted for the top five states with the highest voter turnout (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maine, New Hampshire, Iowa). Those same five states dominated voter turnout in 2008 and 2012 as well.

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Voter interest often increases as registration deadlines approach. Elected offices often remain highly competitive long after most registration deadlines have passed. Advertisements, debates, and news stories in the final weeks of an Election are often enough to convince someone who had not planned on casting a ballot to do so. Registration deadlines must not prevent eligible individuals from voting.

**EDR removes artificial barriers to voting**

Election Day Registration assists historically disenfranchised voters, including the geographically mobile, lower-income, and the young. EDR would remove these barriers by allowing citizens to register and vote on Election Day.

**EDR is a low-cost way to increase voter participation**

Costs associated with EDR have been described as minimal, with elections in EDR states no more expensive to administer than states without it. Resources shift from processing provisional ballots and registrations associated with provisional ballots to registering voters who can cast a regular ballot; and shift from processing registrations during the rush between closing deadlines and election day to a steadier stream of processing registrations before the deadline and on and after Election day.

**Incidences of voter fraud do not increase with Election Day Registration**

There has been no evidence of voter fraud related to EDR. Election officials in EDR states maintain that current safeguards are sufficient.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 594.