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LATE TESTIMONY

COMMENTS ON HB 545
RELATING TO VOTER REGISTRATION
Committee on Judiciary
Rm. 325
2:00 p.m. February 1, 2011

Chair Keith-Agaran and Committee Members:

This measure appears to task the Office of Elections with creating an online voter registration intake and verification system and subsequently transfer the voter registration information to the County Clerks.

We take no position on this measure but note that an appropriation is necessary to cover the costs of creating the intake system and creating the interactivity between the drivers license, civil identification, and the statewide voter registration systems to accomplish the desired end.

We also note that a January 1, 2012 implementation deadline is likely not realistic due to the various state procurement processes and the need to carefully plan and execute the modifications to the various databases described above.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



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LATE TESTIMONY

House JUD Committee
Chair Gilbert Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Karl Rhoads

Tuesday 2/1/11 at 2:00 PM in Room 325
HB 545 – Online Voter Registration

TESTIMONY

Nikki Love, Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

Chair Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Rhoads, and Committee Members:

Common Cause Hawaii supports HB 545, which would establish a system of online voter registration.

This is an important measure to modernize the voter registration process. Our current voter registration method is archaic and burdensome, and unnecessarily excludes many eligible voters from participating in our democracy. In 2001, the National Election Commission chaired by Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford concluded: “The registration laws in force throughout the United States are among the world’s most demanding ... [and are] one reason why voter turnout in the United States is near the bottom of the developed world.”

Modernizing voter registration is especially necessary in Hawaii, which has been consistently at or near the bottom of all 50 states in voter turnout. The numbers from the 2010 General Election show that there are 930,624 eligible voters in Hawaii, but only 690,748 registered voters. This leaves an estimated 239,876 potential voters (26% of those eligible) who were not registered at the time of the 2010 General Election.ⁱ

The concept of online voter registration is especially relevant for younger citizens, who are among the least likely to vote. For the generation who grew up with the Internet, doing anything via paper “hard copy” is considered old-fashioned and serves as a reminder that our government is not keeping up with the times.

We also recommend additional methods such as same day voter registration to help bring down arbitrary barriers to voting.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

ⁱ Sources: http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2010G.html,
<http://hawaii.gov/elections/results/2010/general/files/histatewide.pdf>