



The strength and legitimacy of our democracy is predicated on participation and engagement of citizens in the democratic process. Yet we know, the United States has one of the lowest rates of electoral participation in the world, ranking 120 in a study of 169 countries. <sup>i</sup> Although roughly 215 million were eligible to vote in the presidential elections of 2012, only about 133 million (or 62 percent of eligible voters) actually voted. In the 2014 midterm elections, only 36 percent of eligible voters voted.<sup>ii</sup>

In a country with already low-participation rates, historically Hawaii has had some of the lowest participation rates in the nation. Yet, recently we have seen Hawaii take significant steps in becoming a leader on voting rights nationally. Hawaii stands out as one of less than 14 states to allow for Same Day Registration – a policy known to significantly increase registration rates and voting among eligible citizens. The Center for Popular Democracy applauds Hawaii for serving as a model for the country in considering even more transformative ways in which the government can further strengthen our democracy by ensuring all eligible voters are registered to vote. We applaud Hawaii leaders for considering policies that would further increase voter registration and participation rates via enhanced registration at DMVs. We believe this is one of several ways in which the government can work to maximum voter registration and participation within our democracy. The Center for Popular Democracy looks forward to participating in these continued conversations on reform in Hawaii.

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<sup>i</sup> Rafael López Pintor, Maria Gratschew, and Kate Sullivan, “Voter Turnout Rates from a Comparative Perspective,” *Voter Turnout Since 1945: A Global Report*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral

<sup>ii</sup> Michael P. McDonald, “2014 General Election Turnout Rates,” *United States Election Project*, <http://www.electproject.org/2014g>.