
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VOTER REGISTRATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that voter turnout in the
2 State remains low and continues to decline. In 2016, Hawaii had
3 the lowest voter turnout in the United States. Only 52.7 per
4 cent of registered Hawaii voters cast ballots in the 2018
5 general election. This represents a sharp decline in voter
6 turnout over the years, as approximately ninety-four per cent of
7 registered voters cast ballots in the State's first
8 gubernatorial election in 1959.

9 Additionally, the State has a historically low rate of
10 registered voters. According to a 2016 estimate from the United
11 States Census Bureau, Hawaii had the lowest percentage of
12 registered voters in the country. In 2016, only 49.8 per cent
13 of qualified voters were registered to vote, well below the
14 national average of 64.2 per cent. Therefore, of the 1,064,000
15 people in Hawaii who were qualified to vote in the 2016
16 election, 534,128 were not registered to vote.



1 The legislature also finds that states that adopted
2 automatic voter registration programs have higher voter
3 registration rates and voter turnout. Colorado and Oregon both
4 adopted automatic voter registration programs, and those states'
5 voter registration rates were 68.2 per cent, and 67.4 per cent,
6 respectively. Moreover, Colorado had the eighth highest voter
7 turnout in the 2016 election at 63.8 per cent.

8 In 2018, thirty-one per cent of qualified voters in the
9 United States between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine voted.
10 This represented a ten per cent increase in voter turnout for
11 the same age group from the 2014 election. Recent world events
12 have ignited a passion in younger generations around civic
13 engagement, and have led many sixteen and seventeen year-olds to
14 become passionate about voting, and many would vote if given the
15 opportunity.

16 The legislature further finds that voting at a young age
17 creates and empowers lifelong voters. Data show that after an
18 individual votes once, the individual often becomes a habitual
19 voter. Therefore, by facilitating the ability of those sixteen
20 years of age and older to preregister or register to vote, the
21 State will be empowering a new generation of lifelong voters.



1 Currently, the department of education requires students to
2 receive four social studies credits to graduate from a public
3 high school. In the course, "Participation in a Democracy,"
4 which is required for graduation, students explore what it means
5 to actively engage in civic duties such as voting. This course,
6 and civics education in general, could be enhanced by actively
7 engaging students in the process of voting.

8 The legislature further finds that voting is the
9 cornerstone of American democracy and, while other states have
10 been in the news for suppressing voters, Hawaii, by
11 automatically registering qualified voters, can convey a message
12 that voting is an unquestioned fundamental right that should be
13 exercised. The State allows individuals who are sixteen and
14 seventeen years old to preregister to vote, but many of these
15 individuals do not know they have the option to preregister to
16 vote. As a result, many sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds do not
17 preregister to vote and often fail to register even after
18 turning eighteen years old.

19 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is increase voter
20 participation and encourage civic engagement in Hawaii's schools
21 by establishing a process for the automatic preregistration and



1 registration of public school-enrolled students who are at least
2 sixteen years of age.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
4 by adding a new section to part II to be appropriately
5 designated and to read as follows:

6 "§11- Automatic voter preregistration and registration;

7 opt out. (a) Beginning January 1, 2020, any person who:

8 (1) Is enrolled in a public high school;

9 (2) Is otherwise qualified to register to vote under this
10 part;

11 (3) Is at least sixteen years of age; and

12 (4) Properly completes and submits a voter registration
13 affidavit,

14 shall be automatically preregistered or registered to vote as

15 provided in subsection (d); provided that the person shall

16 retain the option to subsequently opt in or out of

17 preregistration or registration.

18 (b) Between January 1 and January 31 of each year, the

19 superintendent of education shall provide and may collect from

20 each student who is at least sixteen years of age a voter

21 affidavit containing the information required by section 11-15



1 to allow the student to preregister or register to vote or to
2 opt out of preregistering or registering to vote. The
3 superintendent of education shall transmit the voter
4 registration affidavit to the clerk of the county in which the
5 applicant resides; provided that the superintendent of education
6 shall not maintain, scan, review, or copy any voter affidavit
7 nor transmit any information maintained by the department of
8 education.

9 (c) The clerk shall determine whether the applicant is
10 currently preregistered or registered in the general county
11 register. If the applicant is not currently preregistered or
12 registered, the clerk shall determine whether the applicant is
13 at least sixteen years of age and a citizen of the United
14 States.

15 (d) Upon determination that the applicant is eligible to
16 preregister or register to vote and not currently preregistered
17 or registered, the clerk shall provide written notification to
18 the applicant of the process to opt out of the automatic voter
19 preregistration or registration; provided that if the applicant
20 does not opt out of preregistration by the applicant's
21 eighteenth birthday, the clerk shall assign a transaction number



1 to the preregistration in a manner that is substantially similar
2 to the numbering of affidavits as required by section 11-15(c),
3 and on the applicant's eighteenth birthday shall automatically
4 register the name of the voter in the general county register as
5 provided in section 11-14."

6 SECTION 3. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
7 amended by adding a new section to part II, subpart C, to be
8 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

9 "§302A- Automatic voter preregistration and
10 registration. The board and the superintendent shall adopt
11 policies as necessary to maximize and facilitate the
12 preregistration and registration of qualifying students to vote
13 as provided in section 11- ."

14 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

15 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 2020.



Report Title:

Automatic Voter Preregistration or Registration; DOE; Opt out

Description:

Establishes a process, beginning on January 1, 2020, for automatically preregistering or registering public school-enrolled students who are at least 16 years old. (HB1485 HD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

