
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 52.6 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-three per cent
7 of 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 registering voters. According to a 2016 estimate from the
11 United 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 1,111,117
15 people in Hawaii who were qualified to vote in the 2016
16 election, 557,780 were not registered to vote.



1 The legislature also finds that states with both the
2 highest voter registration rate and highest voter turnout have
3 adopted automatic voter registration programs. Massachusetts,
4 Oregon, and Colorado have all adopted automatic voter
5 registration programs, and each of those states' voter
6 registration rates are some of the highest in the nation, at
7 68.1 per cent, 67.4 per cent, and 68.2 per cent, respectively.
8 Moreover, Massachusetts had the eighth highest voter turnout in
9 the 2016 election at 68.1 per cent, and Oregon had the highest
10 at 80.33 per cent.

11 The legislature further finds that voting is the
12 cornerstone of American democracy, and while other states have
13 been in the news for suppressing voters, Hawaii, by
14 automatically registering qualified voters, can convey a message
15 that voting is an unquestioned fundamental right that should be
16 exercised.

17 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a task
18 force to examine automatic voter registration in the State.

19 SECTION 2. There is established within the department of
20 the attorney general for administrative purposes a task force to



1 examine the implementation of an automatic voter registration
2 system in the State.

3 (b) The task force shall be composed of the following
4 members or their designees:

5 (1) The attorney, who shall serve as the chairperson;

6 (2) The chair of the senate committee with jurisdiction
7 over the judiciary;

8 (3) The chair of the house of representatives committee
9 with jurisdiction over the judiciary;

10 (4) The chief election officer; and

11 (5) The appropriate county clerk of each county.

12 Members of the task force may recommendation additional members
13 to the task force, subject to the chairperson's approval.

14 (c) The task force in conducting its duties, the task
15 force shall examine:

16 (1) The use of certain forms submitted to the State,
17 including state tax returns and applications for
18 public assistance, as a means of automatically
19 registering an individual to vote;



1 (2) The methodology to track individuals who are not
2 registered to vote and how to incorporate that system
3 with an automatic voter registration system; and

4 (3) A system to allow individuals who are automatically
5 registered to vote to opt out of the automatic voter
6 registration.

7 (d) Members of the task force shall serve without
8 compensation, but may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses
9 incurred, including travel expenses.

10 (e) The task force shall submit a report to the
11 legislature of its findings and recommendations, including
12 proposed legislation, no later than thirty days prior to the
13 convening of the regular session of 2020.

14 (f) The task force shall cease to exist on June 30, 2020.

15 SECTION 2. This Act shall take effect on January 28, 2081.



Report Title:

Automatic Voter Registration; Task Force

Description:

Establishes a task force to examine the implementation of an automatic voter registration system in the State. (HB1544 HD1)

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