

Automatic Voter Registration

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Massachusetts

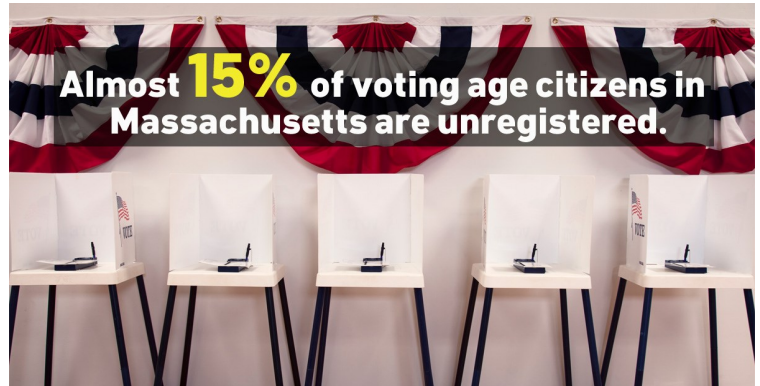
COMMON CAUSE

What is it?

Automatic voter registration (AVR) is the next step in voting rights. It shifts our voter registration system from an opt-in to an opt-out one, involving more citizens and making elections more free, fair, and accessible. It also costs less in the long run and makes voting rolls more accurate and secure.

Under AVR, every eligible citizen who interacts with the RMV and other voter registration agencies will be automatically registered to vote, unless they decline. The legislation also requires Massachusetts to further improve the accuracy of our voting rolls by joining the Electronic Registration Information Center.

There's a problem.



680,000 voting age citizens are not on the rolls.

Cutting Edge

Oregon and California became the first two states to have AVR in 2015. Alaska, West Virginia, Vermont, and Connecticut also adopted this cutting edge reform in 2016, Alaska by ballot initiative on Nov 8th by a 64% vote. **Massachusetts should be next.**

Concerns

Using modern technology to process registration will make voter rolls more accurate and cost-effective. Databases and opt-out procedures will ensure that only those eligible will be registered. If someone is mistakenly registered, they will be not be penalized.

Making voting rights automatic - Boston Globe Editorial, September 22, 2015

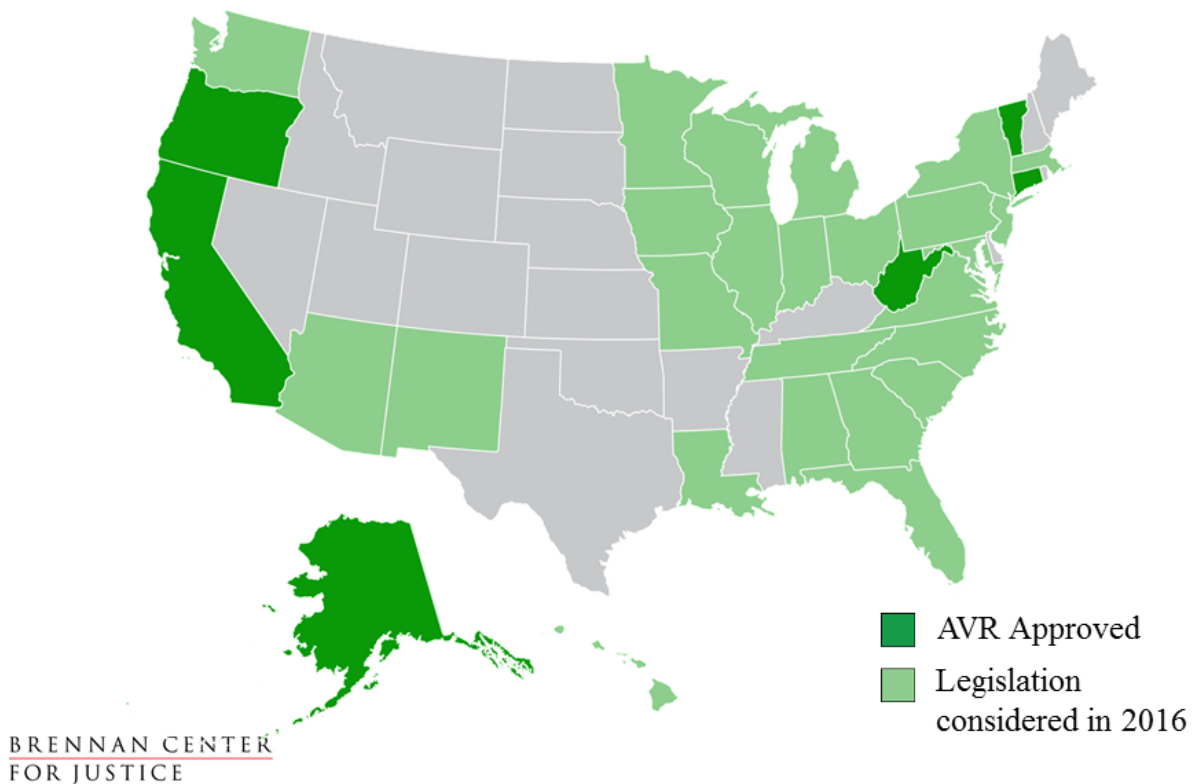
"The measure simply reverses the status quo: Would-be voters currently have to opt in to get enrolled; soon, voter registration will happen by default when receiving or renewing a license from the department of motor vehicles. So the onus now rests with the government, and not with citizens. The right to vote is granted automatically and without unnecessary barriers, as it should be, unless the individual opts out..."

Critics of universal automatic registration...say it could lead to voter fraud, since the new system potentially could enroll people who shouldn't be on the voter lists. But **modernizing the process and relying on technology will only make voter lists more accurate and the system more cost-efficient.**"

Why should we do it?

Having **15% of the voting age population in our state not registered** is unacceptable for a modern democracy. We need to engage all eligible citizens in our elections and automatic voter registration is a proven method for doing so. Developed democracies around the world have adopted this reform to shift the burden of voter registration from the individual to the government, remove barriers to participation, and increase turnout. At the same time, the reform reduces paperwork, increases accuracy and saves money in the long-run. At a time when the Supreme Court's *Shelby* decision gutting the Voting Rights Act has opened the door to anti-voter restrictions in states across the country, **Massachusetts should lead the charge for a better democracy**.

States Considering Automatic Voter Registration in 2016



The evidence is overwhelming: Americans should be automatically registered to vote Salon Magazine, October 17, 2015

“Studies show that when people are encouraged to vote, they are more likely to pay attention to elections...Automatic registration at the RMV could bring millions of new Americans onto the voting rolls, making it easier for them to vote but also making them targets for get-out-the-vote operations...with higher turnout, catering only to the donor class could threaten [an electoral] seat. Automatic registration could serve to alleviate the power of the donor class, and is the first step towards bringing America closer to its democratic ideal.”