



Testimony in Support of HB 1428
Voter Registration Deadline Extension
Senate Government Operations & Security
February, 25 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1428. Project Vote is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to realizing the promise of American democracy. Our mission is to build an electorate that accurately represents the diversity of America's citizenry, and to ensure that every eligible citizen can register, vote, and cast a ballot that counts. By extending the registration deadline for online and in-person voter registration, this bill will optimize the efficiencies of online voter registration, while reducing barriers to the ballot for eligible, interested Washingtonians.

Washington has been a leader in voting rights, including the early adoption of online voter registration (OVR) and leveraging the system for use by agencies conducting voter registration and by third-party registration drives. HB 1428 extends the OVR deadline so people who become interested in voting close to an election will be incentivized to use the online system. Cost-savings and voter roll accuracy will likely increase as a result. Online voter registration eliminates the especially onerous, more costly process of deciphering applicants' handwriting and inputting data into the registration system. It also increases accuracy because misinterpretation of handwritten information on a paper registration form, or even a simple input typo, can lead to incorrect information on the official voter roll. The more people who use the system, the more accuracy and efficiencies are increased.

Additionally, extending the online and in-person registration deadline will directly benefit voters and increase engagement. Arbitrary deadlines should not operate to deprive eligible Washingtonians their voice in the political process. As such, this bill is an important step towards eliminating registration barriers.

Finally, HB 1428 is unlikely to result in significant election administration issues. While this bill moves the online and in-person registration deadline to eleven days prior to an election, fifteen states and the District of Columbia have already enacted same day registration policies that allow voters to register and cast a ballot during early voting, within a few days of an election, or on election day itself.¹ Several states have continuously offered same day registration since the 1970's and reported no significant problems.

Project Vote encourages swift passage of this bill. The small change in HB 1428 offers big benefits for voters, election officials, and taxpayers alike.

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¹ Same day registration states: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming