



ADVANTAGES OF ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

Election Day Registration (EDR), also known as “same-day voter registration,” permits eligible citizens to register and vote on Election Day. Six states¹ had EDR for the 2004 elections. These states:

- **Boast higher-than-average voter turnout;**
- **Reported few problems with fraud;**
- **Saw insignificant changes in costs, or administrative difficulty; and**
- **Enhanced citizen’s participation in our democratic process.**

These benefits led half a dozen states to seriously consider EDR during the 2005 legislative session and Montana enacted EDR for their 2006 elections. Since the elections of 2000, at least 36 states, in every region of the country, have considered a proposal for “Same Day” or “Election Day” Registration.

Why Do We Need EDR?

- **To help Americans vote.**

Election Day Registration makes voting accessible and convenient by removing barriers to participation. With EDR, all eligible citizens who arrive at the polls have an opportunity to vote, even if their names have been incorrectly purged or were not added in time for the election. According to a May 2001 poll, nearly two-thirds (64%) of all non-voters said that allowing people to register and vote on Election Day would make them more likely to vote.²

- **To make every vote count.**

In the 2004 presidential election, more than one million voters cast provisional ballots that often went uncounted. If EDR had been available, most of these voters could have registered and cast regular ballots. Another one million registered voters across the country had

¹ Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming

² Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, “America’s No-Shows,” www.yvoteonline.org/noshows2000.shtml.

registration problems that prevented them from voting altogether – problems that could have been overcome had EDR been available.³

- **Registration deadlines limit voter participation.**

Thirty-seven states end voter registration 20 to 30 days before Election Day, well before debates are held, advertisements are run, and before most voters focus on election campaigns.

- **States with EDR have higher voter participation.**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, on average 75 percent of voting-age citizens voted in EDR states in the 2004 election – about 12 percentage points higher than the national average.

Who Benefits from EDR?

- **All voters.**

61 percent of eligible voters participated in the 2004 presidential election. Another 27 percent, **55 million American citizens, were not registered to vote.**⁴ Experts predict that EDR could bring many of these citizens into the system.

- **Young people.**

States with EDR have youth voter turnout rates that average 14 percentage points higher than the national average. In those states, 18-24 year olds are more likely to be contacted by a political party, which indicates that campaigns seek to engage young people in EDR states.⁵ The top two states for youth voting in 2004, Minnesota and Wisconsin, employ EDR.

- **The historically disfranchised and recent movers.**

More than 40 million Americans, or 14 percent of the population, moved between March 2002 and March 2003.⁶ The young, people of color, and low-income populations are most mobile. Many of these individuals want to vote but are not able to register at their new addresses before registration deadlines pass. EDR offers a ready remedy. New residents can simply re-register at their new voting precinct on Election Day and vote.

- **Election administrators.**

Election administrators like EDR because it is easier to implement than provisional ballots. EDR is efficient: unlike most provisional ballot processes, each voter processed through EDR casts a valid ballot, and is registered for the next election. Administrators are also far less likely to have to turn away eligible voters from the polling place.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in Election 2004," May 2005.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in Election 2004," May 2005.

⁵ Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement "Easier Voting Methods Boost Youth Turnout," February 2003

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, "Geographic Mobility: Population Characteristics, 2002 to 2003," June 2005.

Brians, Craig Leonard and Grofman, Bernard (2001): "Election Day Registration's Effect on U.S. Voter Turnout" (Social Science Quarterly), and Calvert, Jerry W. and Gilchrist, Jack (1993): "Suppose They Held an Election and Almost Everybody Came!" (PS: Political Science and Politics).