



EVERYDISTRICT ACTION FUND

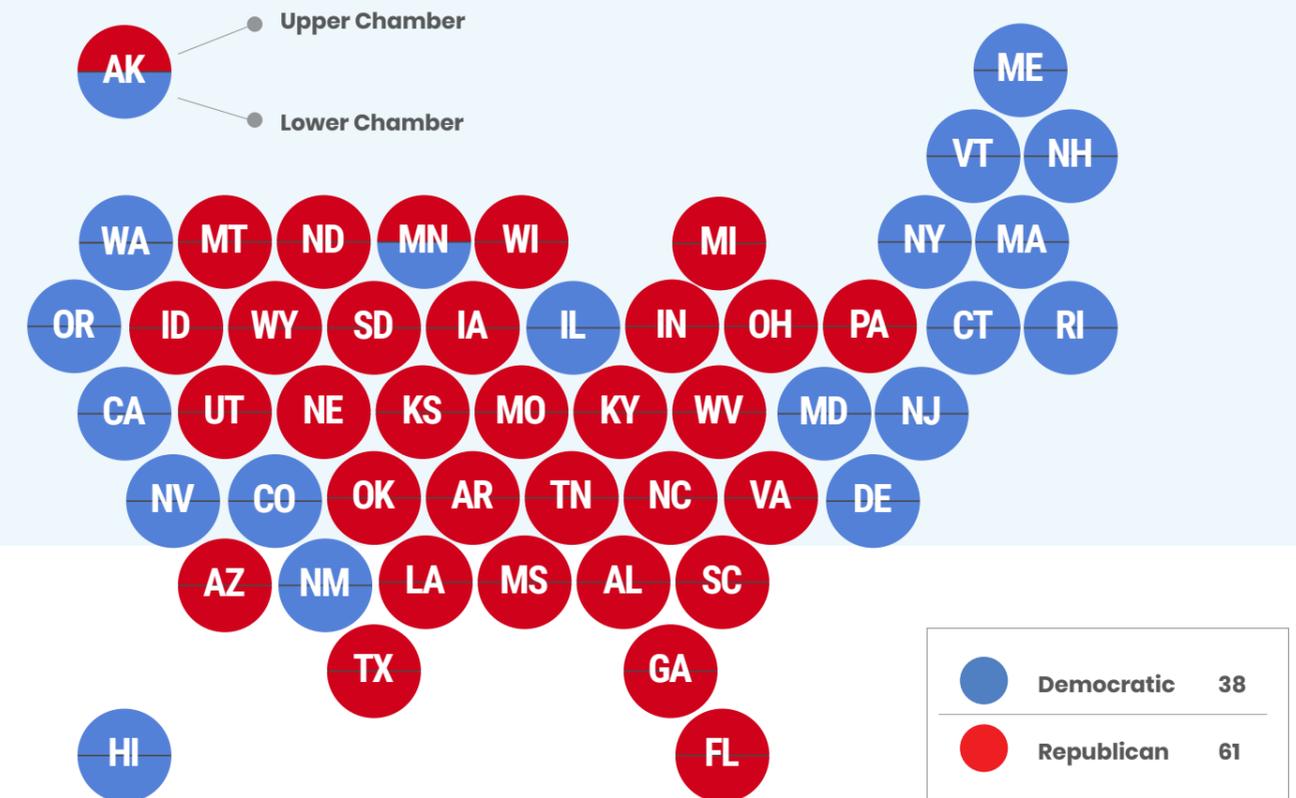
2019 BLUE STATES REPORT:
A VOTING RIGHTS ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

At EveryDistrict Action Fund, we empower people to take part in the political process. We believe that the right to vote is the most fundamental right in our democracy and that our elected leaders should make it as easy as possible for as many people as possible to vote.

State government plays a large role in legislating voting rights, which is why EveryDistrict Action Fund is focused on implementing pro-voting policies in the states.

FIGURE 1. PARTISAN CONTROL OF STATE LEGISLATURES AFTER THE 2018 ELECTIONS



But in recent years, only one political party has shown an interest in this agenda. States that have fallen under Republican control in the past decade have seen one restrictive voting policy after another passed by legislatures and signed into law by governors. In contrast, when Democrats took control of Congress in the 2018 election, the first bill introduced was a sweeping measure to expand voting rights.

With the victories in November, Democrats have trifectas in 14 states and legislative supermajorities with a Republican governor in 3 states. We firmly believe that state-level Democrats should follow the agenda set by Congressional Democrats to enact a strong voting rights agenda in the states.

This report outlines the fundamental elements of a healthy American democracy and how Democrats can improve democracy in the states they control now. This **Voting Rights Scorecard** will help activists chart a path to improve democracy in their communities. In addition to emerging and proven ideas like mail-in voting, automatic voter registration, and felon re-enfranchisement, this report introduces the idea of a "Wait Time Service Standard," an approach to reducing the long lines that dissuade people from voting and disproportionately affect minority and low-income voters.

OUR CRITERIA

Based on the work of voting rights activists and researchers around the country, we have outlined twelve measures to assess how well states controlled by Democrats are guaranteeing the right to vote for their constituents.

REGISTRATION

1. **AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION**

In its purest form, automatic voter registration (AVR) can make every interaction with a government agency an opportunity for an “opt-out” voter registration ask. As the Brennan Center explains, “Automatic voter registration (AVR) is an innovative policy that streamlines the way Americans register to vote. AVR makes two simple, yet transformative, changes to the way our country has traditionally registered voters. First, AVR makes voter registration “opt-out” instead of “opt-in” - eligible citizens who interact with government agencies are registered to vote or have their existing registration information updated, unless they affirmatively decline. Again, the voter can opt-out; it is not compulsory registration. Second, those agencies transfer voter registration information electronically to election officials instead of using paper registration forms. These common-sense reforms increase registration rates, clean up the voter rolls, and save states money.”

Already, 15 states and the District of Columbia have adopted AVR. States that have implemented AVR have often restricted the interaction to an individual agency, like the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), which already tends to have “opt-in” registration policies due to federal Motor Voter laws. The opportunity exists to extend AVR practices to more agencies.

2. **ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION**

Online voter registration provides an easy opportunity for individuals to register from the comfort of their home.

3. **SAME-DAY REGISTRATION**

As anyone who rushes to buy a birthday gift on the way to the party knows, it is easy to forget about deadlines, particularly if people are not constantly focused on that deadline. Same-day registration allows everyone to have an opportunity to both register to vote and cast a ballot on Election Day.

VOTING PROCESS

4. **VOTER ID NOT REQUIRED**

Masked in a sensible-sounding policy, Voter ID laws are used to discriminate against college students, minorities, and low-income voters. Blue states should make sure all can vote, regardless of whether one has a specific form of identification.

5. **EARLY VOTING**

Allowing sufficient early voting gives citizens substantial opportunity to cast their ballot instead of relying on a single Tuesday. Blue states should counteract Republican efforts to limit early voting, particularly on weekends. Republicans often target Sundays, the traditional “Souls to the Polls” days for African-Americans.¹

6. **NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**

In many states, sworn affidavits outlining an “excuse” for being unable to vote in person are required as part of the absentee process. These required excuses, or having to meet an eligibility requirement from a list of state-mandated criteria, have a chilling effect for people participating in the electoral process and should be abolished.

7. **MAIL-IN VOTING**

In place of a focus on in-person voting with some people voting absentee, three states have transitioned to primarily or entirely mail-in voting. This approach has the strongest proven impact on increasing voter turnout if states are willing to change their voting culture.

VOTING RIGHTS

8. **FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT**

Americans broadly agree that once individuals have served their sentence, they should be able to participate in society again. That includes voting. As the overwhelming passage of Amendment 4 in Florida in 2018 makes clear, even purple states can embrace this reform.²

9. **VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS**

A voter bill of rights empowers voters to understand what their rights are when it comes time to vote. This document can give voters who are wary of the electoral process the confidence to participate.

10. **POLLING HOURS**

While we generally believe that states should move toward systems that limit the importance of Election Day, when the polls are open, they should be open for as long as possible, affording people ample opportunity to vote at some point during the day.

11. **WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD**

This new proposal from EveryDistrict Action Fund is about counteracting one of the most tired tropes in political coverage: that long lines at polling places are a good thing. Long lines mean long waits, which means that people who have to get to work are dissuaded from voting. It means that people vote once and then resolve never to vote again. Every state should adopt a service standard for polling places. We recommend that states adopt a standard that no voter should have to wait more than 30 minutes.

With such a standard, states could be required to ensure sufficient staffing to keep people moving and lines short. Voting rights activists could measure performance against these standards to see if certain polling places serving disadvantaged groups are being underserved.³

12. **OTHER MEASURES**

Apart from these specific elements, states can have measures that further enhance access to the franchise or have a further chilling effect. We do not evaluate them in our scorecard, but we do provide more details in our state reports. These elements may become evaluated measures in future reports, and include paid time off for voting policies and pre-registration for teens.

¹ For example, in Virginia, the relatively robust early in-person absentee program noticeably lacks any voting times on Sundays.

² The Amendment passed with 65% of the vote, having required 60% to pass.

³ See Appendix B for a further description of the Wait Time Service Standard.

HOW WE EVALUATE

For each measure, we give a state a score of green, yellow, or red. Generally speaking, a ■ green score means that the state meets the highest standard for implementing that pro-voting measure, ■ yellow means partial adoption of the measure, and ■ red means no adoption or even adoption of suppressing measures.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

- Automatic voter registration has been broadly implemented at multiple government agencies in the state.
- Automatic voter registration has been implemented, but is restricted to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) or equivalent, and does not guarantee a registration opportunity at every encounter with state government.
- Automatic voter registration is not implemented.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

- Online voter registration is available to all prospective voters in the state. Registration form may be provided in multiple foreign languages to ease the registration process for naturalized citizens.
- Online voter registration is limited to some voters in the state.
- Online voter registration is not provided.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

- Same-day registration is available to all voters in the state.
- Same-day registration is available in a limited way.
- Same-day registration is not available.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

- No ID is required at polling places to vote.
- Some form of identification is required, but a broad variety of IDs, including non-photographic identification, are permissible.
- Photo identification is required to vote.

EARLY VOTING

- Early voting is available and includes both weekdays and weekends.
- Early voting is provided, but hours or days create restrictions.
- No early voting is provided.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

- No excuses are required to vote absentee.
- Excuses are required to vote absentee, but the excuses are sufficiently broad to cover many voters.
- A small set of excuses are required to vote absentee.

MAIL-IN VOTING

- Mail-in voting is the predominant form of voting, largely replacing or heavily complementing in-person voting.
- Mail-in voting is available through absentee voting, but is otherwise not broadly available.
- No mail-in voting is provided.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

- Ex-felons have their voting rights automatically restored following their prison sentence. Re-registration may still be required.

Some states go a step further to ensure that felons never lose their right to vote. Such states will be specifically highlighted in this report as the desired eventual outcome.

- Ex-felons can have their voting rights restored, but only after completion of not only their sentence but also parole and/or probation. Re-registration may be required.
- Ex-felons cannot be re-enfranchised in a clear and consistent way. For example, felons may be unable to re-register or they may have to complete specific applications or processes to be considered individually.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

- A clear voter bill of rights is easily accessible, at least online, to all voters.
- A voter bill of rights is available, but it is not easily accessible.
- No voter bill of rights has been developed.

POLLING HOURS

- At least 14 hours to vote are provided on Election Day.
- Fewer than 14, but at least 12 hours, are provided to vote on Election Day.
- Fewer than 12 hours are provided to vote on Election Day.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

- While no wait time service standard exists, the exclusive use of mail-in voting precludes the need for an Election Day service standard.
- While no wait time service standard is provided, the heavy use of other methods to encourage voter participation reduces the need for this standard.
- No wait time service standard exists, while Election Day/limited Early Voting remain the dominant forms of voting.

OTHER MEASURES

While no grade is associated with "Other Measures," these provide useful information about other voting policies in the state.

HOW THE SCORECARD WILL EVOLVE

This is the first year of a multiyear effort to improve voting rights in the states. As we move forward, and as more progress is made on voting rights, we will increase the standards of evaluation and bring in new elements for improving the voting process and experience for voters.

Some potential topics include pre-registration for young voters and reducing voter registration deadlines. EveryDistrict Action Fund welcomes the feedback of groups and individuals on the frontline of voting rights reform to improve the Scorecard.

VOTING RIGHTS SCORECARD:

IMPROVING DEMOCRACY WITH A VOTING RIGHTS AGENDA

STATE	REGISTRATION			VOTING PROCESS				VOTING RIGHTS				APPENDIX A PAGE #
	AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION	ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION	SAME-DAY REGISTRATION	VOTER ID REQUIREMENT	EARLY VOTING	NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE	MAIL-IN VOTING	FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT	VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS	POLLING HOURS	WAIT TIME STANDARDS	
California	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	16
Colorado	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	17
Connecticut	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	18
Delaware	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	19
Hawaii	Red	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	20
Illinois	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Red	Yellow	Red	21
Maine	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	22
Maryland	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	23
Massachusetts	Yellow	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	24
Nevada	Yellow	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	25
New Jersey	Yellow	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	26
New Mexico	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	27
New York	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Red	28
Oregon	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	29
Rhode Island	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	30
Vermont	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	31
Washington	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	32

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Our analysis of these 17 states finds a wide discrepancy in the ease of registering and voting even within blue states. The top tier of blue states are the western states with a commitment to mail-in voting; California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington all score well.

The weakest states are Delaware, New York, and Rhode Island, which have created multiple roadblocks to their citizens' participation in the democratic process.

Across the states, a few key priorities emerge:

- **Expand Automatic Voter Registration:** While many of these states have some form of AVR, it can be strengthened by being a function of all public agencies in every state.
- **Implement Same-Day Registration:** Eight of 17 states still lack same-day registration.
- **Implement Early Voting:** Four states (Connecticut, Delaware, New York, and Rhode Island) still lack any early voting accommodations.
- **Get Rid of the Excuses:** Five states (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island) still retain a short list of excuses with which voters must comply to vote absentee.
- **Test the Wait Time Standard:** With no states implementing a service standard for voters, researchers and activists have an opportunity to advance an approach to reduce time spent waiting in lines at polling places.

AGENDA FOR 2019

In 2019, activists in these 17 states have a clear mandate: Lobby their Democratic elected officials to embrace a voting rights agenda that makes it easy for every citizen to engage in the political process.

In all 17 states, the legislative sessions are ongoing until the dates below. Call, write, and meet your representatives about this crucial issue. Beginning immediately, we'll be highlighting the groups that are pushing legislation right now that you can support. From New York to Hawaii, Democrats are taking the charge to open our democracy to all.

We'll help you join them.

STATE	SESSION TIMEFRAME (ALL DATES 2019 UNLESS NOTED)	STATE	SESSION TIMEFRAME (ALL DATES 2019 UNLESS NOTED)
California	December 3, 2018 – September 15, 2019	Nevada	February 4 – June 6
Colorado	January 9 – May 10	New Jersey	January 7, 2019 – January 9, 2020
Connecticut	January 2 – June 7	New Mexico	January 15 – March 18
Delaware	January 8 – July 2	New York	January 9 – June 30
Hawaii	January 16 – May 5	Oregon	January 14 – July 8
Illinois	January 9 – May 31	Rhode Island	January 1 – June 30
Maine	December 5, 2018 – June 19, 2019	Vermont	January 9 – February 25
Maryland	January 9 – April 11	Washington	January 14 – April 23
Massachusetts	January 2 – December 31		

WHAT ABOUT NON-BLUE STATES?

Of course, blue states are not the only places that need voting rights reform. In fact, it is the states like Wisconsin, Michigan, or North Carolina where Republican legislators and governors have conspired to make voting hard for as many people as possible based on trumped up fears of voter fraud where there is the most work to do.

We have focused on the blue states because it is there that Democrats have clear levers of power through which to enact meaningful legislation and reforms. It creates an opportunity for activists to hold legislators' feet to the fire to make sure they lead on this crucial issue.

As Democrats expand power in the states in 2019 and 2020, we'll be able to expand the Scorecard to more states.

For those living in states still controlled by Republicans, our upcoming Red States report will document how citizens have implemented, and can continue to implement, policy reform in red states through referenda, initiatives, and constitutional amendments.

After the publication of our **Red States** report, we will begin to integrate red states into this analysis to identify the best opportunities for citizen referenda to change the voting rights landscape in their communities.

If you're interested in building a voting rights movement in the states, visit EveryDistrict.us to learn more about our voting rights advocacy work.

APPENDIX A: STATE-BY-STATE VOTING RIGHTS BREAKDOWN

CALIFORNIA

California, one of the best performing states for voting rights, is increasingly becoming a mail-in voting state and provides substantial opportunities for registration and voting access.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

California has automatic voter registration administered at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Residents renewing or acquiring a driver's license have to opt-out of registering to vote. Other agencies are not included in automatic voter registration.⁴

RECOMMENDATION: Expand AVR to other state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is available for voters, with voters as young as 16 able to pre-register to vote. The voter registration application is available in Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese, in addition to English.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

California offers same-day registration. If a voter did not register by the 15-day voter registration deadline, the voter may conditionally register and cast a provisional ballot, which will be counted if California voting criteria are met.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

No Voter ID is required, unless the voter registered by mail and did not provide a driver's license, state ID, or the last four digits of their social security number. In that case, the voter may be asked for identification on his or her first time voting. Acceptable forms of ID in that case include utility bills or any document sent by a government agency

EARLY VOTING

Ample early voting is provided, beginning 29 days before Election Day and concluding on Election Day. Voters do not have to provide an excuse for being unable to vote on Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

All voters are eligible to vote by absentee ballot. No special eligibility requirements are needed.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Elections in California are increasingly conducted by mail, with many voters electing to choose this approach over traditional Election Day voting. Five counties have now begun to mail all voters ballots under the Voter's Choice Act.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

The right to vote is restored upon completion of sentence and parole; the returning citizen is required to re-register online or by mail.

RECOMMENDATION: Allow returning citizens to re-register immediately following their prison sentence.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

A clear voter bill of rights is provided on the Secretary of State's website.

POLLING HOURS

Polls are open from 7 am to 8 pm, providing 13 hours of polling time.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend voting hours to 14 hours to match leading states' open time.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

California, like other states, does not have a wait time standard. However, the increasing use of mail-in voting reduces the criticality of this element.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a wait time service standard, and/or continue to promote, and increase access to, mail-in voting options.

OTHER MEASURES

California has a number of additional positive measures. Residents as young as 16 can pre-register to vote at 18. Voters have a right to receive election materials in languages other than English based on prevalent other languages for that precinct. Policies regarding paid time off for certain workers are also in place. If employees do not have enough time to vote, their employer must provide sufficient time at the beginning or end of a shift, up to two hours, as paid time off.

COLORADO

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Colorado provides automatic voter registration through the Department of Motor Vehicles. In the 2018 election cycle, there was a failed attempt to put forth a statewide ballot initiative: The Colorado Automatic Voter Registration via Public Entities Initiative.

This amendment would have provided for automatic voter registration for individuals interacting with public entities that collect a resident's legal name, age, residence, citizenship, identification information, and signature. The information would then be forwarded to the Colorado Secretary of State, who would ask if the individual wants to opt-out of voter registration or add an affiliation with a political party

If the person does not respond to the inquiry, the individual is automatically registered to vote. Unfortunately, this initiative did not reach the ballot in 2018.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand Automatic Voter Registration as proposed in the Public Entities Initiative.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is provided for all voters, with voters as young as 16 able to pre-register.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Same-day registration is permitted for all voters, though the voter must register eight days before the election to receive a ballot by mail.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

As a state that conducts voting by mail, Colorado requires residents to provide a valid form of identification to vote in-person. This identification is not required to include a photo and a range of forms of identification are accepted.

RECOMMENDATION: While a range of identifications are permitted, reduce Voter ID requirements due to their suppressive impact.

EARLY VOTING

As a state that conducts voting by mail, Colorado still allows early voting the 15 days prior to an election at Voter Service and Polling Centers. Voters may vote in-person on Election Day during polling hours.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

As a state that conducts voting by mail, Colorado allows all voters to vote "absentee" without an excuse.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Elections are conducted by mail in Colorado.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

The right to vote is immediately restored upon completion of sentence and parole, but the returning citizen is required to re-register online or by mail to vote.

RECOMMENDATION: Allow returning citizens to re-register immediately following their prison sentence. Or, better yet, follow the lead of Maine and Vermont and forego disenfranchisement altogether.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

No general voter bill of rights is published. A document is available for residents who have disabilities so that they know their rights when it comes to voting in the state.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a voter bill of rights, post it prominently on the Secretary of State website, and make it available as part of mail-in ballots.

POLLING HOURS

Polls are open on Election Day from 7 am to 7 pm, for a total of 12 hours of voting time.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand to 14 hours, consistent with other leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Colorado does not have a wait time standard for polling places. However, the mail-in approach to elections substantially reduces waits associated with voting.

OTHER MEASURES

Colorado's Voter Service and Polling Centers are open 15 days prior to and through Election Day so residents can:

- Void their mail ballot and vote in person,
- Register to vote,
- Update an existing voter registration record,
- Obtain a mail ballot, and
- Vote in person on paper ballots or accessible voting devices.

Employees can also receive paid time off to vote at the beginning or end of a shift with prior notice to employers.

⁴ California signed into law the "New Motor Voter Act," Assembly Bill 1461, on October 15, 2015.

CONNECTICUT

While Connecticut has adopted some pro-voter practices like automatic voter registration, it still substantially trails most other blue states. With no early voting and a limited number of residents permitted to submit absentee ballots, Connecticut has serious steps to take to improve voting rights.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Automatic voter registration is available in Connecticut through the Department of Motor Vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand AVR to other state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is available to Connecticut residents up to seven days prior to the election. Voters may register if they will be 18 by the next election. However, registrants need a valid driver's license, permit, or photo identification and signature on file with the Department of Motor Vehicles to use this system.

RECOMMENDATION: Revise the online process so that the absence of a DMV identification does not preclude a Connecticut resident from registering.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Same-day registration is available, but only for general elections and the voter must register at a designated Election Day Registration (EDR) location in each town during polling hours. The voter may then vote at the EDR location with a proof of identity and residency.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

A form of identification is required to vote. However, there are a variety of identification options for voters, including non-photo identification. Voters may present a driver's license, credit card with name and signature, ID with name and photo, or any document with name and address, such as a check or utility bill. Non-first-time voters may even sign an affidavit if no identification is available.

RECOMMENDATION: While Connecticut provides a plethora of identification options, the state should move away from identification requirements as part of the voting process.

EARLY VOTING

Connecticut does not offer early voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement early voting (or mail-in voting) and make sure to provide ample time during both the week and weekend to make voting accessible for residents.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Excuses are required to vote early in Connecticut. The excuses are very restrictive:

- Active military service,
- Absence from town of residence during voting hours,
- Illness or physical disability,
- Religious beliefs preclude secular activity, or
- Required performance of duties as election officer at polling precinct other than the voter's own.

RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate excuses required to vote absentee.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only provided in the context of the restrictive absentee balloting provisions. In-person voting on Election Day remains the prominent form of election activity.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand mail-in voting in line with measures taken by California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

The right to vote is restored for returning citizens at the completion of their sentence and parole.

RECOMMENDATION: Restore the right to vote upon the completion of the prison sentence.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

A voter bill of rights is provided.

POLLING HOURS

Polling places are open from 6 am to 8 pm on Election Day, providing 14 hours for voting. This timeframe is consistent with other leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Connecticut does not have a wait time service standard on Election Day. With few other options for voters apart from Election Day, it is even more critical that Connecticut develop real standards to serve voters fairly.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor minimum waiting time standards for voters in the state and then ensure that cities and towns staff polling places appropriately.

OTHER MEASURES

Not applicable at this time.

DELAWARE

A small and increasingly-blue state, Delaware often has a competitive state legislative landscape. It also has too many restrictive voting rights policies for a blue state. Substantial reforms are needed in the year ahead.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

No automatic voter registration is provided in Delaware.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement automatic voter registration in Delaware with broad agency involvement beyond just the Department of Motor Vehicles.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is available for Delaware residents.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Though previous legislative efforts have sought to change this, no same-day registration is provided in Delaware. The registration deadline is 24 days before the election.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration in Delaware.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Voter ID is required to vote. However, a non-photo ID can be provided, such as a utility bill, paycheck, or any government document that confirms the voter's name and address

RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate the voter ID requirements in the state to minimize the suppressive effect of these requirements.

EARLY VOTING

Delaware does not offer early voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement early voting in Delaware.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Absentee voting in Delaware is only allowed if voters meet one of the eligibility requirements from a restrictive set of excuses:

- Nature of work, including students;
- Public service, including military, American Red Cross, etc. Spouses and dependents also qualify;
- Temporary residence outside of USA;
- Religious reasons;
- Vacation;
- Illness or disability; or
- Incarceration (not a felon).

RECOMMENDATION: Remove excuses associated with absentee voting.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is allowed through the limited excuses provided in the absentee voting process. Mail-in voting is not a broader practice, as in states like California, Oregon, or Washington.

RECOMMENDATION: Move toward greater use of mail-in voting as the predominant form of voting.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

People with felony convictions of all but very severe crimes (murder, bribery, and sexual offenses) have their voting rights automatically restored upon completion of their sentence, parole, and probation. There has been recent progress on this front. In July 2016, Governor Markell signed SB 242 into law, removing the financial bar to rights restoration by eliminating the requirement that returning citizens pay

all financial obligations before regaining their eligibility to vote.

RECOMMENDATION: Restore voting rights for returning citizens immediately upon the completion of the sentence alone.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

A set of frequently asked questions is provided on the Delaware Department of Elections website, but there is not a clear bill of rights available for voters.

RECOMMENDATION: Clarify a voter bill of rights and disseminate it to voters through online resources and materials sent to voters.

POLLING HOURS

On Election Day, polling places are open 7 am to 8 pm, for a total voting time of 13 hours.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase voting times to 14 hours to match leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Delaware does not have a wait time service standard. With few other options for voters, improving the Election Day experience is a critical voting rights improvement for Delaware.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Delaware.

OTHER MEASURES

Not applicable at this time.

HAWAII

Despite the Democratic Party's consistent dominance of Hawaiian politics, Hawaii could improve voting rights in the state, particularly by implementing automatic voter registration and expanding polling hours.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Automatic voter registration is not implemented in Hawaii. A 2018 bill, SB 2210, sought to rectify that situation, but did not pass.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement automatic voter registration in Hawaii with as broad an agency base as possible, not just the Department of Motor Vehicles.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online registration is provided for Hawaii residents, with voters as young as age 16 able to pre-register.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Same-day registration is available, having first been implemented in 2018.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

While no photo identification is required to vote in Hawaii, voters must provide some form of identification, including a utility bill, driver's license, state ID, bank statement, or other government issued document.

RECOMMENDATION: Hawaii should ease voter identification requirements further to minimize the suppressive effects of such a requirement.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting is provided in Hawaii. Early voting begins ten days prior to Election Day and concludes on the Saturday before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Voters may vote absentee without providing an excuse in Hawaii.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is provided in the context of absentee voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Hawaii toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Voting rights are immediately restored for returning citizens upon the completion of their prison sentence. The returning citizen must re-register.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

While Hawaii has good information for voters provided on their Department of Elections website, the state does not have a clearly published voter bill of rights.⁵

RECOMMENDATION: Implement a voter bill of rights, place on appropriate websites, and provide directly to voters.

POLLING HOURS

Hawaii has some of the shortest voting hours in the country. Polls are open from 7 am to 6 pm on Election Day for a total of 11 hours of voting time.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend voting hours to 14 hours on Election Day, consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Hawaii does not have a wait time service standard for voters. With a very short polling time, making sure that voters can vote efficiently is of paramount importance.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Hawaii.

OTHER MEASURES

Hawaii offers time off for voters on Election Day. Certain workers are entitled to two consecutive hours off on Election Day to vote. Voters cannot be subject to penalty, rescheduling of hours, or deduction of wages due to such absence. The law does not apply to employees whose hours include a period of two consecutive hours while polls are open when the employee is not working for their employer.

ILLINOIS

Illinois generally has a strong commitment to voting rights, but improvements could be made to simplify the voter registration process, expand automatic voter registration, and implement a voter bill of rights.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Illinois does have automatic voter registration, as a result of SB 1933, signed into law in August 2017. Like other states, automatic voter registration is restricted to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand automatic voter registration to as broad a collection of state agencies as possible.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is available up to 27 days prior to an election.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Same-day registration is available in the state.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

While no Voter ID is required to vote, the identification requirement to register is more onerous than elsewhere. Voters must provide two forms of identification to register, one of which must display the voter's current address.

RECOMMENDATION: Reduce the identification requirement associated with registration.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting generally begins 15 days prior to Election Day and concludes the day before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Illinois has no excuse absentee voting.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Illinois only allows mail-in voting in the context of its absentee voting program.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Illinois toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

In Illinois, returning citizens have their voting rights immediately restored upon completion of their prison sentence. However, they must re-register to vote.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

Illinois does not have a voter bill of rights and the Illinois Elections website does not provide clear information for voters interested in better understanding their rights. The website has a particularly poor user interface, requiring voters to perform multiple clicks to understand key election information.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement a voter bill of rights and make it easily available direct to voters and on appropriate websites.

POLLING HOURS

On Election Day, polls are open from 6 am to 7 pm, for 13 hours of voting time.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase voting hours to 14 hours, consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Illinois does not have a wait time service standard. While Illinois has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Illinois.

OTHER MEASURES

Throughout the state, voter registration forms are available in English and Spanish. In Cook County, registration information is also provided in Chinese, Hindi, Polish, and Korean. On Election Day, employees are entitled to two hours paid time off to vote for special and general elections, provided the employee gives prior notice. As a supplement to the main voter registration period, from 27 days prior to Election Day through Election Day, voters may register under guidelines of "grace period registration." This is an extension of regular registration only available in-person at sites authorized by local election authorities.

⁵ Here is an example of an FAQs page provided by Hawaii: [Elections.Hawaii.Gov/Frequently-Asked-Questions/Election-Day-Registration](https://elections.hawaii.gov/frequently-asked-questions/election-day-registration).

MAINE

Maine is one of the stronger blue states for voting rights in the country, particularly in the area of felon enfranchisement. However, more can be done to improve the registration process.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Maine has not implemented automatic voter registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement automatic voter registration with a broad list of state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Maine does not have online voter registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement online voter registration.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Maine has implemented same-day registration on Election Day.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Maine does not require Voter ID to vote. However, registering voters must provide two valid forms of identification: a driver's license or social security number, in addition to a form of ID with the voter's name and current address. No photo ID is required.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting in Maine begins as soon as absentee ballots are available and ends three days before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Maine does offer no excuse absentee voting.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting only occurs in the context of absentee voting in Maine.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Maine toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Convicted felons always retain their right to vote. Maine is one of only two states where this is the law (Vermont is the other).

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

While there is no voter bill of rights in Maine, the state does provide easy to understand voting rights animated videos on their website.

RECOMMENDATION: Build on the animated videos with an implemented voter bill of rights that is made available to voters in the state directly and through appropriate websites.

POLLING HOURS

For towns with fewer than 500 people, polls may open anytime between 6 am to 10 am. For towns with greater than 500 people, polls must open sometime between 6 am and 8 am. All polls close at 8 pm. Therefore, polls are open between 10 and 14 hours for smaller communities and between 12 and 14 hours for larger communities.

RECOMMENDATION: For the communities with greater than 500 people, standardize poll open times at 14 hours, consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Maine does not have a wait time service standard. While Maine has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Maine.

OTHER MEASURES

Not applicable at this time.

MARYLAND

Maryland has developed one of the strongest commitments to voting rights in the country. It has recently implemented a broad approach to automatic voter registration that makes it one of the strongest in the country.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Automatic voter registration was passed in April 2018 and will be implemented in 2019. In contrast to other states' programs, multiple state agencies are to participate. These include the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, local social service agencies, and the Maryland Transit Administration.⁶

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Maryland provides online voter registration up to 20 days before Election Day. Voters can pre-register at 16 years of age.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Same-day registration has been provided during early voting in the past. As of a constitutional amendment passed by the voters in 2018, same-day registration will now be available on Election Day.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Maryland does not require Voter ID except for first time voters who registered by mail and did not provide a valid identification at that time.

EARLY VOTING

Eight days of early voting, including one Saturday and one Sunday, are provided.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Maryland does offer no excuse absentee voting.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only provided in the context of absentee voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Maryland toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Voting rights are generally restored upon the completion of the prison sentence.⁷

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

No voter bill of rights has been developed, but the Office of Attorney General has developed a detailed FAQ for voters.

RECOMMENDATION: Build on the FAQ with an implemented voter bill of rights that is made available to voters in the state directly and through appropriate websites.

POLLING HOURS

Polling places are open from 7 am – 8 pm on Election Day, for 13 hours of total voting time.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand voting hours to 14 hours consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Maryland does not have a wait time service standard. While Maryland has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Maryland.

OTHER MEASURES

Voters can pre-register to vote beginning at age 16. Employees are entitled to two hours paid time off to vote, but must show proof to employer that they voted.

⁶ Pamela Wood, "Maryland lawmakers approve automatic voter registration," Baltimore Sun March 28, 2018. [Baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/politics/bs-md-automatic-voter-registration-20180328-story.html](https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/politics/bs-md-automatic-voter-registration-20180328-story.html).

⁷ Notably, those who have bought or sold votes must receive a pardon to vote.

MASSACHUSETTS

While Massachusetts has made strong commitments to voting rights, that commitment could be further strengthened by implementing same-day registration and eliminating required excuses for absentee voting.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Automatic voter registration was signed by Governor Baker in August 2018 and is expected to begin in 2020. In contrast to other states, AVR in Massachusetts includes both the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Massachusetts Health Exchange.

RECOMMENDATION: While this program is stronger than many states, Massachusetts should seek to expand to other state and local agencies following initial implementation of AVR.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Voters can register in Massachusetts 20 days prior to Election Day. A wide variety of forms of identification are acceptable for registration, including a driver's license, state ID, utility bill, bank statement, paystub, government-issued check, or another document with name and address.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Massachusetts does not offer same-day registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration in Massachusetts.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

No Voter ID is required at Massachusetts polling places. First-time voters who did not provide identification when registering may need to provide identification at the polling place.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting begins 11 days before Election Day and concludes the Friday before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Massachusetts only allows voters to vote absentee if they will be absent from their town of residence, have a disability, or for a religious reason.

RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate the required excuses from the absentee voting process due to their suppressive effect.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only permitted in the context of the restrictive absentee ballot voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Massachusetts toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Returning citizens have their voting rights restored immediately upon the completion of their prison sentence.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

Massachusetts does have a clearly published voter bill of rights.

POLLING HOURS

Polling places are generally open from 7 am - 8 pm on Election Day, for 13 hours of voting. Municipalities are able to open as early as 5:45 am.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand voting hours to 14 hours consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Massachusetts does not have a wait time service standard. While Massachusetts has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Massachusetts.

OTHER MEASURES

Employees in manufacturing, mechanical, or retail businesses are entitled to vote during the first two hours that polls are open. Workers who will not be otherwise compensated must request time off prior to Election Day.

NEVADA

Nevada has a mixed record on voting rights, with some good commitments to early voting, absentee voting, and online voter registration. On the other hand, there is still no same-day registration and felon re-enfranchisement remains confusing despite recent progress.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Automatic voter registration was approved by voters in November 2018. Like many other states, AVR in Nevada is only conducted through the Department of Motor Vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION: Following the implementation of AVR, expand the program to a broad set of state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Nevada offers online voter registration up to 19 days before Election Day.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Nevada does not offer same-day registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration in Nevada.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Nevada does not require Voter ID at the polls. However, in the absence of an identification requirement, a signature match is conducted between the voter file or the signature on another government-issued ID and a voter's signature on Election Day.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting is provided in Nevada from the third Saturday before Election Day to the Friday before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Nevada allows voters to vote absentee without providing an excuse.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is permitted in the context of absentee voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Nevada toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Nevada has a complex, but evolving, approach to felon re-enfranchisement. Voting rights are automatically restored to people completing sentences for most first-time felony convictions.

With Governor Sandoval's signing of Assembly Bill 181, beginning in 2019, Nevadans who were dishonorably discharged from probation or parole will still receive their rights restored. Additionally, returning citizens who were convicted of "Category B" felonies that resulted in substantial bodily harm to the victim will have their rights restored after a two-year waiting period. These measures enfranchise more people but retain a complicated system in Nevada.

RECOMMENDATION: Simplify and standardize the approach to re-enfranchisement in Nevada.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

Nevada has a clearly published voter bill of rights.

POLLING HOURS

Polls are open from 7 am - 7 pm on Election Day, for a total of 12 hours of voting time.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand voting time to 14 hours consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Nevada does not have a wait time service standard. While Nevada has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Nevada.

OTHER MEASURES

Employees receive between 1-3 hours of paid time off to vote if they request the time prior to Election Day. Signature match is required for voters in lieu of voter identification requirements. This approach should be subject to further scrutiny.

NEW JERSEY

While New Jersey has some strong voting policies, it can still stand to strengthen its approach to registration through online and same-day registration.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Governor Murphy signed automatic voter registration into law in April 2018. Like many other states, AVR in New Jersey is only conducted at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand AVR to a broad set of state agencies in New Jersey.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

New Jersey does not offer online voter registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement online voter registration.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

New Jersey does not offer same-day registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

No Voter ID is required at the polls. Registration does not require a photo ID. A bank statement, car registration, government check, or other documents confirming identity are permissible.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting begins 45 days prior to Election Day and concludes the day before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

No excuses are required to vote absentee in New Jersey.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only permitted in the context of absentee voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move New Jersey toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Returning citizens have their voting rights automatically restored upon completion of sentence, parole, and probation.

RECOMMENDATION: Restore voting rights to returning citizens immediately upon the completion of their sentence. Better yet, follow the lead of Maine and Vermont and repeal disenfranchisement laws.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

New Jersey has a clearly published voter bill of rights that is published in eleven languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Brazilian, Portuguese, Gujarati, Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese.

POLLING HOURS

Polling places are open on Election Day from 6 am – 8 pm for 14 hours of voting time.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, New Jersey does not have a wait time service standard. While New Jersey has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in New Jersey.

OTHER MEASURES

Not applicable at this time.

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico has a strong approach to the voting process, but could stand to improve registration through enactment of automatic and same-day voter registration.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

New Mexico does not have automatic voter registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement automatic voter registration in New Mexico.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

New Mexico does have online voter registration. The registration deadline is 28 days before Election Day.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

New Mexico does not allow same-day registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration in New Mexico.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

New Mexico does not require Voter ID at polling locations. However, first time voters who registered by mail may be required to provide identification if they did not do so when registering. Registering voters have a variety of forms of identification that they may provide: current/valid photo ID, utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document showing name and address.

EARLY VOTING

New Mexico offers early voting beginning the third Saturday before Election Day and concludes the Saturday before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

New Mexico voters are not required to provide an excuse to vote absentee.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only permitted in the context of absentee voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move New Mexico toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Returning citizens have their voting rights restored upon the completion of their sentence, parole, and probation.

RECOMMENDATION: Restore voting rights to returning citizens immediately upon the completion of their sentence alone. Better yet, follow the lead of Maine and Vermont and eliminate disenfranchisement laws.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

New Mexico has a clearly published voter bill of rights.

POLLING HOURS

On Election Day, polling places are open 7 am – 7 pm, for 12 hours of voting time.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend voting time to 14 hours to match leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, New Mexico does not have a wait time service standard. While New Mexico has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in New Mexico.

OTHER MEASURES

Young voters may pre-register if they will be 18 by the time of the election.

NEW YORK

New York has some of the weakest commitments to voting rights among blue states, with limited registration and voting opportunities. New York has a lot to do to improve voting rights. However, it should be commended for long voting hours and increasing attention to felon re-enfranchisement.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

New York does not offer automatic voter registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement automatic voter registration in New York.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

New York offers online voter registration. The registration deadline is 25 days prior to Election Day.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

New York does not offer same-day registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration in New York.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

No Voter ID is required to vote. First-time voters may be required to provide a photo ID if the ID they submitted during registration cannot be verified. Appropriate registration forms of identification include a driver's license, state ID, social security number, utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document with name and current address.

EARLY VOTING

New York is only one of thirteen states across the country with no early voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement early voting in New York.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Voters may only vote absentee if they provide one of a small set of excuses: absence from the county on Election Day, illness or disability, status as a patient at a VA hospital, or incarceration other than felony or awaiting grand jury action.

RECOMMENDATION: Remove excuses for absentee voting due to their suppressive effect.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only permitted in the context of the limited absentee voting process.

RECOMMENDATION: Move New York toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Returning citizens have their voting rights restored upon completion of their prison time, after Governor Cuomo removed parolee voting restrictions. The order effecting this change may be subject to court challenges.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

New York has a clearly published voter bill of rights.

POLLING HOURS

New York has the longest statewide-mandated number of voting hours in the country. Polls are open from 6 am – 9 pm for a total of 15 hours of voting time.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, New York does not have a wait time service standard. With few voting options due to the lack of early voting, New York critically needs to establish standards to limit wait times for voters.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in New York.

OTHER MEASURES

Employees are entitled to up to two hours paid time off to vote if there is insufficient time to vote outside of working hours.

OREGON

Oregon has one of the strongest commitments to voting rights in the country, with a leading automatic voter registration program and a mail-in electoral process.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Oregon was the first state in the nation to pass Automatic Voter Registration. This AVR is different from those in other states in that residents eligible to register found in the Department of Motor Vehicles database are contacted by the agency and told they will be registered unless they return a card declining registration.⁸

RECOMMENDATION: While this AVR is one of the most comprehensive in the country, the use of the DMV database still fails to include all potential voters who do not engage with the DMV. Oregon should investigate applying this program to other state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is available for all voters. Voters may pre-register to vote beginning at 16 years old.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

No same-day registration is available. The registration deadline is 21 days before the election.

RECOMMENDATION: Oregon should implement same-day registration at municipal clerk's offices where Election Day voting can take place.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Voter ID is required at registration; the voter must present a driver's license or other state ID. No voter ID is required to vote by mail.

RECOMMENDATION: Oregon should expand the forms of identification that can be used to register to vote as part of the mail-in voting process.

EARLY VOTING

As elections are fully conducted by mail, early voting is not required. Voters may vote in person on Election Day at the local municipal clerk's office during polling hours.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Elections are fully conducted by mail and all voters are eligible to vote by mail. All voters are therefore eligible to vote absentee without excuses.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Elections are fully conducted by mail.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

The right to vote is immediately restored upon the completion of a sentence. The returning citizen is required to re-register.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

There is a clear voter bill of rights provided.

POLLING HOURS

Polls are open from 7 am to 8 pm, providing 13 hours of voting time on Election Day.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend voting hours to 14 hours, consistent with leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Oregon does not have a wait time service standard. However, since elections are conducted by mail, waiting times at the polls are not an obstacle to voter engagement as in other states.

OTHER MEASURES

Oregon allows voters at age 16 to pre-register to vote. The state also has a particular approach to inactive voters. If voters become inactive under state law, the state must send a Voter Confirmation Card to the voter which can be forwarded on to their latest address.

⁸ <https://Demos.org/Publication/Oregon-Automatic-Voter-Registration>

RHODE ISLAND

A small state dominated by Democrats, Rhode Island is one of the weaker blue states in terms of registration and voting processes.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Governor Raimondo signed House Bill 5702 into law in July 2017, implementing automatic voter registration. While AVR in Rhode Island has started at the Department of Motor Vehicles, the legislation allows it to expand to social service agencies.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that expansion of automatic voter registration to social service agencies does take place.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is provided in Rhode Island. The registration deadline is 30 days before Election Day.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Rhode Island does not allow for same-day registration.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement same-day registration.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Photo Voter ID is required to vote in Rhode Island. Valid forms of identification include Rhode Island voter card, driver's license, student ID, military ID, and government-issued medical card. Without an ID, a voter must sign a provisional ballot with signature check.

RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate Voter ID requirement due to suppressive effect.

EARLY VOTING

Rhode Island does not allow early voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement early voting in Rhode Island.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Rhode Island requires voters to provide an excuse before voting absentee. Voters must meet one of the following eligibility requirements: incapacitated due to illness, mental or physical disability, blindness, serious impairment of mobility; confined to hospital, convalescent, nursing or rest home, or a similar institution within RI; out of state due to employment or service connected to military, also covers spouse and dependents; US citizen outside USA; or unable to vote at designated polling place in designated city or town.

RECOMMENDATION: Eliminate excuse requirement for absentee voting.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only permitted in the context of the restrictive absentee voting process.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Rhode Island toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Returning citizens have their voting rights automatically restored upon release from prison.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

While Rhode Island does have a voter bill of rights, it is not easily accessible for Rhode Island voters.

RECOMMENDATION: Make the voter bill of rights clearly accessible on appropriate websites and provide directly to voters.

POLLING HOURS

Polls open at 7 am or 8 am and close at 8 pm for 12-13 hours of voting time on Election Day.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend voting time to 14 hours on Election Day.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Rhode Island does not have a wait time service standard. With few voting options due to the lack of early voting, Rhode Island critically needs to establish standards to limit wait times for voters.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Rhode Island.

OTHER MEASURES

Young voters may pre-register beginning at 16 years old.

VERMONT

In contrast to Rhode Island, Vermont demonstrates a strong commitment to voting rights on nearly every category that the Scorecard considers. Some improvements could still be made to the accessibility of the voter bill of rights and polling hours.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Vermont has implemented automatic voter registration through the Department of Motor Vehicles. While AVR is only through the DMV, Vermont has achieved an incredible 92.5% registration rate thanks in large part to the initiative.⁹

RECOMMENDATION: Expand AVR to a broad set of state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Vermont offers online voter registration.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

Vermont offers same-day registration. Voters must provide proof of residence to register on Election Day.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

No Voter ID is required in Vermont. First-time voters who register by mail must provide identification. Valid forms of identification include a driver's license, passport, utility bill, bank statement, or other government document.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting is provided in Vermont beginning 45 days before Election Day and ending the day before Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

No excuse is required to vote absentee in Vermont.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Mail-in voting is only permitted in the context of absentee voting.

RECOMMENDATION: Move Vermont toward a mail-in vote state in line with practices in California, Oregon, and Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Convicted felons always retain their right to vote. Only Vermont and Maine retain convicted felons' voting rights even when incarcerated.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

Vermont has a voter bill of rights, but it is not very accessible and provided only as a resource at the bottom of a voter information page.

RECOMMENDATION: Make the voter bill of rights more clearly visible on appropriate websites and provide directly to voters.

POLLING HOURS

Polling places are open at least from 10 am - 7 pm for a total of 9 hours of voting time. Some polling places are open longer hours.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand voting hours to 14 hours to match leading states.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Vermont does not have a wait time service standard. While Vermont has substantial early voting, improving the Election Day experience is still vital.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement and monitor a wait time service standard for polling places in Vermont.

OTHER MEASURES

Not applicable at this time.

⁹ vtdigger.org/2018/10/16/vermont-hits-record-92-5-percent-voter-registration-ahead-election.

WASHINGTON

With a mail-in voting system and other voting and registration innovations, Washington has demonstrated a consistent commitment to voting rights.

REGISTRATION

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Washington provides automatic voter registration through the Department of Licensing. Like other states, AVR is limited to this motor vehicle agency.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand automatic voter registration in Washington to a broad set of state agencies.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Online voter registration is provided in Washington up until 29 days before Election Day.

SAME-DAY REGISTRATION

As of 2019, Washington now has same-day registration.

VOTING PROCESS

VOTER ID REQUIREMENT

Washington does not require Voter ID for the voters casting a ballot by mail. However, a non-photo ID is required to register to vote. Acceptable forms of identification include: valid driver's license, state ID, tribal ID, Social Security number, utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document showing name and address.

EARLY VOTING

Elections are conducted by mail, obviating the need for early voting. Vote centers are open 18 days prior to Election Day.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Elections are conducted by mail, obviating the need for separate absentee voting.

MAIL-IN VOTING

Elections in Washington are conducted by mail. Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, but can also be returned to a ballot drop box or a county elections department.

VOTING RIGHTS

FELON RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT

Returning citizens have their voting rights restored upon completion of sentence, parole, and probation.

RECOMMENDATION: Restore voting rights immediately upon completion of sentence. Better yet, follow the lead of Maine and Vermont and repeal disenfranchisement laws.

VOTER BILL OF RIGHTS

Washington does not have a voter bill of rights. However, see "Other Measures" below for other approaches taken to ensure voting rights.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement a voter bill of rights, place prominently on appropriate websites, and provide directly to voters.

POLLING HOURS

Vote centers are open until 8 pm on Election Day and are open 18 days before Election Day.

WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

Like other states, Washington does not have a wait time service standard. However, since elections are conducted by mail, waiting times at the polls are not an obstacle to voter engagement as in other states.

OTHER MEASURES

Young voters can pre-register to vote at 16 years old. The Washington State Legislature recently passed a series of new laws to help voter turnout and protect against discrimination and disenfranchisement, including a state version of the federal Voting Rights Act (2017/18 SB 6002), referred to as "a model for the country."¹⁰

¹⁰ Mark Joseph Stern, "Democrats Defend the Ballot," Slate April 3, 2018. [Slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/04/washington-states-sweeping-voting-rights-reforms-should-be-a-model-for-the-entire-country.html](https://www.slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/04/washington-states-sweeping-voting-rights-reforms-should-be-a-model-for-the-entire-country.html).

APPENDIX B: WAIT TIME SERVICE STANDARD

It is one of the worst adages in politics, the idea that long waits at the polls are a good thing. Long waits may indicate higher turnout, but they also describe an electoral system that fails to value the time of voters, particularly voters who work multiple jobs, have jobs where lateness is a fireable offense, or who have long commutes. Moreover, these long lines are often concentrated in neighborhoods with high proportions of low-income, minority, or student voters.

EveryDistrict Action Fund believes that a voting system that reduces the centrality of the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November is highly preferred. Early voting provides more opportunities for voters and mail-in voting has a proven positive impact on voter turnout. For states that both move in that direction and those that choose not to, a “wait time service standard” at polling places could provide a measurable impact in reducing voters’ delays at the polls.

HOW IT WOULD WORK

In partnership with local elections officials, each state would set a maximum wait time for voters. This is the length of time that they believe should be the longest that a voter should have to wait at a polling place. EveryDistrict Action Fund recommends that this be set as low as 30 minutes. The state and local elected officials, or voting rights activists, would then track the performance of precincts in comparison to this standard.

Using lessons from the discipline of queueing theory, we can identify the appropriate number of check-in and voting booths to keep lines moving during the three busiest parts of the voting day (the morning before the work day, the lunchtime rush, and after the work day). We can compare affluent and white neighborhoods against low-income and minority neighborhoods to identify where disparities exist and address them.

In 2019, EveryDistrict Action Fund is actively soliciting partners to monitor polling places and lobby state officials to make real commitments to voters’ rights and time.



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