

HB2590

HD1

LATE

TESTIMONY



HB2590 HD1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor

March 14, 2014

10:00 a.m.

Room 016

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB2590 HD1, which would allow voters to register at any absentee polling place in the individual's county in days prior to an election, or at the polling place in the individual's precinct on election day. Allowing late and election day registration may contribute to a more engaged populace, and result in higher rates of Native Hawaiian voter participation.

It is well known that Hawai'i has historically suffered from low voter turnout. HB2590 HD1 would reduce hurdles for voter registration, ultimately resulting in a more accessible voter registration process and higher voter turnout rates. While many states suffer from low voter turnout, in 2008 Hawai'i ranked dead last—50th in the nation for voter participation among those eligible to vote in the presidential election.¹ In response to historical data reflecting the underrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the polls, in 2012 OHA developed the "Hawaiian Voice, Hawaiian Vote: I Mana Ka Leo" campaign to increase Native Hawaiian voter registration, education and turnout. During implementation of this campaign, we found that Hawai'i's voter registration process was unnecessarily complicated, and that the State does very little to educate the public on these processes or encourage voter turnout.

In contrast, over the last decade the federal government has initiated several efforts to strengthen voter registration systems and increase access to the polls nationally. Most recently, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) attempted to improve voter registration practices across the nation by providing funds for states to develop statewide, computerized voter registries and requiring states to adopt provisional voting.² With the enactment of HB2590 HD1, HAVA funding would be available to facilitate the addition of late in-person registration at absentee polling places in the days leading up to elections, and election day registration at county polling places.

¹ R. Michael Alvarez & Jonathan Nagler, *Election Day Voter Registration in Hawaii*, DEMOS.ORG (Feb. 16, 2011), http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/Elections_Day_Registration_Hawaii.pdf, at 3.

² Help America Vote Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-252, 116 Stat. 1666-1730 (2002).

Research indicates that the people of Hawai‘i would likely benefit from the simpler process envisioned by HB2590 HD1. Foremost, the nine states that allow election day voter registration have experienced substantially increased voter participation.³ These states have not found that allowing election day voter registration complicates election administration or leads to increased voter fraud.⁴ In addition, a 2011 study published by Dēmos.org found that election day voter registration would likely lead to a substantial 5.3 percent increase in Hawai‘i voter turnout.⁵ This increase would include new voters who have not voted in previous elections and therefore are not familiar with the voter registration process and deadlines, as well as prior voters that have moved and may be unaware that they need to register in their new voting districts.

Given the potential to greatly bolster Hawai‘i’s low voter turnout rate, including the turnout of Native Hawaiian voters, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HB2590 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

³ R. Michael Alvarez & Jonathan Nagler, *Election Day Voter Registration in Hawaii*, DEMOS.ORG, Feb. 2011, at 2.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.* at 1.



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
www.lwv-hawaii.com | 808.531.7448 | voters@lwvhawaii.com

JUDICIARY and LABOR COMMITTEE

Friday, March 14, 2014, 10:00 a.m. Conference Room 016
HB 2590, HD1 RELATING TO ELECTIONS.
TESTIMONY
League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Sen. Clayton Hee, Chair, Sen. Maile Shimabukuro, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports HB 2590, HD1 which allows late voter registration for future elections beginning in 2016 and polling place voter registration beginning in 2018.

The League has been promoting voting and elections modernization for some time. We are excited that Act 225 passed in 2012 will permit online voter registration beginning in 2016. Online voter registration is a very efficient “automated” approach toward voter registration, which will greatly reduce the demand for in-person registration. Nevertheless some people do not drive and other people wait until an election is imminent to register to vote so this bill is still needed.

We think by 2016, our hard-working County Clerks could devise a system for permitting people to register to vote at absentee polling places, using the guidance provided in this measure. Our understanding is that by 2016, the State Office of Elections will have upgraded their statewide database in accordance with Act 225, making it relatively easy for a clerk to check whether a person is already registered to vote and also to check that a registered voter has not already voted. Other procedures for processing registration applications are also already in place.

Regarding late voter registration at polling places, we think 2018 is a realistic date for planning this change, which we wholeheartedly support because of the likely bump up in voter turnout (however modest). Prior to 2006 in the six states that permitted voters to register on election day plus North Dakota (which has no voter registration), turnout is 10 percent to 17 percent higher than the national average. Minnesota estimates that registrations that occur on election day account for five percent to ten percent of voter turnout.¹

Experts have also projected substantial voter turnout increases in states that are considering adopting registration at polling places, including Hawaii. In a 2011 study, overall turnout here was estimated to go up by 5.3 percent. Turnout among those aged 18 to 25 could increase by 9.2 percent, and turnout for those who have moved in the last six months could increase by 7.3 percent.²

We do not think additional proof other than a self-affirming affidavit and other procedures outlined in Section 1, (b) (2) of this bill should be required of voters who are registering in person on election day, because Hawaii already has well-established procedures for challenging the identity, residence or other

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, February 19, 2013.

² Alvarez, R. Michael and Jonathan Nagler, “ELECTION DAY VOTER REGISTRATION IN HAWAII,” Demos, February 16, 2011.



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
www.lwv-hawaii.com | 808.531.7448 | voters@lwvhawaii.com

aspects of a voter's legal registration. Importantly, pursuant to HRS 10-3.5 a person who knowingly provides false information on this registration affidavit may be guilty of a Class C felony, punishable by up to five (5) years imprisonment and/or a \$10,000 fine.

Certainly we also support all efforts by our County Clerks to keep our voter registration records accurate and up-to-date. Many registrars have made this task easier by using proven electronic databases like The Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) to match public records databases across many types of databases and many states.³

Finally, the League wants this measure to become a ***funded*** mandate. This will require an ongoing commitment from both the State and the Counties to properly implement the bill. But, we think this will be a modest commitment. In fact, in mid-February the Office of Elections provided a budget showing it would cost approximately \$407 thousand for the State to implement the bill, not including related annual operating costs borne by the Counties. This is a modest investment, yet Office of Elections testimony seems to indicate that the State appropriation would not be needed for the 2014-2015 year. **We urge your Committee to pass this bill regardless, but seek confirmation from the Office of Elections about the timing of any needed appropriation.** Passing the bill now will allow both the Office of Elections and the County Clerks to carefully plan for the 2016 and 2018 rollouts described in the bill; we know careful planning has been a critical ingredient in the success of election day registration in other states. We support gradual investment in modernizing voter registration and we are very confident the 2016 and 2018 milestones are achievable.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

³ Developed by the Pew Charitable Trusts and IBM, ERIC uses several databases to compare voters across state lines. The system compares voter list data with Department of Motor Vehicle records, Social Security Administration records, the Postal Service's national change of address registry and other databases to match voters across state lines; if the system concludes with a high degree of confidence that a John Doe on one state's voter roll is the same John Doe in another state, the record is flagged.

To: Committee on on Judiciary and Labor, Senator Hee, Chair

Date: March 14, 2014, State Capitol Conference Room 016, 10:00 a.m.

Re: HB2590 HD1 - Relating to Elections

Chair Hee and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of **HB2590 HD1** Relating to Elections. My name is T. J. Davies Jr.; I am retired and disabled and live in the Kakaako area. I came to live in Hawaii in 1959 before Statehood and was proud of the fact that in the election for Statehood, Hawaii registered highest in the nation in voter turnout.

The passage of this bill is vital as:

Voter registration is key to voter turnout. According to the State Office of Elections Factsheet FSVS505H Rev. 01/08/13, in the 2012 Hawaii general elections, the voting rate for all eligible persons of voting age was only 44.5% percent (probably the lowest in the United States), while the voting rate for people who were registered to vote was considerably higher at 61.9%.

Today, approximately 270 thousand residents of Hawaii who are eligible to vote are still not registered to vote. This represents almost 28% of eligible persons.

According to 2013 data from the National Conference of State Legislatures, States that allow same day registration have consistently led the nation in voter participation. Experts project substantial voter turnout increases in states such as Hawaii that adopt registration at polling places. In a 2011 study, overall turnout here was estimated to go up by 5.3 percent. Turnout among those aged 18 to 25 could increase by 9.2 percent, and turnout for those who have moved in the last six months could increase by 7.3 percent. [2]

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii encourages all people who are eligible to vote to register and to cast an informed vote in all elections. We believe that government should make registration and re-registration easy, while assuring that the basic requirements of citizenship, age, and residency are met.

I urge you to support this effort to increase Hawaii's voter participation and turnout by supporting **HB2590 HD1**.

T. J. DAVIES JR.
Volunteer, AARP & Kokua Council for Senior Citizens
Kakaako (District 23 / Senate District 12)

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [JDLTestimony](#)
Cc: brynvillers.hi@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB2590 on Mar 14, 2014 10:00AM
Date: Friday, March 14, 2014 9:29:01 AM

HB2590

Submitted on: 3/14/2014

Testimony for JDL on Mar 14, 2014 10:00AM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Bryn Villers	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Chair Hee and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill No. 2590, HD 1. As regards same-day voter registration: How much is the extra manpower going to cost? Should the taxpayers be paying that amount more simply because an eligible voter chose not register prior to the day of elections? Having worked in a polling station before I can tell you—it...is...busy. Whenever an individual arrived who was not listed it threw a wrench in the works as we scrambled to find out about them and whether they could vote at that location. Yet, we were glad to do it because it is their right to vote and they had already registered. Can you imagine people coming in and not even being registered, how much chaos that will cause? I think there is an equitable solution to the issue. One that will also avoid coercion and fraud. And certainly, technology will play an important role in making registration efficient and accurate. However, the wisest course of action is always to build upon a solidly laid foundation. Perhaps, in light of our last election, we ought to consider getting one or two unquestioned and completely supplied votes under our belts before we start adding tottering superstructure. Sincerely, Bryn M. Villers

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov