
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VOTER REGISTRATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that voter turnout in the
2 State remains low and continues to decline. In 2016, Hawaii had
3 the lowest voter turnout in the United States. Only 52.7 per
4 cent of registered Hawaii voters cast ballots in the 2018
5 general election. This represents a sharp decline in voter
6 turnout over the years, as approximately ninety-four per cent of
7 registered voters cast ballots in the State's first
8 gubernatorial election in 1959.

9 Additionally, the State has a historically low rate of
10 registered voters. According to a 2016 estimate from the United
11 States Census Bureau, Hawaii had the lowest percentage of
12 registered voters in the country at 49.8 per cent, well below
13 the national average of 64.2 per cent. Therefore, of the
14 1,064,000 people in Hawaii who were qualified to vote in the
15 2016 election, 534,128 were not registered to vote.

16 The legislature also finds that states that adopted
17 automatic voter registration programs have higher voter



1 registration rates and voter turnout. Colorado and Oregon both
2 adopted automatic voter registration programs, and those states'
3 voter registration rates were 68.2 per cent, and 67.4 per cent,
4 respectively. Moreover, Colorado had the eighth highest voter
5 turnout in the 2016 election at 63.8 per cent.

6 In 2018, thirty-one per cent of qualified voters in the
7 United States between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine voted.
8 This represented a ten per cent increase in voter turnout for
9 the same age group from the 2014 election. Recent world events
10 have ignited a passion in younger generations around civic
11 engagement, and have led many sixteen and seventeen year-olds to
12 become passionate about voting, and many would vote if given the
13 opportunity.

14 The legislature further finds that voting at a young age
15 creates and empowers lifelong voters. Data show that after an
16 individual votes once, the individual often becomes a habitual
17 voter. Therefore, by facilitating the ability of those sixteen
18 years of age and older to preregister or register to vote, the
19 State will be empowering a new generation of lifelong voters.

20 Currently, the department of education requires students to
21 receive four social studies credits to graduate from a public



1 high school. In the course, "Participation in a Democracy,"
2 which is required for graduation, students explore what it means
3 to actively engage in civic duties such as voting. This course,
4 and civics education in general, could be enhanced by actively
5 engaging students in the process of voting.

6 The legislature further finds that voting is the
7 cornerstone of American democracy and, while other states have
8 been in the news for suppressing voters, Hawaii, by
9 automatically registering qualified voters, can convey a message
10 that voting is an unquestioned fundamental right that should be
11 exercised. The State allows individuals who are sixteen and
12 seventeen years old to preregister to vote, but many of these
13 individuals do not know they have the option to preregister to
14 vote. As a result, many sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds do not
15 preregister to vote and often fail to register even after
16 turning eighteen years old.

17 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to increase voter
18 participation and encourage civic engagement in Hawaii's schools
19 by establishing a process for the automatic preregistration and
20 registration of public school-enrolled students who are at least
21 sixteen years of age.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
2 by adding a new section to part II to be appropriately
3 designated and to read as follows:

4 "§11- Automatic voter preregistration and registration;

5 opt out. (a) Beginning January 1, 2020, any person who:

6 (1) Is enrolled in a public high school;

7 (2) Is otherwise qualified to preregister or register to
8 vote under this part;

9 (3) Is at least sixteen years of age; and

10 (4) Properly completes and submits a voter registration
11 affidavit,

12 shall be automatically preregistered or registered to vote as
13 provided in subsection (d).

14 (b) Between January 1 and January 31 of each year, the
15 superintendent of education shall provide and may collect from
16 each student who is at least sixteen years of age a voter
17 affidavit containing the information required by section 11-15
18 to allow the student to preregister or register to vote or to
19 opt out of preregistering or registering to vote. The
20 superintendent of education shall transmit the voter
21 registration affidavit to the clerk of the county in which the



1 applicant resides; provided that the superintendent of education
2 shall not maintain, scan, review, or copy any voter affidavit
3 nor transmit any information maintained by the department of
4 education.

5 (c) The clerk shall determine whether the applicant is
6 currently preregistered or registered in the general county
7 register. If the applicant is not currently preregistered or
8 registered, the clerk shall determine whether the applicant is
9 at least sixteen years of age and a citizen of the United
10 States.

11 (d) Upon determination that the applicant is eligible to
12 preregister or register to vote and not currently preregistered
13 or registered, the clerk shall provide written notification to
14 the applicant of the process to opt out of the automatic voter
15 preregistration or registration; provided that if the applicant
16 does not opt out of preregistration by the applicant's
17 eighteenth birthday, the clerk shall assign a transaction number
18 to the preregistration in a manner that is substantially similar
19 to the numbering of affidavits as required by section 11-15(c),
20 and on the applicant's eighteenth birthday shall automatically



1 register the name of the voter in the general county register as
2 provided in section 11-14."

3 SECTION 3. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended by adding a new section to part II, subpart C, to be
5 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

6 "§302A- Automatic voter preregistration and
7 registration. The board and the superintendent shall adopt
8 policies as necessary to maximize and facilitate the
9 preregistration and registration of qualifying students to vote
10 as provided in section 11- ."

11 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2030.



Report Title:

Automatic Voter Preregistration or Registration; DOE; Opt Out

Description:

Establishes a process, beginning on January 1, 2020, for automatically preregistering or registering public school-enrolled students who are at least 16 years old to vote.

(HB1485 HD2)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

