



Testimony in Support of HJR 5515 – Same-Day Voter Registration

House Committee on Judiciary

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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Rep. Alzate’s HJR 5515, which would propose to the voters of the state a constitutional amendment regarding eligibility to vote and to be a candidate; the bill would allow for same-day voter registration.

Voter participation and civic engagement are crucial to the success of our democracy. Currently, RI law requires residents to register to vote at least 30 days before an election. HJR 5515 would allow Rhode Islanders to register to vote up to the day of the election. Rhode Islanders deserve to exercise their constitutionally protected right to vote without unnecessary hindrances or obstacles. Same-day registration increases turnout, allows for updating and correcting voter rolls, and does not threaten election security. In fact, extensive research reveals that voter fraud is very rare, voter impersonation is virtually nonexistent, and many instances of alleged fraud are, in fact, mistakes by voters or administrators.¹

HJR 5515 will not only increase voter turnout, it will also increase equity in RI by reducing barriers to voting for Black and Latino voters, who have been historically disenfranchised. A policy brief published by researchers from the University of Massachusetts and the think tank Demos has found that the same-day registration may play a role in reducing barriers to voting and boosting turnout for Black and Latino Americans.² Among the 23 states and Washington D.C. that currently allow voters to register and vote on the same day during early voting or on election day – they often experience higher turnout among both Black voters and Latino voters than do similarly situated states without same-day voter registration. The study found that Black voter turnout is on average 2 - 17 percentage points higher in states with same day registration, and that Latino voters in those states turned out at rates that were on average 0.1 - 17.5 percentage points higher than similar states without same-day registration.

HJR 5515 would make it easier for Rhode Islanders to exercise their constitutional right to vote and make our elections more inclusive. If elected officials truly seek to represent Rhode Islanders, they should aspire to be elected by as many voters as possible. We strongly urge passage.

¹ <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/vote-suppression/myth-voter-fraud>

² <https://www.umass.edu/news/article/new-study-finds-states-same-day-voter-registration-have-higher-black-and-latinx>