

**Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee on
House Bill 6251: An Act Authorizing Election Day Registration**

By Roger C. Vann, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut

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Good Afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Roger Vann, and I am the Executive Director of the ACLU of Connecticut.

The ACLU of Connecticut strongly supports House Bill 6251, and we would like to commend the GAE committee for reintroducing this bill. We believe that barriers should not be placed on the exercise of the fundamental right to vote unless they are absolutely necessary to serve compelling state interests. It is both technologically and administratively feasible for Connecticut to implement Election Day Registration (EDR), while maintaining the integrity of the election system, and the state should therefore seize upon this opportunity to ensure that more citizens participate in our democracy.

Election Day Registration is a proven means of reducing barriers to participation and increasing voter turnout. States that have adopted EDR have a voter turnout rate approximately 12 to 15 percentage points higher than the national average. In addition, empirical studies by political scientists conclude that EDR increased voter turnout in the states that adopted it by 3 to 7 percentage points. There is every reason to believe that similar percentages, if not more, of Connecticut citizens will take advantage of Election Day Registration.

In vetoing Public Act No. 03-204, Governor Rowland cited concerns that, "without an accurate, complete, up-to-date and real-time centralized voter registration database," the EDR procedure included insufficient safeguards against fraud. Nonetheless, the lessons from the states with EDR show that there have been minimal problems with voter fraud as a result of the adoption of EDR. Even if concerns about fraud were more than a speculative fear, Connecticut's current statewide voter database would allow election officials to check for duplicate registrations in real-time.

We urge the Committee, the General Assembly and Governor Rell to support House Bill 6251 and strengthen our democracy by making it possible for Connecticut's citizens to register and vote on Election Day.