



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
(860) 240-8555
FAX (860) 240-8444**

Testimony before the General Administrative and Elections Committee

Monday, February 28th, 2007

11:00 AM in Room 2B of the LOB

Good afternoon Representative Caruso, Senator Slossberg and ranking members of the General Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Frank Sykes and I am the Legislative Analyst representing the state agency the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The Commission is here today to reaffirm its support for Election Day Registration (EDR) as raised in

House Bill (HB) 6251 – An act authorizing Election Day registration.

Part of the Commission's mandate is to ensure that African-Americans have equal access and opportunity to participate in the political process as all other Connecticut residents. To this end the Commission has supported a number of initiatives aimed at creating inclusiveness in the democratic process. Most recently EDR has been a priority on the Commission's agenda for a number of reasons.

Firstly the African-American population in the state is 9.1 percent yet less than 4 percent of African-Americans are represented in the State's elective positions. The Commission's agenda is to increase minority representation at all levels of government to ensure that issues impacting the African-American community are a priority.

Secondly as we have mentioned in earlier testimony the issue of voter fraud can no longer be seen as an impediment to EDR. Connecticut now has a centralized voter system that is expected to significantly reduce the incidence of fraud. Opponents of election day registration have cited the miscellaneous costs involved but our research shows that the most obvious costs associated with Election Day registration relates to increasing the number of polling place workers and training them to handle new registrations on Election Day. However, as the 2000 elections demonstrated, even without EDR, states end up paying for additional staffing and better training for poll workers. As such costs associated with implementing EDR are not new necessarily new costs incurred.

Secondly geographical mobility is increasingly becoming a common feature in our society, especially within minority groups. New citizens, young people and low-income individuals are more likely to be in transition, moving from place to place, as a result are likely to encounter registration problems. Same day registration solves this inconvenience by providing first time voters and those who have just moved to new districts the opportunity to vote with minimal administrative hurdles.

Its worth noting that a number of states have already instituted same day voter registration successfully. In previous elections, collectively these six states had significantly higher voter registration and participation rates than the national average. More importantly the states that used Election Day Registration reported fewer problems with regard to fraud, administrative complexity or excessive cost. Connecticut must do the same and institute Election Day

registration, to further increase voter turnout and engage more citizens in the democratic process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sources:

1. Democratic Investigative Staff, U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, *How to make a million votes disappear: Electoral sleight of hand in the 2000 Presidential Election*. August 20, 2001, p.4
2. The Gallup, *The Gallup Pool, The Nine Weeks of Election 2000*.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, *Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2000 Table 4a*
4. Citizens Service Bureau, *The League of Women Voters of Connecticut Education*
5. African-American Commission, *2004 Survey of African-American Elected Officials in the State*