



REGISTRARS OF VOTERS ~ 27 WEST MAIN STREET ~ ROOM 507 ~ NEW BRITAIN, CT ~ 06051
860-826-3310

Date: December 31, 2009

To: State Senator Donald DeFronzo (D – 6th District)
State Representative Betty Boukus (D – 22nd District)
State Representative Timothy O'Brien (D – 24th District)
State Representative John Geragosian (D – 25th District)
State Representative Peter Tercyak (D – 26th District)

cc: Fred DeCaro III – Registrar of Voters (R), Greenwich
Judith Beaudreau – Registrar of Voters (D), Vernon

From: Peter Gostin (R)
Edward Dzwonkowski (D)
Registrars of Voters – New Britain

Subject: Election Day Registration (EDR)

We write to inform you of our concerns with and opposition to election day registration (EDR), and are including information augmenting our position from the Registrar of Voters in Greenwich (approval obtained), supportive data we have gleaned from the 2008 Presidential election as it occurred here in New Britain, and additional joint research.

In general we are opposed to EDR based on the apprehension we have for new registrants regarding these issues: 1) to properly verify their identity; 2) the difficulties of accommodating and processing new registrants during our busiest day of the year; 3) the additional staff costs certain to be incurred by our budgets and the city of New Britain in order to implement such a new law; and 4) facts and figures from the few states who have adopted EDR.

Before addressing the four issues stated above, let us begin with the efficacy of EDR registration. We'd like to share the following facts from the Presidential election in November 2008 as it relates specifically to New Britain:

Number of Provisional Ballots Issued:	657
Applicants Who Registered	117 (18%)
Applicants Not Did Not Register	483 (74%)
Applicants With Undeliverable Addresses	35 (5%)
Duplicate Applications (already voters)	22 (3%)

As the above figures show, an accumulated total of 79% of those people who came in to request a provisional ballot to vote for President did not register to become a voter! Call this voting under false pretenses or whatever you will, but do not call it legal! Our Constitution guarantees the citizens of our country the right to exercise their vote provided they have met certain requirements as outlined by each State for proper registration. These requirements are not only an assurance that people are who they say they are, but more importantly a protective measure to ensure every registered citizen's vote is not diluted by an unregistered mass of people or by those who are non-citizens.

This leads us to the first issue mentioned above relating to identity verification. The current laws of CT which outline the allowable forms of presentable identification are too lax and should be revisited for strengthening. The fact that someone can register to vote simply upon presenting a drivers license or a current utility bill which shows their residential address is no certain proof of their citizenship! While the Registrar's office is a place to extend our Constitutional rights and welcome as many new voters as possible, it should also be a protector of those rights by ensuring a thorough review of a person's status as a citizen prior to them becoming a registered voter. Please read the attached letter and exhibit information from the Registrar of Voters in Greenwich on the subject of address verification for additional information on this subject.

The second issue is accommodating an influx of new registrants on election day. This will require the hiring and training of additional staff to be available for processing applications and entering the information into CVRS, the State's voter registration system, as our regular staff is occupied fielding numerous phone calls all day long from the seventeen voting districts we have open. The need for providing timely information to the poll locations is very acute and our first priority on election day, in order to ensure a rapid response to those voters already at the polls who are waiting on discrepancy resolutions before casting a ballot. This is the reason why additional staff would have to be hired to specifically address persons wanting to both register and vote on election day.

Regarding the third issue of staffing, please keep in mind as you deliberate about EDR that many of the registrar offices across the state are quite small and in many cases do not even employ other staff, and implementing EDR would pile on an additional burden that these offices would have much difficulty in handling. Service to those who have taken the time to register under less harried circumstances will certainly suffer in these smaller towns, and unless additional staff is hired in medium-to-large cities a similar situation will also take place.

The fourth issue pertains to other states who have implemented EDR and the findings to date of its debatable effectiveness on improving voter turnout. In researching the advantages and disadvantages of EDR from the nine states who have implemented EDR, it was interesting to note that nearly all of these states are generally more rural and sparsely-populated than CT. These nine states are: Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Wyoming. Although EDR has met with some success in these states, particularly in the first year or two upon initiation, it caused major interruptions in the processing of new registrants and now years later still creates long lines and waiting times at the registration locations in each state without exception.

The research also shows some disconnect when comparing voter turnout increases / decreases in these EDR states and whether they were considered swing states. To wit:

State	Turnout %	Turnout Rank 2008	Increase or Decrease Over 2004	EDR and /or Swing State
Minnesota	77.9	1	0.9	EDR; SS
Maine	73.0	2	-0.6	EDR
New Hampshire	71.7	4	1.0	EDR; SS
Iowa (2008)	69.7	5	-0.5	EDR; SS
Montana	67.2	13	4.4	EDR; SS
North Carolina (2008)	66.0	21	11.4	SDR*, SS
Wyoming	65.9	22	1.3	EDR; SS
North Dakota	65.5	23	0.4	EDR**
Idaho	63.2	27	-2.2	EDR
Top 10 Voter Increases				
North Carolina	66.0	1	11.4	SDR*, SS
South Carolina	58.8	2	11.0	Neither
Virginia	67.6	3	9.9	Neither
Alabama	61.8	4	7.9	Neither
Georgia	67.8	5	7.6	Neither
Nevada	59.4	6	6.9	Neither
Indiana	59.2	7	6.3	Neither
Rhode Island	62.7	8	6.0	Neither
Maryland	67.0	9	5.2	Neither
Montana	67.2	10	4.4	EDR; SS
Connecticut	67.1	18	2.9	None
USA	61.5			

SDR* - Same Day Registration and Voting with 16 Day Early Voting Period

EDR** - No Voter Registration

Source: Voter Turnout 2008: www://nonprofitvote.org/voterturnout2008

In reviewing the EDR performance of these nine states in 2008 vs. 2004, the data shows six having one percent growth or less, with three of them actually decreasing in voter turnout. In contrast, eight states in the Top 10 of increased voter turnout in 2008 were from states that do not have EDR! Additionally, information garnered from other states in this study revealed that increases in voter turnout had more to do with them being swing states with competitive candidate races being run than whether or not they utilized EDR.

In summary, EDR usually provides an initial boost that increases a state's voter participation but hasn't yet proven to be a sure-fire way of keeping that interest. While EDR would likely do away with the problem of actually getting people registered after submitting their ballots, one has to wonder how many mailed confirmation letters will be returned to our offices as undeliverable due to incorrect or contrived addresses given at the time of registration? This situation, along with the current minimal requirements for proving citizenship at the time of registration when a social security number isn't used, begs the following question: How can we assure the legitimate voters of our state that their votes aren't being diluted by the votes of those whose eligibility may be in question? We are in complete agreement with the registrar from Greenwich that current laws regarding registration and address requirements should be strengthened first before any consideration of EDR is attempted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter J. Gostin
Registrar of Voters (R)
New Britain

Edward J. Dzwonkowski
Registrar of Voters (D)
New Britain