



March 1, 2012

Chairman Slossberg, Chairman Morin, and the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Yale College Democrats in support of **H.B. 5024: An Act Concerning Voting Rights**. This bill will ensure that our state's democracy is a truly representative one, in which all citizens are given a fair opportunity to exercise their right to vote.

The Yale College Democrats, of which I am a member, strongly support the bill's provisions that would allow Election Day Registration (EDR). College students often have lower voter turnout rates than the rest of the population, but as some of the youngest people who are eligible to vote, we are the ones who will in the long-run benefit or suffer because of the decisions that are made today. Therefore it is imperative that the legislature take steps to reduce obstacles to voting for students, as well as other low-turnout populations. Allowing EDR is the best way to accomplish this.

According to a 2009 report from researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, allowing EDR is correlated with an increase in voter turnout of six to seven percentage points, and it has "a significant positive effect on the individual likelihood of voting." Their finding that EDR is the single most effective step states can take to increase turnout is consistent with other research on the subject.

Opponents of EDR have raised concerns of voter fraud. Yet in almost 40 years of EDR in the state of Maine, there were only two confirmed occurrences of voter fraud. This is despite the fact that, when EDR was first implemented, voter registrars could not use computers and the Internet to quickly verify registrations. Maine's experience is not unique; post-election investigations in New Hampshire and Wisconsin in 2004 found zero cases of voter fraud that were attributable to EDR. If EDR could be done in the year 1973, when Maine first implemented EDR, surely, in 2012, we too can securely and efficiently process voter registrations on Election Day.

The numbers are clear: Election Day Registration boosts turnout, and does not result in an increase in voter fraud. But this issue is not simply about numbers and abstractions. It is ultimately a question of principles. To support H.B. 5024 is to reaffirm our commitment to the democratic values of inclusion and equity, and passing this bill will

demonstrate that Connecticut understands that a democracy is strongest when all of its members participate.

Zachary Krislov
Member
Yale College Democrats