



Illinois Mandatory Voter Registration Legislation – Talking Points

- Mandatory, or automatic, voter registration is a system that does not accomplish its goal of increased voter turnout but does create problems, such as inaccurate voter rolls, ineligible voters being added to the rolls, double registrations, and inaccurately changed registrations.
- The reasons most eligible citizens who could register to vote choose not to register are because they are not interested in the election or the candidates, believe their vote will not make a difference, or do not wish to participate in politics. It is not because they lacked the opportunity to register, as claimed by proponents of mandatory registration. The small portion of people who do not register because of issues with registration are not disproportionately minority, low-income, or less educated citizens.
- Mandatory registration opens the door for fraud by registering people who have no intention of ever voting in the jurisdiction, are transient, or are otherwise added to the rolls when they should not be. Those who know another person will not vote in an election could vote fraudulently in the non-voter's name, knowing that the person is registered. Students who are temporarily in a jurisdiction for school without the intent to reside there should not vote in that jurisdiction, but mandatory registration would give them that opportunity.
- The system of mandatory registration that would be established by SB0250 in Illinois would require five state agencies to forward a person's information to the State Board of Elections ("SBE") when the person conducted any business with the agency, regardless of whether the person claimed to be eligible to vote. The agencies are the Office of the Secretary of State and the Departments of Human Services, Healthcare and Family Services, Employment Security, and Aging. The SBE would then verify a person's eligibility and forward the person's information to local election official if eligible. Local officials would inform the person that he or she is now registered to vote.
- The drafters of the bill worked with the SBE but the SBE says its recommendations were not represented in the bill. The House amended the bill to address some of the SBE's concerns, but it did not address all of them.
- The SBE, even though it supports the concept of mandatory voter registration generally, opposed SB0250 because of the difficulties and cost of implementing and administering the system. The mandatory registration system would not work within Illinois' existing framework of registration procedures.
- The system or program to meet the law's requirements by all five agencies and the SBE would need to be created; it does not currently exist. SBE director of voting and registration systems, Kyle Thomas, said, "It would take major changes to the system and structure of our system to try and implement these things."
- Government databases are notoriously rife with errors, and the proposed system would transfer those errors to a person's voter registration.
- Illinois runs an annual operating deficit of nearly \$10 billion and has a total debt of over \$159 billion. The SBE has estimated officially that the costs of implementing the mandatory voter registration system will be \$845,000, while informally estimating it to be in the millions. The state simply cannot afford to enact an expensive system of mandatory voter registration that will do very little to help voter turnout while threatening the integrity of Illinois' voter registration rolls.