



VOTING RIGHTS INSTITUTE

Governor Bruce Rauner
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

June 29, 2016

Dear Governor Rauner,

We write to urge you to sign Illinois SB 250 into law. This proposal would place Illinois alongside Oregon, California, Vermont, and West Virginia, which have all approved automatic voter registration laws that make it easier for voters to participate in the democratic process.¹

Automatic voter registration laws provide numerous benefits to state officials and taxpayers alike in the form of increased registration rates, more accurate voter records, and lower administrative costs. For example, Oregon added an average of more than 15,000 voters a month to its registration records as of May.² This is more than three times its previous registration rate of approximately 4,000 voters a month. Similarly, Vermont officials estimated that their program could add 50,000 voters to the rolls over the course of four years.³ While Illinois already has same day voter registration, enacting automatic voter registration would help voters avoid any potential confusion about their eligibility to vote long before Election Day.

SB 250 would also increase the accuracy of the voter rolls by making it easier for voters to update their voter information. Automatic voter registration decreases the amount of work that voters need to perform in order to register to vote and therefore makes it easier to register when changing addresses. For example, a voter who changes their address when receiving a new license may only need to sign their name to register to vote. This makes it more likely that they will register to vote and that the voter rolls will contain their new address.

But wait, there's more. Automatic voter registration has the potential to save taxpayer funds. The more opportunity there is to register electronically instead of through paper forms, the lower the costs of administering elections. For example, Maricopa County, Arizona estimated that it costs them \$0.83 to process a paper application, while only \$0.03 to process an electronic application.⁴ Multiplying that amount by thousands, over decades, can add up to real cost savings that can be used for other public goods.

Finally, signing SB 250 into law is just good politics. More than seventy percent of those present

¹ Connecticut has implemented automatic voter registration administratively. Alice Ollstein, *BREAKING: Connecticut to Automatically Register 400,000 Voters*, THINKPROGRESS (May 17, 2016), <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2016/05/17/3778976/connecticut-automatic-registration/>.

² Editorial, *States Prove that Voter Registration at the D.M.V. Works*, N.Y. TIMES (May 13, 2016), http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/14/opinion/states-prove-that-voter-registration-at-the-dmv-works.html?_r=0.

³ *Id.*

⁴ BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE, *The Case for Automatic, Permanent Voter Registration* (2015), http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Case_for_Automatic_Permanent_Voter_Registration.pdf.

in each house of the Illinois legislature voted in favor of the proposal. Likewise, a 2015 HuffPost/Yougov poll found that a majority of Americans favor automatic voter registration.⁵ Signing this bill into law would therefore respect the wishes of the people and the vast majority of their democratically elected representatives.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to sign SB 250 into law and make Illinois a leader in the fight to make voting easier, rather than harder, for eligible voters.

Sincerely,



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⁵ Ariel Edwards-Levy, *Most Americans Want Their State to Make Voter Registration Easier*, HUFFINGTON POST (Mar. 30, 2015), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/30/voter-registration-poll_n_6970896.html.