

# Des Moines Register

## Let Iowans register to vote on Election Day

Convenience outweighs unlikely fraud.

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The history of voting in this country has been one of the privileged grudgingly extending the "right" to the not-so-privileged. Barriers to voting may seem ancient history, but Iowa's Legislature is just now considering a change that would remove a barrier to voting for those who fail to register in time.

The bill passed by the House State Government Committee Tuesday would allow qualified voters to register at the polls on Election Day. This falls into the category of "What took them so long?" legislation. Seven states — Minnesota, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming — have successfully made the change, according to Secretary of State Michael Mauro, Iowa's election commissioner. He supports making it here as well.

There is nothing magic about registering to vote 10 days — or 110 days — in advance of an election. Voter-registration applicants fill out a simple form giving their name, home address, a driver's license or Social Security number and date of birth. The process would be virtually the same with same-day registration: A prospective voter wanting to register on Election Day would have to produce an approved photo identification, such as a driver's license, and sign an oath affirming the accuracy of the registration information produced.

There is a slightly greater opportunity for fraud, but only slightly. If someone gives a phony address while registering ahead of an election, the county auditor is more likely to catch it while cross-checking addresses with other voter-registration identification information. Also, there is time between the registration deadline and the election for a voter-registration card sent to a applicant's given address to bounce back if it turns out to be phony.

The same confirmation process would be used for a registration completed on Election Day, but a fraudulent application would be discovered only after the election. The odds are against fraud, however, given the threat of \$7,500 fine and prison. Besides, even if there were such deceptions, it is unlikely they would impact the election outcome.

A same-day voter-registration law would make it easier for qualified voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote, and it contains sufficient protections to assure the integrity of elections. Few people will exercise this option, but no one should be turned away from the polls if they are eligible to vote. This bill would help make sure of that.