

*Common
Sense
Copies*

HB 30: Revise Late Registration Laws
House State Administration, Rm 455
January 14, 2013 @ 8:00 a.m.
Secretary Linda McCulloch's Testimony

- Good morning Madam Chair, members of the committee. For the record, I am Linda McCulloch, Montana Secretary of State.
- I strongly oppose House Bill 30, because there is no justifiable reason to eliminate same-day voter registration and turn eligible Montanans away at the polls.
- Late registration was first implemented in the 2006 Federal Primary. Since then, 65,836 Montanans have used it to register to vote and cast a ballot in a statewide election.
 - Of those Montanans, 28,329 have registered and voted on Election Day. Keep in mind that these numbers do not include local elections.
- These aren't all "new registrants" – which is a common misperception. Late registration is used by every type of voter in every one of your legislative districts.
- About half of all late registrants in the 2012 General Election were existing voters who had moved.
 - These numbers aren't statistics on a piece of paper. They are people. They are grandparents, mothers, and fathers. They're young adults who are starting a new chapter in their lives.
 - If you've ever relocated, you know that registering to vote is the last thing on your mind between packing and unpacking, forwarding your mail, paying your bills, starting a new job or enrolling your kids in school.
- Election Day registrants aren't procrastinators. They are responsible and hardworking Montanans who vote in your elections, and they know that their right to register and vote is protected under Montana law.
 - Are you willing to look them in the eye on Election Day and deny them their right to vote?
- Eliminating Election Day registration is a solution to a problem that does not exist.
- I've heard the argument that Election Day registration creates longer lines and additional work for counties. That's only partially true.

- Montana's county Election Administrators and staff are trained to manage late registrants, and they do a great job both on Election Day and in the days leading up to the election.
 - The Montana Association of Clerks & Recorders and Election Administrators supported the late registration bill in 2005, and its members have advised me that they are neutral on this bill.
- Running elections is hard work, and sometimes there's a wait time on Election Day – but elections shouldn't be about workloads and bureaucratic timelines.
- Montana elections are for the voters, and Election Day registration has successfully ensured that every eligible Montanan has had the opportunity to cast a ballot. That is what we should be focused on.
- The 2012 General Election is proof that Montanans are committed to exercising their right to vote.
 - We had a two-page ballot due in part to the volume of legislative referenda included on the ballot. Folks chose to wait in line on Election Day and give their neighbors adequate time to vote that two-page ballot.
 - Montana citizens who feel strongly enough about their civic duty to stand in line in order to vote, should be applauded.
- HB 30 not only strips away their right to vote, it strips away the ultimate fail-safe for any administrative error that can occur at no fault of the voter.
 - For example: Voters who thought they had registered at the DMV or through a voter registration drive, and were told that they were not registered when they showed up at the polls. Election Day registration allows them to vote.
- We all have the right to be heard on Election Day.
- As an American, I cannot support a bill that would turn Montanans away at the polls and deny them their right to vote.
- I urge you to vote "no". Thank you for your time this morning.
- ***Pass out 3 handouts.
 - Total Late/ED Registrants 2006-Present.
 - Late Voter Registration by House District 2006-Present.
 - Late Registrants by Type: 2012 General Election