

SB405: LR to Roll Back Late Registration
House State Administration – Monday, April 15, 2013
Secretary Linda McCulloch's Testimony, by Lisa Kimmet, Deputy

- Secretary McCulloch continues to strongly oppose eliminating Montana's same-day voter registration, as it would undoubtedly deny eligible Montanans their right to vote. You've heard her opposition to this bill before, when she came in to oppose House Bill 30 – so I won't repeat the testimony.
- It is important to note, however, that proposing to place this issue as a legislative referendum on the ballot will cost counties nearly \$38,000 to administer.
 - This is a conservative number that only includes the layout and printing of the ballot, and programming of the vote tabulating machines. It does not include the additional time, money and energy expended on answering questions related to the ballot issues, or on mailing the Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP) - Which is sent in October to every household in Montana with at least one registered voter.
 - To put this into perspective, counties spent \$100,000 mailing the 2012 General Election VIP.
 - That doesn't include the expense to the SOS Office spent on the design and printing of the VIP – which in 2012 included 3 LRs, and 2 citizen-proposed ballot issues.
- So far this session, an unprecedented number of legislative referenda have been introduced. 10 remain active in the legislative process. And while asking the voters to approve proposed legislation is at your discretion, if those 10 remaining LRs are to appear on the 2014 General Election ballot, you will effectively be sending county election offices a \$380,000 bill.
- Additionally, the next statewide federal election will be held in 2014 – which means this issue would appear on the ballot in a non-presidential election year, when voter turnout is historically lower than average.
 - 59% in 2010 General compared to 79% in 2012
 - 67% in 2006 General compared to 81% in 2008

EXHIBIT

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- The legislative referenda process works slightly differently than citizen-proposed initiatives. For one, the title will be included on the ballot as written in this bill – which could lead to voter confusion.
- Nowhere in the title does the bill address what it is trying to do. Instead of saying “eliminate same-day voter registration”, it says “protecting the integrity of Montana elections” by “ensuring compliance with the National Voter Registration Act”.
- Montana is already NVRA compliant, and therefore, the language is unnecessary. And we challenge that any bill which eliminates people’s right to vote protects the integrity of our elections.
- We ask that this committee carefully consider the language in this bill, including the title being proposed for the ballot.
- We must all remember that Montana elections are for the voters, and they elected you to do your job during the 90 days you are at the Capitol.
- While we support efforts to streamline election administration in Montana, we firmly believe that you don’t shorten the lines on Election Day by denying people their right to vote. Nor do you shorten the lines by adding to, or complicating the ballot.
- In 2012, 5 ballot issues were on the ballot. Montanans waited in line to give their neighbors the chance to vote that 2-page ballot. In 2014, we’re potentially looking at a ballot over twice the length, which will do nothing to shorten the lines on Election Day.
- Those ballots will not only take longer to count, they will delay the election results.
- We urge you to vote no on SB 405.