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Legislative Activity

RANKED CHOICE VOTING

MAINE: A committee of lawmakers was sharply divided on the election system that voters approved in November and the state's top court recently ruled unconstitutional. The voting followed a recent advisory opinion from Maine's Supreme Judicial Court that found that parts of the law, which was supported by 51 percent of the voters in November 2016, was not in line with the state's constitution. The committee's divisions did not fall strictly along partisan lines, although Republicans do appear to be more in favor of an outright repeal, saying that having two different voting systems for Maine could be both costly and confusing. Sen. Ron Collins, R-Wells, who supported the repeal measure, said there were only 11 places in the U.S., mostly cities, including Portland, that use ranked choice voting. Maine Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap, who oversees statewide elections, said it would cost the state about \$1.5 million to implement the law, but that doesn't include any added expenses that cities and towns might face in changing to the new system.

<http://www.pressherald.com/2017/06/08/rank-choiced-voting-bills-head-to-full-legislature-for-debate/>

UTAH: Earlier this year, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) easily passed the Utah House of Representatives, but was defeated in the Senate.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865681641/Op-ed-Ranked-Choice-Voting-can-help-Utah-elections.html>

EARLY VOTING

NEW YORK: Gov. Andrew Cuomo has called for early voting and allowing voters to register on Election Day. However, the legislation faces an uphill climb in the Republican-controlled Senate, where the GOP has long raised concern about opening the door to voter fraud. Senate Elections Committee Chairman Fred Akshar, R-Colesville, Broome County, has sponsored a bill that would require the use of electronic poll books at polling sites, rather than traditional paper books. That would allow poll workers to have more access to information to assist voters at the poll site.

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/politics/albany/2017/06/13/early-voting-ny-reformers-make-last-ditch-push/102821898/>

PENNSYLVANIA: Sen. Wayne Fontana's legislation (Senate Bill 440) would allow early voting in Pennsylvania. In the House, Eddie Day Pashinski (D-Luzerne) has similarly filed an early voting bill (House Bill 427).

REGISTRATION

NEW HAMPSHIRE: A bill that would substantially change New Hampshire's voter registration and verification process is on its way to Gov. Chris Sununu for his anticipated signature. The Senate on June 8

concurred with changes made by the House to SB 3, the major election law initiative of the Republican majority in the current session. That sets the stage for Sununu to sign the bill into law, creating tougher requirements for domicile verification and a more aggressive follow-up process. The Senate concurred with House changes to SB 113, creating an electronic poll book pilot program that could lead to digital registration options. The House concurred with Senate changes to HB 552, a bill granting new powers to the Secretary of State to investigate voter identity affidavits and to cross-reference voter registration with other states.

<http://www.unionleader.com/article/20170609/NEWS0621/170609377/-1/mobile?template=mobileart>

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

MASSACHUSETTS: Common Cause is pushing for a bill that instructs the state secretary to create a system that automatically updates a voter's registration information whenever that voter alerts one of several state agencies of a change of address or other changes related to their voter information. The agencies include the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Higher Education, and all public institutions of higher education. The bill would also allow a voter to waive those updates if they want. Supporters say that they have 102 co-sponsors, including 80 in the 160-member House and 22 in the 40-member Senate.

<http://boston.cbslocal.com/2017/06/10/massachusetts-lawmakers-consider-automatic-voter-registration/>

PENNSYLVANIA: Senator Hughes (D) has authored automatic voter registration legislation (Senate Bill 608), which would change the voter registration process in Pennsylvania from an "opt-in" system to an "opt-out" system. Senator Lisa Boscola (D) has also filed a bill that would allow for Election Day voter registration (Senate Bill 282) and would allow employees time off to vote on Election Day (Senate Bill 284).

<http://www.sj-r.com/news/20170505/illinois-senate-oks-automatic-voter-registration>

VOTE BY MAIL

PENNSYLVANIA: A bill was introduced by state Rep. Rob Matzie (D) that would authorize no-excuse vote by mail in Pennsylvania. Under Matzie's House Bill 1546, the Pennsylvania Department of State and county election boards would be directed to create a vote-by-mail system in which voters could make a one-time request for a mail-in ballot and be automatically sent one in subsequent elections.

http://www.timesonline.com/news/governmentandpolitics/matzie-bill-would-have-state-implement-voting-by-mail/article_870ec054-5134-11e7-941d-c37ab509df2b.html

STRAIGHT-PARTY VOTING

TEXAS: Texas entered the 85th legislative session as a minority among its peers—one of only 10 states that offered a one-punch voting option on election ballots. The state will leave as part of the majority, however, after Gov. Greg Abbott signed House Bill 25. The bill, by Rep. Ron Simmons, R-Carrollton, will start the process of eliminating straight-ticket voting, but will have no immediate effect before 2020. Starting Sept. 1, the secretary of state will distribute a notice that straight-ticket voting will be eliminated, and then develop a process to follow through on the elimination.

<https://communityimpact.com/austin/at-the-capitol/2017/06/02/straight-ticket-voting-eliminated-texas-wont-go-away-2020/>

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

TEXAS: Late last year, after two Texas electors went rogue, top Republicans rallied around bills to "bind" Texas Electoral College members to the result of the statewide popular vote. Yet no such legislation made it to Gov. Abbott's desk over the course of the legislative session that ended in May. Instead, lawmakers are now seeking to study the issue during the interim. State Rep. John Raney, R-College Station, filed House Bill 543, which would have created a \$5,000 fine for any elector that does not support the winner of the statewide popular vote. In the House Elections Committee, HB 543 received a committee substitute that did away with the fine, instead making any elector ineligible to serve if he or she submits a ballot for someone other than the candidate who received the most votes in the general election in Texas. On April 17, the House elections panel approved the committee substitute on a unanimous vote. However, it never got a vote on the House floor. Three days later, the Senate State Affairs Committee held a hearing on Buckingham's legislation, which still included the fine. It was there that SB 394 encountered opposition from the state Republican Party.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2017/06/09/texas-electoral-college-bills-abbott/>

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

OREGON: Senate Bill 802, which gives 16-year-olds the ability to pre-register to vote, passed the Oregon House 37-12 and now heads to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature. Under current Oregon law, an otherwise qualified person who is at least 17 years of age may pre-register to vote. Currently, 11 states and the District of Columbia allow 16-year-olds to preregister to vote.

<http://www.ktvz.com/news/legislature-oks-letting-16-year-olds-pre-register-to-vote/539050573>

PENNSYLVANIA: Several senators, led by David Argall (R., Berks), announced legislation that would allow Pennsylvania's gubernatorial nominees, like those running for U.S. president, to choose a running mate for lieutenant governor in future elections. If the legislation becomes law, future candidates for governor would be able to select their running mates after winning their party primaries. The legislation has 15 cosponsors, including two Democrats, Argall said, adding that several other states grant gubernatorial candidates the ability to choose running mates. According to the National Lieutenant Governors Association, Pennsylvania is among only 13 states where lieutenant governors are elected during the primary election independently of the governor. They are then yoked together on the general election ballot.

<http://www.philly.com/philly/news/politics/state/should-pa-change-how-lt-governors-are-elected-20170613.html>