



June 28, 2017

## Legislative Activity

### RANKED CHOICE VOTING

**MAINE:** The Senate on Tuesday took the first step in scuttling a voter-approved state election overhaul before it's implemented. The Senate voted 21-13 to repeal the ranked choice voting law that allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. The repeal movement follows a Maine Supreme Judicial Court opinion that a key part of the law is likely unconstitutional. While lawmakers are also considering a constitutional amendment, it has yet to achieve the two-thirds support necessary to go to voters for final ratification.

<http://bangordailynews.com/2017/06/27/politics/maine-senate-votes-to-scrap-ranked-choice-election-system/>

**MAINE:** A potential fix to the constitutional concerns raised about Maine's new ranked-choice voting system faltered in the Maine House. The 78-68 House vote fell short of the two-thirds majority needed to present voters with a proposed constitutional amendment on a ranked-choice voting process that fundamentally changes the way Maine voters elect legislators, governors and members of Congress. Lawmakers voted largely along party lines, with Democrats supporting sending the constitutional amendment to voters and Republicans opposing the measure. Although 52 percent of Mainers voted to approve switching to a ranked-choice system last November – making Maine the first state to do so – the Supreme Judicial Court issued a unanimous advisory opinion last month that said the process would violate Maine's Constitution. That has left lawmakers with two major options: either repeal the ranked-choice voting law approved by voters, or give voters a chance to change Maine's Constitution to address the court's concerns.

<http://www.pressherald.com/2017/06/23/constitutional-amendment-to-fix-ranked-choice-voting-falters-in-house/>

### MAIL OR ABSENTEE BALLOT VOTING

**TEXAS:** Gov. Greg Abbott called on two Tarrant lawmakers to lead the way in cracking down on mail-in ballot fraud in Texas. Abbott recently pointed to state Rep. Craig Goldman, R-Fort Worth, and state Sen. Kelly Hancock, R-North Richland Hills, as leaders in this issue once the special session starts July 18. Abbott has pointed to a current investigation of voting irregularities in Dallas.

<http://www.star-telegram.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/politex-blog/article157835704.html>

**OHIO:** With backers saying it will reduce paperwork and ensure fewer mistakes on early ballots and critics saying it will make it harder for eligible resident to vote, the Ohio House approved legislation designed to make Ohio's in-person absentee polls more like those on Election Day. House Bill 41 prompted debate by two candidates for the secretary of state races. Among other provisions, the bill would eliminate a requirement that absentee voters complete identification envelopes to submit their ballots. Those voters would have to provide a driver's license or other allowed identification to confirm their eligibility as Election Day voters do now.

Completed absentee ballots would be scanned for mistakes before being submitted and held for counting later. HB 41 ultimately passed on an unofficial vote of 63-30 and heads to the Ohio Senate for further consideration. <http://www.the-review.com/dix%20statehouse/2017/06/22/rules-change-for-absentee-voting-draws-debate-in-house>

## **AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION**

**UNITED STATES:** Senator Patrick Leahy, D-Vermont, announced legislation that would require states to automatically register eligible citizens to vote when they interact with certain state and federal agencies, unless they decline. The Automatic Voter Registration Act of 2017 would do away with the patchwork of state voting laws and mandate a proactive approach to voter registration by the government. <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2017/06/14/leahy-presents-bill-would-require-states-automatically-register-eligible-voters/397488001/>

## **VOTER ID**

**ARKANSAS:** Legislators have approved rules to implement a new voter-identification law that could go into effect as early as September. The state Board of Election Commissioners approved the rules requiring voters to show photo identification before casting ballots. Those without photo ID can sign a sworn statement saying they're registered voters in the state. <http://couriernews.com/bookmark/27437883/article-Arkansas>

## **STRAIGHT-PARTY VOTING**

**TEXAS:** Gov. Greg Abbott recently resolved the future of straight-ticket voting in Texas when he signed a bill to eliminate the option, but the impact of the new law on future elections is far from certain. [http://www.palestineherald.com/news/texas-joins-majority-in-losing-straight-ticket-voting/article\\_450c751e-587f-11e7-ba92-13d58130fea9.html](http://www.palestineherald.com/news/texas-joins-majority-in-losing-straight-ticket-voting/article_450c751e-587f-11e7-ba92-13d58130fea9.html)

## **VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

**UNITED STATES:** House Democrats introduced legislation to restore parts of the Voting Rights Act while pledging to make the issue of voting rights a priority if the party wins in 2018. Under the new act, local and state governments with a history of voter discrimination from the past 25 years would have to obtain federal approval before making changes to voting policies or procedures. These states include: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/house-democrats-looking-ahead-2018-pledge-prioritize-voting-rights-n775766>

## **ELECTION ADMINISTRATION**

**CALIFORNIA:** Commentary: Why California should definitely not lower voting age to 17. Assemblyman Evan Low, D-Campbell, says we should give 17-year-olds that responsibility and has introduced legislation to lower the voting age in California. California's current voting age is 18, and it should stay that way. Having 17-year-olds vote for something as important as a presidential election could mean thousands of teenagers voting without any knowledge of who and what they are voting for.

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

**UNITED STATES:** A group of House Democrats has proposed legislation that would require all employers to give workers at least two hours of paid leave so they can vote in federal elections. The Time Off to Vote Act, from Rep. Matthew Cartwright, D-Pa., is aimed at creating a federal rule to allow time for voting, since 25 states don't require employers to give their workers any time off.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/democrats-to-companies-give-workers-paid-time-off-to-vote/article/2627006>