

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON STRENGTHENING UTAH'S DEMOCRACY

RECOMMENDATION FOR MAKING VOTER REGISTRATION AUTOMATIC AND PORTABLE

SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE REBECCA CHAVEZ-HOUCK AND SENATOR SCOTT MCCOY

Whereas, the Commission agrees with the National Commission on Federal Election Reform in 2001, which concluded: "The registration laws in force throughout the United States are among the world's most demanding ... [and are] one reason why voter turnout in the United States is near the bottom of the developed world";

Whereas, the Commission believes that Utah's voter registration regime should enhance voter access and encourage all residents to vote;

AUTOMATIC AND PORTABLE REGISTRATION

Whereas, the National Voter Registration Act only requires states to make registration materials available to citizens when they visit government offices, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, public assistance agencies, and military recruiting centers;

Whereas, under Utah's current voter registration system, eligible voters are not placed on electoral rolls unless they first take the initiative to register and satisfy state-imposed requirements for voter registration;

Whereas, Utahans change addresses frequently, and under Utah's current voter registration system, state officials must expend substantial resources manually processing each voter registration form and registration update;

Whereas, because the current registration system requires individuals to re-register each time they move, citizens are less likely to vote if they move shortly before an election;

Whereas, address changes account for at least 30 percent of all voter registration transactions and needlessly increase election administrators' workloads;

Whereas, so-called "automatic registration" would make voter registration simpler and more efficient when a resident fills out a driver's license form, state income tax form, or other similar form;

Whereas, automatic and portable registration would allow the state to more easily update its voter database, which would reduce errors on the voter rolls and opportunities for fraud;

Whereas, the National Voter Registration Act already requires Utah to allow a voter who moves to a new address within the same county and congressional district to cast a regular ballot at his/her new polling place;

Whereas, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 requires Utah to maintain a state-level list of registered voters, so no purpose is served by requiring voters to re-register every time they move residences within state lines;

Whereas, Utah's Lieutenant Governor can use information submitted to other government agencies, including change of address forms submitted to the U.S. Postal Service, to automatically update voters' addresses to ensure that voters' registrations are portable if they remain within the State of Utah;

The Commission hereby resolves to recommend that Utah residents will be deemed to register to vote by completing a Utah State tax form, drivers' license application, or social services form, provided said forms gather that information necessary to meet existing voter registration laws and prominently indicate that completion registers a person to vote. Utahns would register by completing these forms only if they affirmatively indicate, by means of marking a provided "opt-in" box. These forms will inform Utah residents of this automatic registration and allow them to refuse to register to vote. The Utah Lieutenant Governor's Office will utilize information submitted to other government entities so that if a voter updates his/her registration information with another state government entity, the update is automatically shared and voter rolls are updated.

**APPROVED 16-0 (3 ABSENT)
NOVEMBER 5, 2009**

VOTING TO APPROVE

Acting Chair Kirk Jowers, Representative Rebecca Chavez-Houck, Randy Dryer, Representative Craig Frank, Dave Hansen, Bruce Hough, Meghan Holbrook, Senator Scott Jenkins, Dan Jones, Tom Love, Frank Pignanelli, Dick Richards, Dee Rowland, Ken Verdoia, LaVarr Webb, Doug Wright