



House Elections and Ethics Committee

March 8, 2018

House Bills 5548 and 5549

Position: Support

The ACLU of Michigan supports House Bills 5548-5549, which will allow eligible citizens the opportunity to register to vote online. Online voter registration (OVR) has the potential to make voting more accessible, secure, and accurate by allowing people to register without paper forms and without mail, and to prepare to vote in the same way that they conduct an increasing amount of business and personal affairs: online

Allowing voter registration to be done online will improve accuracy of the voter registration rolls and reduce the burden on local clerks to enter this information by hand. Online voter registration systems allow voters to input their information through a secure and accessible online portal. Since the information does not have to be re-entered manually by staff from the local elections office, registrations received via online systems will decrease data entry errors. Measures that improve the accuracy of voter registration records could also reduce long lines on Election Day. Long lines discourage some voters from exercising their right, and disenfranchise others that must attend to work or family obligations.

Online voter registration reduces the cost of processing new voter registrations and saves local government's critical resources. After implementing online voter registration, Arizona experienced a reduction in per-registration costs from 83 cents per paper registration to 3 cents per online registration.¹ California's OVR program resulted in a cost savings of over 90%, paid for itself in the first year, and resulted in a net savings of \$700,000.²

Voting modernization has been taking place across the country, in states that are liberal, conservative, and even battleground states – but so far, Michigan has lagged behind. With passage of these bills, Michigan will join 38 other states and the District of Columbia in allowing qualified voters to register online. The security and integrity of our election system is important to all of us. This common-sense update will improve the accuracy of our voter rolls, ensure more eligible Americans can participate in voting, and at the same time safeguard our election system.

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¹ Washington Institute of the Study of Ethnicity and Race (WISER), and Election Administration Research Center (EARC). "ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION (OLVR) SYSTEMS IN ARIZONA AND WASHINGTON: EVALUATING USAGE, PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES." 1 Apr. 2010. www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2010/onlinevoterregpdf.pdf.

² Burd-Sharps, Sarah, and Patrick Noland Guyer. *THE COSTS OF MODERNIZING VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEMS. A Case Study of California and Arizona*. Social Science Research Council and the ACLU, Feb. 2015. www.acluohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ACLU-VoterRegCostsOnline2015_0224.pdf.