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Report: Election Day Voter Registration Would Boost Voter Participation in Iowa; 'EDR Could Help Increase Voter Turnout Over 10 Percentage Points'

DES MOINES, Iowa, March 22 (AScribe Newswire) -- Voter participation in Iowa will significantly increase if the state passes Election Day Registration (EDR) into law, according to a new report published today by national election reform research and policy group Demos and released in collaboration with the Iowa Citizen Action Network (ICAN). The Iowa House this week passed an EDR bill (HF653) and the state Senate is expected to take up the bill on Monday, March 26.

Election Day Voter Registration in Iowa, authored for Demos by election policy experts R. Michael Alvarez from the California Institute of Technology and Jonathon Nagler of New York University, finds that with EDR Iowa could expect a boost in turnout, with particularly large increases for some demographic groups.

"Our report shows that adoption of EDR could raise turnout in Iowa by almost 5 percent," said Nagler. "In particular, EDR can have a positive affect on turnout rates of young voters, those who've recently moved, naturalized citizens, and people of color."

Co-author Alvarez added, "One clear conclusion of voter turnout studies conducted over the last 35 years is that states that make registration and the voting process easier will increase participation among eligible voters. EDR is a clear example of that trend."

Key findings from the report:

- Nationally, in 2004, EDR states had a voter turnout rate of 70.3 percent, versus 54.7 percent in states without EDR.
- In Iowa in 2004, voter turnout was about 66 percent of the voting age population.
- If Iowa had EDR, indicators point to a likely boost in turnout of at least 5 percent.
- Turnout among those between the ages of 18 to 25 could increase by 10.7 percentage points under EDR.
- Turnout for those who have moved in the last six months could increase by 8.8 percentage points under EDR.
- Turnout for Latinos could increase by 9.5 percentage points, and for African Americans turnout could increase by 6.6 percentage points under EDR.
- Turnout among recently naturalized citizens could increase by as much as 20.2 percentage points.

Betty Ahrens, Executive Director of Iowa Citizen Action, observed that support for EDR in Iowa is broad. "One of our most important and often challenging missions is to increase participation in voting, especially among those that are least likely to vote," she said. "Iowa Citizen Action Network applauds the work of the Iowa House of Representatives in passing Election Day Registration. It is an important first step in getting all of Iowa citizens actively participating in our democracy."

Stuart Comstock-Gay, Director of the Democracy program at Demos, pointed out that campaigns to pass EDR are gaining momentum across the country. "Currently, seven states are on the EDR bandwagon. As other states see that EDR can turn around flagging turnout numbers, they are preparing to add the reform. We need to find every means possible to encourage folks to vote. This is a simple and easy-to-implement reform."

About DEMOS, ICAN and Election Day Registration: In its work on vital reforms for the US election system, Demos is engaged in a nationwide, long-term effort to research and monitor the effectiveness of Election Day Registration. Iowa Citizen Action Network works on an ongoing basis to get people involved in the political and electoral process. ICAN is working with the Midwest States Center on a regional initiative to promote civic engagement and democracy programs in the Midwest, including implementation of EDR.

For more information or to download a full copy of the Election Day Voter Registration in Iowa report, visit www.demos.org or www.iowacan.org.

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