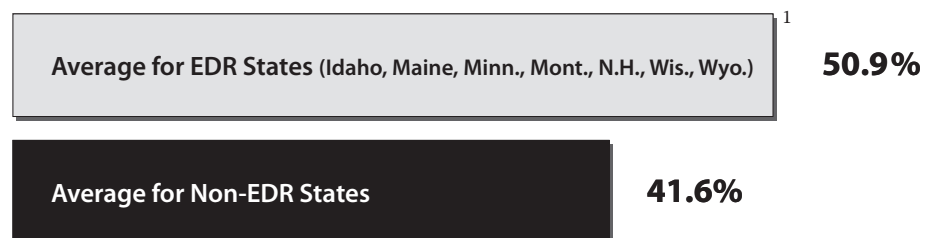


# Voters Win with Election Day Registration

## WHAT IS ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION?

Election Day Registration (EDR), sometimes called “same day registration” (SDR), allows eligible voters to register and cast a ballot on Election Day. Nine states currently have EDR or SDR laws. Maine, Minnesota and Wisconsin adopted EDR in the 1970s. Idaho, New Hampshire and Wyoming enacted Election Day Registration two decades later. Montana implemented EDR in 2006. In 2007, Iowa and North Carolina both enacted same day registration. Iowa now allows registration and voting on Election Day. North Carolina permits registration and voting on the same day during the state’s liberal early voting period.

## Voter Turnout in the 2006 Midterm Election



By counteracting arbitrary voter registration deadlines, EDR greatly enhances the opportunity for Americans to participate in the electoral process and cast a ballot that will be properly counted. States with EDR have consistently boasted turnout rates 10 to 12 percentage points higher than states that do not offer Election Day Registration. The 2006 midterm election was no different.

## STATE BY STATE SUMMARY 2006

### Idaho

Idaho recorded 54,531 individuals registering to vote on Election Day in November 2006, representing 12 percent of the total ballots cast in the election.<sup>2</sup>

### Iowa

Iowa enacted Election Day Registration in 2007.

### Maine

Turnout among eligible voters topped 53 percent in Maine in 2006—significantly higher than the 41.6 percent average for non-EDR states.<sup>3</sup>

### Minnesota

Over 292,000 people registered using EDR in Minnesota in the 2006 election. Their ballots accounted for more than 13 percent of the votes cast in the 2006 general election.<sup>4</sup>

### Montana

9,200 Montana citizens registered and voted using the new “late registration” option from October 7, 2006, to November 7, 2006 (Election Day).<sup>5</sup>

Of those, 3,947 registered on election day itself. These ballots figured in the 8 percent increase in voter turnout among eligible voters over the 2002 midterm election.<sup>6</sup>

### New Hampshire

25,796 New Hampshire residents registered and voted on Election Day in 2006. Of the 417,436 ballots cast in the state, 6.2 percent were from individuals registering on Election Day.<sup>7</sup>

### North Carolina

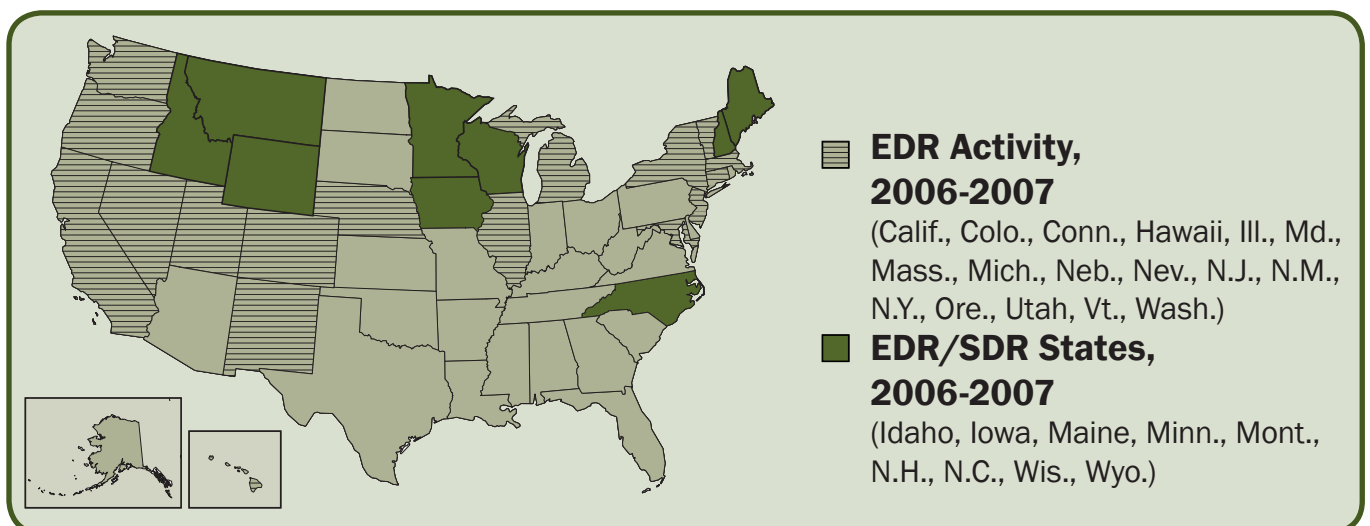
North Carolina adopted Same Day Registration in 2007.

### Wisconsin

Wisconsin reported 392,391 registrations on Election Day in 2006. This figure accounts for 18 percent of the total turnout for the state.<sup>8</sup>

### Wyoming

13,393 Wyoming residents registered and voted on Election Day in November 2006. Their votes comprised over 5.5 percent of the ballots cast in Wyoming.<sup>9</sup>



## NATIONAL SUMMARY

### EDR States in the 2006 Midterm Election

The midterm election of 2006 featured some of the most highly contested races of the decade. The votes of Election Day registrants became more important as the number of closely contested races rose in the final hours of the election. Preliminary data indicates that EDR greatly facilitated voter participation in these elections.

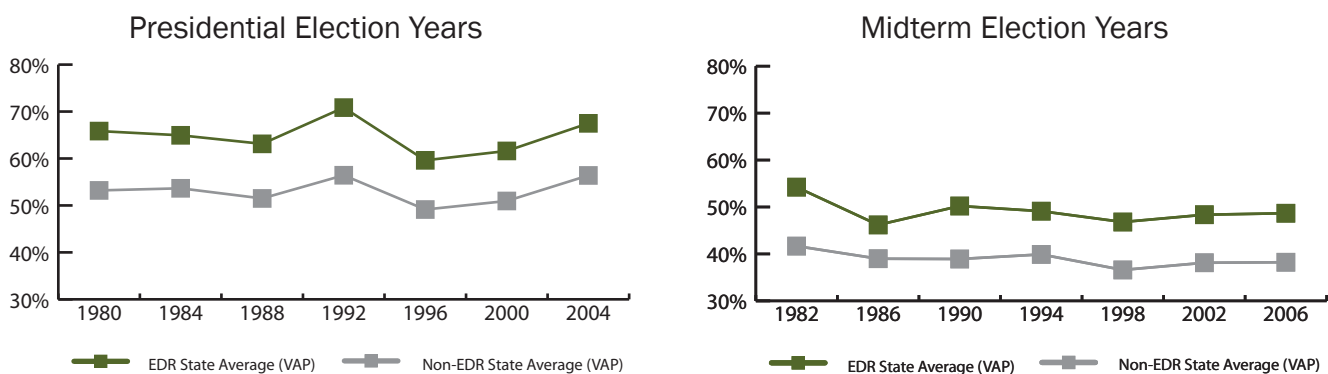
### EDR Enfranchised Over Three-Quarters of a Million Voters on November 7, 2006

More than 787,000 votes were cast by individuals who registered on Election Day in the six EDR states for which data is available, representing 5.5 to 18 percent of citizens in those states who participated in the 2006 general election.<sup>10</sup> Without Election Day Registration, hundreds of thousands of Americans might have been excluded from exercising the most fundamental right of democracy.

### 2006 EDR Overview

- » More than 787,000 individuals used EDR to register and vote in the 2006 general election. This bloc of voters is larger than the populations of Washington DC, Des Moines, Iowa, Tacoma, Washington, Jackson, Mississippi, or Ft. Meyers, Florida. In fact, this number is larger than the entire populations of Wyoming or Vermont.
- » Voter turnout in the seven states that offered Election Day Registration in the 2006 election was, on average, nearly 10 percentage points higher than states without EDR.<sup>11</sup>
- » Five EDR states made the list of top 10 voter turnout states in 2006 (Minnesota, Montana, Maine, Wisconsin and Wyoming).

### Turnout Rates in EDR vs. Non-EDR States from 1980 to 2006



Source: United States Election Project, [http://elections.gmu.edu/voter\\_turnout.htm](http://elections.gmu.edu/voter_turnout.htm), using Voting Age Population

## EDR BENEFITS VOTERS AND STATE ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS

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### **EDR states consistently boast higher turnout than non-EDR states.**

States with Election Day Registration have boasted higher voter turnout than those without EDR for over 25 years, in both presidential and midterm elections. In the 2004 presidential race, EDR states had an average turnout 12 percentage points higher than the average turnout for non-EDR states. While that full increase cannot likely be attributed to EDR, research shows that at least 3 to 6 percentage points of the increase is directly related to EDR.

### **EDR counteracts arbitrary voter registration deadlines.**

Voter registration deadlines vary widely across the nation. The experience of EDR states show that these cut-off dates bear little relevance to a state's ability to run smooth elections. Nevertheless, 25 states close off voter registration 25 or more days before the election—well before many would-be voters have been fully apprised of candidates and campaign issues.

**Voter registration deadlines close before the media and the public fully focus on elections.** For example, the University of Wisconsin's NewsLab found that over 40 percent of election news stories were aired in the final week before the 2006 election in seven Midwest media markets.<sup>12</sup> A 2000 election poll found that the percentage of people giving "quite a lot" of thought to the election rose significantly as Election Day approached, from 59 percent in September to 75 percent in the first week of November.<sup>13</sup>

Competition can also increase in the final weeks of an election. The *Cook Political Report* classified 25 U.S. House seats across 16 states as highly competitive in early October 2006. By November 6, after all registration deadlines had passed, the number of House seats considered to be highly competitive increased to 39 across 23 states.<sup>14</sup> An unregistered voter moved to action in this final week would have been ineligible to cast a countable ballot in 42 states.

**EDR allows eligible voters who may have been mistakenly purged from the voting rolls to cast a meaningful ballot.** The Help America Vote Act of 2002 requires states to offer provisional ballots at the polls to voters whose names do not appear on the voter rolls. These provisional ballots are only counted if election officials subsequently determine that the individuals were eligible to vote.<sup>15</sup>

"In Minnesota, we not only believe citizenship is an American right, it is also an American responsibility. We go out of our way to make sure every single Minnesotan exercises his or her duty and is allowed to vote. For the past 34 years, Election Day Registration has guaranteed them that right — fairly and freely. It's a right that all Americans should share."

U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN)

More than one in three of the almost 2 million provisional ballots cast in 2004 were ultimately discounted.<sup>16</sup> Dēmos’ analysis of preliminary provisional balloting data for the 2006 midterm election shows continuing problems.<sup>17</sup> Much like patients sent home with a placebo, many provisional voters mistakenly believed that they were given a genuine opportunity to vote. EDR allows voters who have been purged or mistakenly left off the rolls to re-register and cast a ballot that will be counted.

**EDR assists young voters.** Young Americans move frequently—for school, for jobs, for family—making it harder for them to keep their voter registrations current. Although voter turnout increased among youth in 2004, it still lagged behind the overall turnout rate. EDR is a powerful tool that can be used to ensure that young people are able to register and vote.

Research indicates that allowing young people to register to vote on Election Day could increase youth turnout in presidential elections by as much as 14 percentage points.<sup>18</sup> Montanans between the ages of 18 and 25 comprised more than a third of the approximately 9,200 individuals who registered to vote under Montana’s new “late registration” statute. The state allowed registration and voting after the close of the early registration period, up to and including Election Day (October 7, 2006, and November 7, 2006).<sup>19</sup>

**EDR enfranchises geographically mobile and lower-income citizens.**

Census data shows that almost 40 million Americans moved between 2004 and 2005. Over one-third of those moving during this period had incomes of less than \$25,000.<sup>20</sup> With early voter registration deadlines, many Americans who have recently moved are unable to fulfill their duty as citizens to vote in elections. With EDR, they can re-register on Election Day and cast a ballot.

“Nevada has consistently been near the bottom in terms of the number of registered voters and those who actually cast their ballots. There are several factors that contribute to this poor showing, but certainly the fact that in Nevada people must register to vote at least 30 days before an election serves as a stumbling block for increasing participation.”

U.S. Rep. and former Nevada Secretary of State  
Dean Heller (R-NV), supporting state EDR bill

**EDR is cost-effective and easier for elections officials to administer than provisional ballots.**

An authoritative study indicates that elections are no more expensive to administer in EDR states than elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> Most respondents to a 2007 telephone survey of local election officials in the EDR states of Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming described the incremental cost of EDR as minimal.<sup>22</sup>

Non-EDR states are also far more likely to distribute large numbers of provisional ballots. According to Wisconsin’s elections director, his state’s ability to avoid provisional balloting “alone makes EDR worthwhile.”<sup>23</sup> After an election, officials

must spend extra time and effort to comb voter registration records and determine whether a provisional voter had actually registered and whether her ballot should be counted. This process can take days or weeks. EDR spares election officials from these efforts, and ensures that voters can cast ballots that will be counted.

### **EDR does not encourage voter fraud.**

A bi-partisan team of consultants to the Election Assistance Commission reported widespread agreement that very little evidence existed of voter impersonation at the polls.<sup>24</sup> A recent analysis of 2002-2005 data from EDR states also found very little evidence of voter fraud.<sup>25</sup> And the great majority of local elections officials participating in a 2007 survey in Election Day Registration states rated current fraud-prevention measures sufficient to protect the integrity of elections.<sup>26</sup>

“As an election official, I seek to facilitate the highest possible vote turnout through a secure process. Election Day Registration is a big part of our success in achieving those goals. EDR ensures that all eligible voters can cast their ballots, without jumping through unnecessary hoops. And EDR keeps voter turnout in our state very high. It’s good for democracy and good for Wyoming.”

Max Maxfield  
Wyoming Secretary of State

## **EDR: A POLICY THAT BENEFITS MILLIONS**

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Election Day Registration has assisted millions of voters in casting valid ballots and participating in the democratic process. The 2006 midterm election was another illustration of EDR’s potential.

Momentum around EDR/SDR continues to grow. Three states have enacted same or election day registration since 2005: Iowa, Montana and North Carolina. Seventeen other states also saw EDR activity in 2006-2007: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington.

By passing EDR, states can reduce unnecessary barriers to participation and empower their residents.

“Election Day Registration increases voter participation by allowing all eligible voters to cast a ballot. Election Day Registrations are processed by trained election officials at their polling location. When successfully registered by the election official, the voter is allowed to cast their ballot and have their voice heard. EDR provides an alternative method for individuals to register and vote, providing the services that citizens want and need to fully participate in their government.”

Mark Ritchie, Minnesota Secretary of State

## Never Too Late to Vote

By Ben Ysursa And Matthew Dunlap

Originally published in  
*The New York Times*, May 11, 2007

LAST month, Gov. Chet Culver of Iowa signed a bill authorizing Election Day Registration, which allows previously unregistered voters with proper ID the opportunity to cast a ballot that day. This is a powerful tool to promote voting and, as secretaries of state of two states that already have this policy in place, we welcome Iowa in joining our ranks.

With Election Day Registration, all qualified voters can participate in the vital American tradition of voting without finding themselves hampered by arbitrary registration deadlines. Seven states—ours, as well as Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming—now use EDR, and the evidence is convincing: voter turnout in these states is on average 10 to 12 percentage points higher than in other states.

While opponents are concerned that this option might encourage voter fraud, such crime is exceedingly rare or nonexistent in states that offer Election Day Registration. Citizens of Maine, for instance, have benefited from same-day registration since the early 1970s and no case of voter fraud has ever been attributed to the policy. With simple, fair and safe methods to verify voters, and by relying on effective poll-worker training and sophisticated election administration, our states have ensured the integrity of the process while allowing every eligible citizen to cast a ballot.

We also reject the oft-used argument that voters not registered in advance should be effectively barred from voting as punishment for not heeding existing deadlines. While it's true even EDR states have deadlines in place for registration by mail, we firmly believe that missing a deadline should not prevent interested and engaged parties from being able to register

in person on Election Day. We are committed to leaving no voter behind, including first-time voters, newly naturalized citizens and those who may have recently changed addresses.

When it comes especially to voters ages 18 to 25—a demographic often absent at the polls—a recent study by Demos projected that in Iowa, Election Day Registration could result in a 10.7 percent increase in voting among that group.

Other beneficiaries are registered voters inadvertently removed from the rolls, newlyweds who just changed their names and people who, because of whatever mix-up, are asked to cast a provisional ballot instead. In same day registration states, these folks don't leave the voting booth wondering if their ballots will count equally alongside their neighbors'.

Legislatures from Hawaii to Massachusetts to North Carolina are taking serious steps toward putting Election Day Registration into effect. And the need for this critical reform did not escape the notice of Congressional leaders who recently introduced a proposed Count Every Vote Act, with an added provision for Election Day Registration nationwide.

Though one of us is a Republican and one is a Democrat, we can attest that political affiliation isn't relevant here: this is a policy that is good for voters, regardless of party, and good for our democracy. When it comes to elections, America is best served when all eligible voters cast their ballots—even those who missed the registration deadline.

**Ben Ysursa and Matthew Dunlap are the Secretaries of State for Idaho and Maine, respectively.**

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## Early voting, late registration begin

By Josh Shaffer, staff writer

Originally published in  
*The News & Observer*, September 20, 2007

RALEIGH - North Carolina's new and relaxed voting guidelines kicked in today, allowing voters to register and cast ballots at the same time.

State elections officials expect overall turnout to jump by 5.4 percent, and more than 10 percent for the youngest voters now that restrictions have been dropped.

Early voting in local elections started at 8:30 a.m., allowing North Carolina voters to register and vote in a single trip for the first time.

In the Triangle, early voting periods began today in Wake and Durham counties. For other counties, early voting will begin in October.

Those who choose to register and vote during the early period use an absentee ballot. Those ballots can be disqualified if a voter's identity, checked through drivers' licenses and Social Security numbers, proves to be false.

That level of security is impossible on Election Day itself, when voting is much heavier.

"This is a great balance," said State Elections Director Gary Bartlett. "It gives that last-minute voter a chance."

The new rules last until three days before the election. On Election Day, voters will need to have registered in advance.

Polls were open in Raleigh and Cary on Thursday. By 10:45 a.m., seven people had voted in Raleigh.

"This is a major step," said Bill Page, the seventh person to vote in Wake and a Wake County Democratic Party official. "It could eventually put us beyond (an extra 5.4 percent), but I'm not sure about this time. The word is not out yet."

*(Reprinted with Permission of The News & Observer of Raleigh, North Carolina.)*



## ENDNOTES

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1. North Dakota, which has no statewide voter registration requirement, was included among EDR states for purposes of turnout comparison. Iowa and North Carolina had not yet adopted same day registration in 2006.
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12. Wisconsin NewsLab, "Midwest Local TV Newscasts Devote 2.5 Times as Much Air Time to Political Ads as Election Coverage, Study Finds," University of Wisconsin-Madison, November 21, 2006, <http://www.mni.wisc.edu/pdfs/MNI%202%20Release%20FINAL.pdf>.
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16. Kimball W. Brace and Michael P. McDonald, *2004 Election Day Survey* (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2005), [http://www.eac.gov/election\\_survey\\_2004/toc.htm](http://www.eac.gov/election_survey_2004/toc.htm).
17. Scott Novakowski, *A Fallible 'Fail-Safe': An Analysis of Provisional Balloting Problems in the 2006 Election* (Demos, November 2007), <http://www.demos.org/page575.cfm>. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission's official analysis of provisional balloting in 2006 has yet to be released as of the date of this publication.

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