

Feingold, Ellison bill makes voters registration easier for Americans

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Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) and U.S. Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) are reintroducing legislation to make it easier for Americans to register to vote by allowing same day registration at polling places for all federal elections. By allowing voters to register at polling places the same day as they vote, the Same Day Registration Act would help increase voter turnout and voters would not have to worry about sitting an election out because they missed a registration deadline.

And by having voters register in person, there is less of a chance that voter fraud could take place. The bill is cosponsored in the Senate by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jon Tester (D-MT), Tom Harkin (D-IA), and John Kerry (D-MA). In the House, the cosponsors are Representatives Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Kendrick Meek (D-FL), Timothy Walz (D-MN), Bob Filner (D-CA), and James Oberstar (D-MN).

“Helping more Americans exercise their right to vote is in the best interests of our democracy,” Feingold said. “The system in Wisconsin, which allows for same day registration, has worked well for more than 30 years and is a major reason why Wisconsin is a national leader in voter turnout. In fact, the states that frequently have the highest voter turnout all allow Election Day registration. We should take action to get more people involved in the political process and same day registration is a proven way to do it.”

“Minnesota routinely leads the nation in voter turnout – usually over 70%,” Ellison stated. “We do so because in Minnesota our right to vote is a sacred right and a moral obligation. In Minnesota we do everything that encourages, fosters and facilitates everyone’s ability to exercise that right. Enacting a National Election Day Registration law would do for the nation what same day registration has done for our State – give a voice to all who want to vote.”

Since 1968, American political participation has hovered at around 50 percent for presidential elections and 40 percent for congressional elections. In the 2008 election, the top five states in terms of voter turnout were Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maine, New Hampshire, and Iowa – all of which allow voters to register on Election Day and all of which had turnout of 70 percent or more. Same day registration can also be a cost saver by reducing the need for provisional ballots. Allowing same day registration can also address concerns about potential voter fraud. Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie has called same day registration a “no brainer” and has said it is more secure than advance registration because “you have the person right in front of you – not a postcard in the mail.”