

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the Committee. I submit this testimony in support of HF 45 to establish automatic voter registration (AVR) in Minnesota.

Minnesota leads the United States in voter turnout. We are also the only state with a divided legislature, a fact that received explicit attention just last week in the national press. I see this as a golden opportunity to set examples for the country on multiple fronts, not only in voter turnout, optimal access to the vote, and secure elections, but also in good bipartisan governance.

I testified in support of HF 45 at last week's Subcommittee on Elections hearing. I heard Rep. Schultz and others describe numerous benefits of AVR in removing barriers to voting and increasing voter registrations and turnout. The 2018 audit of the Minnesota State Voter Registration System showed voter fraud in Minnesota to be virtually non-existent. Implementing AVR would enhance data accuracy and security still further AND save money.

I also heard questions about the cost of changing the Department of Public Safety registration forms and regulation of instructional permit applications to allow only legally eligible Minnesotans to vote, both of which were easily and manageably addressed.

So, I see my role as a Minnesota citizen to simply ask – Why would we not want to take all steps, including automatic voter registration, to ensure that our Minnesota elections are exemplary on all fronts and our tax payer dollars are wisely spent? Why would we not want to have this bill promptly passed so that you could move on to other important business of the state?

Promoting full and fair access to the vote is not a red or a blue issue – it's a democracy issue and its common sense. Legislatures in red and blue and purple states have passed automatic voter registration bills and governors of both parties have signed them. I'm encouraged that the list of co-authors of HF 45 is bipartisan. I hope the bipartisan balance on the bill on the House side improves and spreads to the Senate. And I hope that legislators on both sides of the aisle and in both houses see this bill as a winning proposition for all Minnesotans.

Yes, Minnesota is first in the nation in voter turnout, at just under 75%, but our state turnout rate trails that of 8 other nations by as much as 12% - and our national rate trails Minnesota's by another 20%, putting the United States 29th in the world for voter turnout. 29th in the world!! We can and must do better and HF 45 provides an important place to start.

It's February 5th. We have a divided legislature and less than 4 months to get the important work of Minnesota done. As the only state in the nation with a divided legislature, we're in the spotlight. Please work together to pass HF 45 and other bills that set a Minnesota model of unity around common sense issues that move us all forward.

Thank you very much for your service.

Respectfully,

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