

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the Subcommittee. I am here to testify in support of HF 45, authored by Representative Jennifer Schultz, to establish automatic voter registration in Minnesota.

Minnesota leads the nation in voter turnout. We are also currently the only state with a divided legislature, a fact that has not escaped national attention. 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.

Sixteen states and the District of Columbia have already instituted automatic voter registration (AVR). Preliminary results from Oregon, the first to enact it, show significantly greater voter registration and higher voting rates among previously disengaged populations. More data is needed but it's clear that removal of barriers to voting at all phases of engagement is necessary for optimal public participation.

And AVR has additional benefits. Electronic transmission of voter data modernizes and streamlines the process, cleans up voter rolls, and saves money. The 2018 audit of the Minnesota State Voter Registration System showed voter fraud in Minnesota to be nearly non-existent and implementing AVR would enhance security still further.

Why would we not take all steps to ensure that our Minnesota elections are exemplary and our tax payer dollars are wisely spent?

Promoting full and fair access to the vote is not a red or a blue issue – it's a democracy issue. Legislatures in red and blue and purple states have passed AVR 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 balance 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 we trail 8 other nations, by as much as 12% - and the national rate trails Minnesota's by another 20%, putting the United States 29th in the world. There's important work to be done.

It's January 30th. We have a divided legislature and less than 4 months to get the important work of the state done. We're in a bit of a spotlight here. Please pass HF 45 and other bills that set a Minnesota Model of unity around common sense issues that move us all forward.

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