



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

Statement on An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud

H.4320, entitled An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud, is a combination of the bills S.373 and H.2091, which were introduced in the Massachusetts Senate by Sen. Cynthia Creem and the Massachusetts House of Representatives by the late Rep. Peter Kocot, and sponsored by 21 Senators and 85 Representatives. Following a favorable report of these two bills by the Joint Committee on Election Laws on March 22, 2018, H.4320 is currently in the committee on House Ways and Means. This bill would, in essence, make voter registration an opt-out system in the Commonwealth, in contrast to the current opt-in system, by automatically registering eligible voters who interface with the RMV and MassHealth to vote.

The Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,900 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their quality of life and work and their civic engagement during their studies at MIT. **We support all measures that increase the civic engagement of the MIT community and promote the voting rights of students, and thus strongly support H.4320.**

It is well known that young adults (18 to 24 years old) are the least likely to be registered to vote. This is particularly pronounced in non-presidential elections. U.S. Census data shows that, nationwide, no more than 59% of eligible voters 18 to 24 years of age have been registered to vote in any election year since 2000. In contrast, over 72% of citizens age 65 years and older have been registered in every election year in that period.¹

We urge you to explicitly allow all institutions of higher education in Massachusetts to participate in automatic voter registration, a provision included in a different automatic voter registration bill, H.2080, introduced by Rep. Evandro Carvalho. Students at Massachusetts universities represent an important subset of the young adult population, and automatic registration when students enroll in a university would greatly increase their ability to participate in local and state government during their studies.

Eleven states have already passed automatic voter registration bills. In Oregon, which implemented automatic voter registration in 2015, 230,000 new voters were registered and 265,000 addresses updated in the first six months. Forty percent of these registrants were under the age of thirty. With nearly half of those automatically registered voting, this program helped to increase voter turnout by 4.1% in 2016, the largest increase in the country during a similar time period.²

We ask you to urge the speaker to bring H.4320 to the floor for a vote. Automatic voter registration would substantially improve the ability of all of our citizens to participate in the government of the Commonwealth.

¹ Compiled from Current Population Survey data, including reports P20-552, P20-556, P20-557, and P20-562RV, and U.S. Census Bureau. "Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012"

² [Who Votes With Automatic Voter Registration?](#), Center for American Progress (2017)