



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

24 October 2017

General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Boston, MA 02133

Members of the Massachusetts General Court:

We write to you to express our support for Bill S.371, *An Act establishing election day registration*.

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 student engagement in the political process, so **we strongly support allowing eligible voters to register on election day**.

In Massachusetts, potential voters must currently register 20 days before an election or primary or 10 days before a special town meeting. This arbitrary requirement predates modern digital technology and networks, which allow nearly instantaneous processing of identification and paperwork in properly configured systems.

This voter registration deadline was recently challenged in *Chelsea Collaborative v. Galvin*, which was filed in Massachusetts' Suffolk Superior Court by the Chelsea Collaborative, MassVote, a set of registered individual voters, and the ACLU of Massachusetts on November 1st, 2016. We support several of the arguments advanced by Chelsea Collaborative et al., including:

The right to vote is uniquely important. It is important in its own right because it enables citizens to express their views about who should govern. Voting is also “the preservative of all rights,” since it empowers citizens to hold elected officials accountable.

And:

The burden of the Voter Cutoff Law is clear - it is permanent and total disenfranchisement from an election - but the need for it is not. Although the Commonwealth has an interest in the timely and secure processing of voter registration forms, a twenty-day cutoff is neither a reasonable nor the least restrictive way to serve that interest.

We applaud the ruling in favor of *Chelsea Collaborative et al* in July, and we urge the General Court to act to update Massachusetts voter registration law accordingly. *An Act establishing election day registration* would settle the matter for good by eliminating the twenty-day cutoff and allowing eligible voters to register all the way up to election day. **We urge you to pass S.371, An Act establishing election day registration.**

Best regards,

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MIT Nuclear Science and Engineering

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And the MIT GSC External Affairs team