

Submitter: Jessica Watson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed bill that mandates in-person voting on the date of an election as the standard method for conducting elections. While I understand the intent behind this proposal, I believe it is fundamentally flawed and poses significant challenges to the democratic process. I urge you to reconsider this bill for the following reasons:

- 1. Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Mandating in-person voting on a single day disproportionately affects individuals who face barriers to accessing polling stations. This includes people with disabilities, the elderly, those with chronic illnesses, and individuals who work long or irregular hours. For many, the physical act of traveling to a polling station can be a significant hurdle. By limiting voting to a single day, we risk disenfranchising these vulnerable populations and undermining the principle of equal access to the ballot box. Expanding voting options, such as mail-in ballots and early voting, ensures that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in the democratic process, regardless of their personal circumstances.
 - 2. Public Health and Safety:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of flexible voting methods to protect public health. In-person voting on a single day can lead to crowded polling stations, increasing the risk of spreading infectious diseases. This is particularly concerning for individuals with compromised immune systems and those who are unable to receive vaccinations. By maintaining diverse voting options, including mail-in and early voting, we can reduce the risk of large gatherings and ensure that voters can cast their ballots safely. Public health considerations must be a priority in our electoral processes to protect the well-being of all citizens.
 - 3. Voter Turnout and Engagement:** Restricting voting to a single day can negatively impact voter turnout and engagement. Many citizens face logistical challenges that make it difficult to vote on a specific day, such as work commitments, childcare responsibilities, or transportation issues. By offering multiple voting methods and extended voting periods, we can accommodate the diverse needs of the electorate and encourage higher voter participation. Studies have shown that states with more flexible voting options tend to have higher voter turnout rates. Ensuring that voting is accessible and convenient for all citizens is essential for a healthy democracy.
- In conclusion, while the proposed bill aims to standardize the voting process, it inadvertently creates significant barriers for many voters. To uphold the principles of accessibility, public health, and voter engagement, it is crucial to maintain a variety of voting methods that accommodate the diverse needs of our population. I respectfully urge you to oppose this bill and support measures that promote an inclusive and accessible electoral process.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this important issue; I hope that you will take these concerns into account.