



Save

Student Association for Voter Empowerment

Initiative:

- Passing the *Student Voter Opportunity to Encourage Registration Act of 2008* (otherwise known as the *Student VOTER Act*), a federal bill conceived of by SAVE members and introduced in Congress on July 31, 2008 by Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Steven LaTourette (R-OH) as well as Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL).

Background:

- Despite recently encouraging increases, voter turnout among young Americans has declined since the first election after the ratification of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1971, which lowered the voting age in America to 18.
- According to a 2005 Harvard University study, students are "more likely [than any other cohort of Americans] to cite registration mistakes or a lack of registration knowledge as a reason why they did not vote."
- Student voters are historically independent. In a 2005 Harvard University study, 38% of college students across America self-identified as independents, 33% as Democrats, and 25% as Republicans.
- In the Higher Education Act of 1998, Congress required universities to make a "good faith effort" to offer voter registration to students, but only 17% are in full compliance according to a 2004 Harvard University study.
- Colleges and universities have a special obligation to equip students for a lifetime of civic participation. The health of our democracy depends on an active, informed citizenry.

Summary:

- The Student VOTER Act of 2008 would require all universities that receive federal funds to offer voter registration to students at the same time they register for classes.
- The student voter bill would amend the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA or "motor voter act"), which was passed by Congress in 1994 and which requires state and local governments to offer voter registration to citizens when they obtain a driver's license or public assistance benefits. The student voter bill would designate universities that receive federal funds as "voter registration agencies" for purposes of the NVRA.
- The student voter bill would not be burdensome for universities because the requirement to offer voter registration with class registration would mean universities would not have to spend money on voter registration drives, as many do now to comply with the Higher Education Act "good faith effort" requirement. CBO will not provide a cost estimate for the bill because they view voting as a constitutional right, and their policy is not to provide cost estimates for bills involving such rights.



110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to provide for the treatment of institutions of higher education as voter registration agencies.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. DURBIN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to provide for the treatment of institutions of higher education as voter registration agencies.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Student Voter Oppor-
5 tunity To Encourage Registration Act of 2008” or the
6 “Student VOTER Act of 2008”.



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S.L.C.

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1 **SEC. 2. TREATMENT OF UNIVERSITIES AS VOTER REG-**
2 **ISTRATION AGENCIES.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2) of section 7(a) of
4 the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C.
5 1973gg-5(a)) is amended—

6 (1) in paragraph (2)—

7 (A) by striking and at the end of subpara-
8 graph (A);

9 (B) by striking the period at the end of
10 subparagraph (B) and inserting “; and”; and

11 (C) by adding at the end the following new
12 subparagraph:

13 “(C) each institution of higher education
14 (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Edu-
15 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)) in the
16 State that receives Federal funds.”; and

17 (2) in paragraph (6)(A), by inserting “or, in
18 the case of an institution of higher education, with
19 each registration of a student for enrollment in a
20 course of study” after “assistance,”.

21 (b) AMENDMENT TO HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF
22 1965.—Section 487(a) of the Higher Education Act of
23 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)) is amended by striking para-
24 graph (23).