

FAIR ELECTIONS LEGAL NETWORK

Working to remove barriers to voting and improve election administration across the United States.

TO: Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections
FROM: Fair Elections Legal Network
RE: Support for SB 375: a bill to modernize voter registration
DATE: March 29, 2013

Dear Chairwoman Spearman and Members of the Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections,

The Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) and the conceptual amendment presented by sponsor Senator Segerblom. FELN is a national, nonpartisan advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Our overall mission is to remove barriers to registration and voting for traditionally underrepresented constituencies and improve election administration through administrative, legal, and legislative reform.

As part of this mission, FELN advocates for improvements to the voter registration system that expand access to participation in our democracy. By using modern technology to streamline and expand opportunities for voter registration, SB 375 does just that. We ask you to join us in supporting this bill.

First and foremost, SB 375 automates voter registration transactions at a wide array of government offices. FELN strongly supports such automation, which benefits voters and election professionals alike. Under the bill – as modified by the conceptual amendment – individuals could choose to have the information they provide during a government transaction double as a voter registration application or update. The data within the applications is then automatically uploaded to the voter file, thereby eliminating costs and errors that come when paper voter registration forms need to be keyed in by clerical staff.

Cost savings can be significant. In Arizona, an online registration form costs just \$.03 to process, versus \$.83 to process a paper registration form. In Washington State, the cost of an online voter registration application is estimated at \$.45 as opposed to \$1.55 for a paper registration form. Nevada can similarly save taxpayer dollars with electronic forms that come in a file and can be directly uploaded into state voter databases.

Eliminating errors is just as important. Officials in Maricopa County, Arizona found that paper-based forms were five times more likely to introduce errors into the registration process as compared to online forms. Election officials strain under the weight of processing paper forms just prior to elections. Rather than being occupied with data entry while preparing for an upcoming election, the electronic forms allow data to be uploaded instantaneously, and valuable resources are not expended on manual data entry.

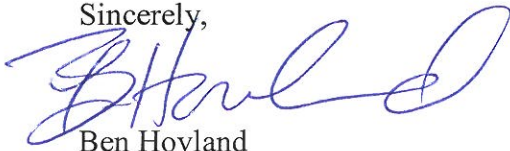
We also applaud the bill's mandate to expand online voter registration beyond just those with current in-state driver's licenses on file. That limitation unnecessarily excludes thousands of

voters in every state, a disproportionate number of whom are youths, seniors, or minorities. We support SB 375's online registration expansion, which will increase the percentage of voters who can use Nevada's online system.

Finally, FELN favors the expansion of registration to young citizens. Pre-registration of voters when they are 16 or 17 years old is a vital tool to increase the participation of young voters in elections.

Senate Bill 375 is a nonpartisan, common-sense proposal that increases both voter participation and election integrity. Modernizing the voting system will make it easier for Nevadans to register and stay registered to vote. We urge you to support SB 375 and vote yes to preserve, protect, and expand the right to vote in Nevada.

Sincerely,



Ben Hovland
Senior Counsel
Fair Elections Legal Network