

Once again the Senate Government operations committee is taking up a bill for election-day voter registration. The league has supported EDR before and we strongly support it now.

The main objection to the bill last year was that the statewide checklist had not been tested to see if it were ready to be used - as foolproof as possible and would really work in an active election. That statewide checklist was put into use in the 2006 general election and prove to work quite well.

There are seven states that have been using EDR for a while now and they all claim no fraud problems and excellent participation by the voters (in excess of 70% in an election). Other states, besides Vermont, are also looking at EDR.

Thirty years ago the residency requirement was one year here in Vermont. When the voting laws were rewritten and the residency requirement was dropped to 30 days, the hue and cry from some town clerks was astonishing. You would have thought the world was coming to an end. Not too long after that the residency requirement was dropped to 10 days and the same hue and cry came up from some town clerks. Not too long ago residency was dropped to seven days, but did require that town clerks' offices be open on the last Saturday before the deadline. The town clerks stood the requirement of working on Saturday for a short while and then said they would prefer working until the following Monday. They then put the deadline for 12 noon instead of the end of the work day at 5:00.

With election-day registration we end the confusion for everybody about deadlines or length of residency. With strict identification rules and with the provisional ballot (which was provided for in the federal Help America Vote Act) the possibilities of fraud are virtually nil.

Here in Vermont the clerks from the larger towns and cities in particular are very much in favor of EDR. Last year town clerks testified before the Senate that they were in favor of EDR; then a small group of clerks very loudly protested and the bill never passed. Many of them are worried about the increased work load, but those from small towns are not going to be overwhelmed by last minute voters.