SB 2821: Extend Vote Centers to Election Day
The Illinois Campaign for Political Reform and the League of Women Voters of Illinois

Encouraging Convenient Voting on Election Day

As early voting has become more prevalent in Illinois, voters have become accustomed to casting their ballot at any site within their election jurisdiction at a date and time that is convenient for them. In the 2016 elections, at least 30% of Illinois voters cast their ballots prior to Election Day.

While this method is convenient for both voters and election administrators, current election policies in Illinois require jurisdictions to switch back to precinct-based methods for Election Day. Many states across the U.S. have established “Vote Centers,” which provide consistency and convenience by creating standard hours and central voting locations throughout Early Voting and Election Day.

The Benefits of Vote Centers

This proposal gives election jurisdictions an opt-in program to establish Vote Centers for Early Voting and Election Day. If jurisdictions choose to move to this model, they will be required to submit a transition plan to their local county board or election board.

The plan must include detailed processes and procedures for jurisdiction-wide voting services, and will be considered through two public hearings and a 14-day comment period. If a jurisdiction submits a proposal, at least one vote center would be required for each 7,500 registered voters. These vote centers will also be required to open three days prior to election day, providing weekend voting in convenient locations across the jurisdiction. Proposals must meet the racial equality standards set forth in Section 52 of the Voting Rights Act.

Vote Centers have become more popular across the country in recent years, as they:

- Extend a voter convenience already utilized during Early Voting
- Optimize staff time and voting equipment, resulting in significant cost savings
- Reduce the need for provisional ballots, as voters can visit any location in their jurisdiction
- Encourage higher turnout by making voting more convenient and minimizing confusion
- Provide many convenient weekend voting locations in advance of Election Day

Success in Other States

- 13 other states, including California, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, and Indiana use vote centers on Election Day. Some counties in Texas, Colorado, and Indiana have been utilizing vote centers this way for 4+ election cycles

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