



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

AUDITOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

SUZANNE M. BUMP, ESQ.  
AUDITOR

August 10, 2017

TEL: 617-727-2075

The Honorable Chair Anne M. Gobi  
Joint Committee on Election Laws  
State House, Room 513  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Gobi:

I am writing to you in regard to several measures currently under consideration by this Committee relative to same-day voter registration. While I support efforts to increase turnout by making our elections more accessible to voters, I do not intend to take a position in support or opposition of the measures before this committee. Instead, I ask, as you consider these measures, to keep in mind their fiscal impacts on municipalities.

Earlier this year, at the request of local officials from Woburn and Oxford, my office determined that parts of the early voting law, which was implemented for the first time in the 2016 election cycle, constituted an unfunded mandate. We determined that requirements to establish early voting polling locations, provide additional staff, and establish privacy measures produced an unfunded mandate on municipalities. Thus far, the Legislature has not made arrangements to cover the costs associated with early voting from 2016 nor has it appropriated sufficient funding for 2018 elections.

Similar to early voting, it is our belief that incorporating same-day voter registration will require additional staff and time from local election officials above what is currently required for elections and early voting. This would almost certainly lead to an increased need for funding and resources to smoothly execute the voter registration process.

As you consider these measures, we ask that you remain cognizant of the potential costs to municipalities that same-day registration would likely bring, and provide adequate funding to meet these costs should the Legislature decide to implement the policy. To pass these measures without an adequate allocation of funding would be a disservice not only to municipalities, but also to the voters that will take advantage of same-day registration.

It is worth mentioning that as this Committee also considers measures to implement automatic voter registration, which my office believes would likely not constitute an unfunded mandate under state law if the measure is crafted properly, such a measure would require most of the work and funding to be provided by state entities such as the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Registry of Motor Vehicles, and college and universities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Most importantly, thank you for the work this Committee does to strengthen and protect the foundation of our democracy - our elections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne M. Bump".

Suzanne M. Bump  
Auditor of the Commonwealth