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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to allow all eligible voters to vote by mail in Federal elections, to amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to provide for automatic voter registration, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BLUMENAUER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to allow all eligible voters to vote by mail in Federal elections, to amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to provide for automatic voter registration, and for other purposes.

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 “Vote at Home Act of
5 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) An inequity of voting rights exists in the
4 United States because voters in some States have
5 the universal right to vote by mail while voters in
6 other States do not.

7 (2) Many voters often have work, family, or
8 other commitments that make getting to polls and
9 waiting in line on the date of an election difficult or
10 impossible. Many citizens with disabilities are phys-
11 ically unable to vote due to long lines, inadequate
12 parking, no curb cuts, steep ramps, and large
13 crowds. In 2012, 30 percent of voters with disabil-
14 ities had difficulty voting, and in 2016, nearly two-
15 thirds of the 137 polling places inspected on Elec-
16 tion Day had at least one impediment to people with
17 disabilities. Under current State laws, many of these
18 voters are not permitted to vote by mail.

19 (3) In 2020, despite a global pandemic, the
20 general election saw record high turnout as a result
21 of increased vote by mail options, which allowed vot-
22 ers to cast a ballot and stay safe at the same time.

23 (4) 34 States and the District of Columbia cur-
24 rently allow universal absentee voting (also known as
25 “no-excuse” absentee voting), which permits any
26 voter to request a mail-in ballot without providing a

1 reason for the request. No State which has imple-
2 mented no-excuse absentee voting has repealed it.

3 (5) 5 States currently hold elections entirely by
4 mail. At least 22 States currently allow some elec-
5 tions to be conducted by mail, especially in large and
6 rural jurisdictions where voting by mail is especially
7 convenient. Polling stations in rural jurisdictions
8 tend to have higher costs per voter, smaller staffs,
9 and limited resources. Transportation is often a cru-
10 cial barrier for rural voters.

11 (6) In 2020, in order to provide greater accessi-
12 bility and to protect the public health, 30 States
13 adopted or changed their laws for the general elec-
14 tion to allow voters to cast 36 their ballots from
15 home. These changes included removing strict excuse
16 requirements or allowing COVID-19 concerns to be
17 a valid excuse to vote absentee, allowing ballot drop
18 boxes, offering prepaid postage on election mail and
19 proactively sending all active registered voters appli-
20 cations to request an absentee ballot, with some even
21 skipping that step and sending the actual ballots.

22 (7) Voting by mail gives voters more time to
23 consider their choices, which is especially important
24 as many ballots contain greater numbers of ques-
25 tions about complex issues than in the past due to

1 the expanded use of the initiative and referendum
2 process in many States.

3 (8) Voting by mail is cost effective. After the
4 State of Oregon adopted vote by mail for all voters
5 in 1996, the cost to administer an election in the
6 State dropped by nearly 30 percent over the next
7 few elections, from \$3.07 per voter to \$2.21 per
8 voter. After Colorado implemented all-mail balloting
9 in 2013, voting administration costs decreased by an
10 average of 40 percent. The cost of conducting vote-
11 by-mail elections is generally one-third to one-half
12 less than conducting polling place elections. Voting
13 by mail also saves a substantial amount by getting
14 rid of the temporary labor costs of hiring poll work-
15 ers. In addition to that cost, many jurisdictions have
16 been facing difficulty in obtaining sufficient numbers
17 of poll workers.

18 (9) Allowing all voters the option to vote by
19 mail can reduce waiting times for those voters who
20 choose to vote at the polls. In 2016, voters in Ari-
21 zona reported waiting in line from 1 to 5 hours to
22 vote; in New York, voters reported that stations ran
23 out of ballots and did not have staff during all of
24 the hours scheduled for voting.

1 (10) Voting by mail is preferable to many vot-
2 ers as an alternative to going to the polls. In 2018,
3 25.3 percent of ballots in the United States were
4 cast by mail, up from 10 percent in 2000. Voting by
5 mail has become increasingly popular with voters
6 who want to be certain that they are able to vote no
7 matter what comes up on Election Day, as it re-
8 duces the physical obstacles and eases the time con-
9 straints connected with the act of voting.

10 (11) Despite attempts to claim that voting by
11 mail is susceptible to fraud, it is not. Strategies such
12 as the tracking systems for ballots and Postal Serv-
13 ice cooperation in preventing ballots from being de-
14 livered to names not recognized as receiving mail at
15 an address nearly eliminate the potential for fraud
16 in vote by mail elections. Evidence of undue influ-
17 ence or voter coercion after vote-by-mail implementa-
18 tion in Oregon has been nonexistent to minimal.

19 (12) Many of the reasons which voters in many
20 States are required to provide in order to vote by
21 mail require the revelation of personal information
22 about health, travel plans, or religious activities,
23 which violate voters' privacy while doing nothing to
24 prevent voter fraud.

1 (13) State laws which require voters to obtain
2 a notary signature to vote by mail only add cost and
3 inconvenience to voters without increasing security.

4 (14) Many voters choose to cast ballots early
5 when they have the option (over 50 percent in Ari-
6 zona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Geor-
7 gia, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North
8 Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and
9 Washington). More than 40 percent of voters in the
10 2016 election cast their ballot before Election Day.
11 In Oregon, 7 years after vote-by-mail election imple-
12 mentation, over 80 percent of voters favored the
13 vote-by-mail system.

14 (15) Vote-by-mail typically increases turnout in
15 all elections, but can be particularly effective in in-
16 creasing voter participation in special elections and
17 primary elections. Oregon, Washington, and Colo-
18 rado, 3 of the 5 States with entirely vote by mail
19 systems, continue to have consistently high voter
20 turnout rates. In the 2016 Presidential election,
21 while the percentage of registered voters who cast a
22 ballot nationally was 68.1 percent, Oregon's was
23 80.3 percent, Washington's was 78.76 percent, and
24 Colorado's was 74.3 percent.

1 lated voting materials from the appropriate State or local
2 election official and for returning the ballot to the appro-
3 priate State or local election official.

4 “(b) PROVISION OF BALLOT MATERIALS.—Not later
5 than 2 weeks before the date of any election for Federal
6 office, each State shall mail ballots to individuals who are
7 registered to vote in such election.

8 “(c) ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DIS-
9 ABILITIES.—All ballots provided under this section shall
10 be accessible to individuals with disabilities in a manner
11 that provides the same opportunity for access and partici-
12 pation (including for privacy and independence) as for
13 other voters.

14 “(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
15 tion shall be construed to affect the authority of States
16 to conduct elections for Federal office through the use of
17 polling places at which individuals cast ballots.

18 “(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—A State shall be required
19 to comply with the requirements of this section with re-
20 spect to elections for Federal office held in years beginning
21 with 2022.”.

22 (2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT RELATING TO
23 ENFORCEMENT.—Section 401 of such Act (52
24 U.S.C. 21111) is amended by striking “and 303”
25 and inserting “303, and 303A”.

1 through 3406” and inserting “3403 through
2 3407”.

3 **SEC. 4. AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION THROUGH**
4 **STATE MOTOR VEHICLE AUTHORITIES.**

5 (a) AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION.—Section 5
6 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (52 U.S.C.
7 20504) is amended to read as follows:

8 **“SEC. 5. VOTER REGISTRATION THROUGH MOTOR VEHICLE**
9 **AUTHORITY.**

10 “(a) SIMULTANEOUS APPLICATION FOR VOTER REG-
11 ISTRATION AND APPLICATION FOR MOTOR VEHICLE
12 DRIVER’S’S LICENSE.—

13 “(1) TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION TO ELEC-
14 TION OFFICIALS.—Each State’s motor vehicle au-
15 thority, upon receiving any of the identifying infor-
16 mation described in paragraph (2) with respect to
17 any applicable individual, shall securely transmit the
18 identifying information to the appropriate State elec-
19 tion official.

20 “(2) IDENTIFYING INFORMATION DESCRIBED.—
21 The identifying information described in this para-
22 graph with respect to any individual is as follows:

23 “(A) The individual’s legal name.

24 “(B) The individual’s age.

25 “(C) The individual’s residence.

1 “(D) The individual’s citizenship status.

2 “(E) The individual’s electronic signature.

3 “(b) DUTIES OF OFFICIALS RECEIVING INFORMA-
4 TION.—

5 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Upon receiving the identi-
6 fying information with respect to an applicable indi-
7 vidual under subsection (a), the appropriate State
8 election official shall determine—

9 “(A) whether such individual is eligible to
10 vote in an election for Federal office; and

11 “(B) whether such individual is currently
12 registered to vote in elections for Federal office
13 at the address provided in such identifying in-
14 formation.

15 “(2) NOTIFICATION TO INDIVIDUALS.—

16 “(A) ELIGIBLE UNREGISTERED INDIVID-
17 UALS.—In the case of an applicable individual
18 who is eligible to vote in an election for Federal
19 office and who is not currently registered to
20 vote, the appropriate State election official shall
21 issue a notification to the individual con-
22 taining—

23 “(i) a statement that, unless the indi-
24 vidual notifies the election official prior to
25 the expiration of the 21-calendar day pe-

1 riod which begins on the date the official
2 issued the notification that the individual
3 declines to be registered to vote in elections
4 for Federal office held in the State, the in-
5 dividual’s records and signature will con-
6 stitute a completed registration for the in-
7 dividual; and

8 “(ii) a description of the process by
9 which the individual may decline to be reg-
10 istered to vote in elections for Federal of-
11 fice in the State.

12 “(B) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS REGISTERED
13 AT A DIFFERENT ADDRESS.—In the case of an
14 applicable individual who is eligible to vote in
15 an election for Federal office and who is reg-
16 istered to vote in such election at a different
17 address than the address provided in the identi-
18 fying information, the appropriate State elec-
19 tion official shall issue a notification to the indi-
20 vidual containing—

21 “(i) a statement that, unless the indi-
22 vidual notifies the election official prior to
23 the expiration of the 21-calendar day pe-
24 riod which begins on the date the official
25 issued the notification that the address

1 provided in the identifying information
2 should not be used for voter registration
3 purposes, the address provided in the iden-
4 tifying information shall be used as the in-
5 dividual's address for voter registration
6 purposes; and

7 “(ii) a description of the process by
8 which the individual may decline a change
9 of address for voter registration purposes.

10 “(c) AUTOMATIC REGISTRATION OF ELIGIBLE INDI-
11 VIDUALS; AUTOMATIC CHANGE OF ADDRESS.—

12 “(1) REGISTRATION.—Upon the expiration of
13 the 21-calendar day period which begins on the date
14 the appropriate State election official issues a notifi-
15 cation to an individual under subsection (b)(2)(A),
16 the official shall ensure that the individual is reg-
17 istered to vote in elections for Federal office held in
18 the State unless—

19 “(A) the official later determines that the
20 individual does not meet the eligibility require-
21 ments for registering to vote in such elections;
22 or

23 “(B) prior to the expiration of such 21-cal-
24 endar day period, the individual notifies the of-

1 ficial that the individual declines to be reg-
2 istered to vote in such elections.

3 “(2) CHANGE OF ADDRESS.—Upon the expira-
4 tion of the 21-calendar day period which begins on
5 the date the appropriate State election official issues
6 a notification to an individual under subsection
7 (b)(2)(B), the official shall ensure that the indi-
8 vidual is registered to vote in elections for Federal
9 office at the address provided in the identifying in-
10 formation unless—

11 “(A) the official later determines that the
12 individual does not meet the eligibility require-
13 ments for registering to vote in such elections;
14 or

15 “(B) prior to the expiration of such 21-cal-
16 endar day period, the individual notifies the of-
17 ficial that the individual declines a change of
18 address for voter registration purposes.

19 “(d) APPLICABLE INDIVIDUAL.—For purposes of this
20 section, the term ‘applicable individual’ means any indi-
21 vidual who seeks assistance from, receives benefits from,
22 or receives service or assistance from a State motor vehicle
23 authority that issues motor vehicle driver’s licenses.”.

24 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT RELATING TO TIM-
25 ING OF REGISTRATION PRIOR TO ELECTIONS.—Section

1 8(a)(1)(A) of such Act (52 U.S.C. 20507(a)(1)(A)) is
2 amended to read as follows:

3 “(A) in the case of registration through a
4 motor vehicle authority under section 5, if the
5 identifying information with respect to the indi-
6 vidual is transmitted by the authority to the ap-
7 propriate State election official under section
8 5(a)(1) not later than the lesser of 30 days, or
9 the period provided by State law, before the
10 date of the election;”.

11 (c) OTHER CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section
12 4(a)(1) of such Act (52 U.S.C. 20503(a)(1)) is amended
13 to read as follows:

14 “(1) through the State motor vehicle authority
15 pursuant to section 5;”.

16 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
17 this section shall take effect upon the expiration of the
18 180-day period which begins on the date of the enactment
19 of this Act.