

SENATOR BECCA RAUSCH

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Contact:
Evan Berry, evan.berry@masenate.gov

SENATOR RAUSCH FILES COMPREHENSIVE SLATE OF ELECTION REFORM BILLS

Legislation includes permanent vote-by-mail option, local ranked choice voting, moving the September primary date, creating an Election Day holiday, and more

Boston, MA – Today Senator Rausch (D-Needham) filed four remaining bills in her slate of comprehensive election reform legislation to modernize Massachusetts' voting system and increase Massachusetts voters' access to the ballot box. Her list of elections reform bills now include proposals to make Election Day a holiday in Massachusetts, move the state primary date to June, modernize Massachusetts' central voter registry, and require all presidential candidates to disclose their tax returns to appear on a Massachusetts ballot, respectively.

These legislative proposals follow two landmark election reform bills which Rausch filed earlier this year: the [MAIL-in Voting Act](#) (An Act modernizing access and improving laws in voting), a new piece of legislation to retain and expand the vote-by-mail system that was implemented last year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the **Local Option Ranked Choice Voting Act**, allowing municipalities to adopt the voting option through local ordinance or ballot initiative.

"My progressive and practical election policy package will give Bay Staters what they want and deserve: robust voting reforms that advance equity, access, and modernization," said **Senator Rausch**. "I was proud to lead on comprehensive voting by mail in 2020; now, my MAIL-in Voting Act will make mail voting permanent here in Massachusetts, and improve the system to enhance ballot access for voters and ease the burdens on our local clerks. These half-dozen bills provide sorely needed upgrades to our antiquated voting systems and forward-thinking updates to our election laws that uplift voters across the Commonwealth."

Below is an overview of Senator Rausch's election policy proposals:

- **SD 39 [The MAIL-in Voting Act](#) (An Act modernizing access and improving laws in voting):** expands vote by mail provisions to all future elections and creates a permanent opt-in mail voter status option for voters. Over 40 percent of eligible Massachusetts voters cast mail-in ballots in the 2020 general election.
- **SD 241/HD 652 An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections:** allows municipalities to adopt the voting option through local ordinance or ballot initiative. Under current Massachusetts law, cities and towns can only adopt ranked-choice voting through home rule petition, requiring approval by both the state legislature and governor. Although ballot Question 2 did not pass statewide, but [a majority of voters in over 75 municipalities supported the ballot initiative](#).
- **SD 967 An Act establishing election day as a legal holiday:** improves working voters' access to the ballot by establishing Election Day (the first Tuesday in November in even-numbered years) as a legal holiday, in place of Columbus Day. Any employees who are not entitled to election day as a paid holiday are awarded four hours of paid voting leave to be used during the early voting period, the mail voting period, or on the date of a primary or general election.

- ***SD 969 An Act moving the state primary to June:*** increases voter engagement and improves election administration by moving the state primary from June to September. Massachusetts currently is one of only five states in the country that holds its state primary in September. Thirty states hold their primaries in May or June for the general election in November. The current schedule shortchanges voters' opportunity to engage the issues and learn about candidates by compressing the general election into seven weeks (and sometimes less). Late primaries also necessitate rapid certification of results to allow timely printing of general election ballots. In recent elections, this has presented a challenge to local clerks due to late-arriving mail ballots and close elections requiring recounts.
- ***SD 970 An Act to modernize the central registry of voters:*** improves voter access to the ballot by digitizing the central registry and making live-time data available to election officials on election day. Currently, typos and corrections cannot be made day-of, limiting voter access if there is an error in the voter file. The Act further requires the Secretary of the Commonwealth to certify his compliance with previously enacted statutory requirements to enter into an agreement with the Electronic Registration Information Center, or to explain the reasons for his continuing noncompliance.
- ***SD 968 An Act requiring disclosure of four years of tax returns to appear on a presidential primary ballot*** provides critical information for voter decisions. For almost 50 years, presidential candidates of both major parties routinely released their federal income tax returns. Making this information public has long been considered an essential part of vetting candidates for the highest election position. Tax returns provide a unique window into a candidate's finances, including charitable contributions, investments, business interests, and more.

192nd General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts began on Monday, January 4th 2021. The bill filing deadline for the two-year legislative session is Friday, February 19th.

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Senator Becca Rausch represents the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District, comprised of Attleboro, Franklin, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, North Attleborough, Plainville, Sherborn, Wayland, Wellesley, and Wrentham.