

April 1, 2021

Dear Governor Gianforte:

The undersigned organizations and tribal nations respectfully urge you to veto House Bill 176, which would eliminate Election Day voter registration in Montana. House Bill 176 would strip our state of a vital tool that has allowed more than 60,000 eligible Montanans to cast a ballot since 2006. The impact of this legislation is nothing short of voter suppression, and we implore you to intervene and stop it.

HB 176 ignores the will of Montana citizens, who have not only utilized Election Day registration but also defended it. Just seven years ago, 57% of Montana voters rejected LR-126, a ballot measure that aimed to end same-day registration. Montanans in 81 of 100 legislative districts, and by a 14-percent margin statewide, voted to keep Election Day registration.

These voters understood that Election Day registration serves as a failsafe option. Voters who attempted to simultaneously update their registration and driver's license at the DMV weeks or months before the election sometimes arrive at the polls to realize their registration application was never processed. Working Montanans with non-traditional or inflexible schedules - from ranchers to frontline workers - might be unable to visit their county election office during regular business hours. For these hard working members of our communities, the brief period between 5:00 and 8:00 pm on Election Day might be the first and only opportunity to register to vote.

Logistical barriers to accessing in-person election services should not be dismissed as merely an occupational hazard. Voters living in rural communities, students, and individuals with disabilities also face similar challenges to accessing voter registration services. For these Montanans and many more, Election Day voter registration is a lifeline that enables them to fully participate in our democratic processes.

Should HB 176 become law, many of these voters would be simply turned away from the polls on Election Day without recourse. A technical error, scheduling conflicts, and proximity to an election office are not sufficient cause to deny eligible Montanans access to the ballot. No such cause exists.

Montanans, through both their votes and actions, have spoken. The ability to register and cast a vote on Election Day should remain in effect. As long as the polls are open, eligible Montanans should be able to have their vote counted and voice heard.

Please veto HB 176. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Keaton Sunchild at [ksunchild@westernnativevoice.org](mailto:ksunchild@westernnativevoice.org)

Sincerely,

Keaton Sunchild  
Political Director, Western Native Voice

Co-Signed:

Timothy F. Davis  
Chairman, Blackfeet Tribe

Loni Taylor  
Council Member, Chippewa Cree Tribal

Andrew Werk, Jr  
President, Fort Belknap Indian Community

Liz Albers  
Executive Director, Montana Public Interest  
Research Group (MontPIRG)

Amanda Curtis  
President, Montana Federation of Public  
Employees (MFPE)

Sam Forstag  
Legislative Program Manager, ACLU of  
Montana

Beth Kampschorr  
Executive Director, Carol's List

Cora Neumann  
Founder, We Are Montnaa

Heather O'Laughlin  
Co-Director, Montana Budget and Policy  
Center

Shawn Reagor  
Director of Equality and Economic Justice,  
Montana Human Rights Network

Amara Reese-Hansell  
Program Director, Forward Montana

Al Smith  
Executive Director, Montana Trial Lawyers  
Association

Ella Smith  
Program Director, Montana Women Vote

Martha Stahl  
President & CEO, Planned Parenthood  
Advocates of Montana

Frank Szollosi  
Executive Director, Montana Wildlife  
Federation

Whitney Tawney  
Executive Director, Montana Conservation  
Voters Education Fund

Darcie Warden  
Montana Conservation Coordinator, Greater  
Yellowstone Coalition

Alanna Wulf  
Political and Advocacy Organizer, Big Sky 55+