

Offered by City Councilor Josh Zakim



CITY OF BOSTON

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS,** The ability for all citizens to participate in elections is a fundamental civil right and a central principle of our democracy; and
- WHEREAS,** Massachusetts currently has a voter registration cutoff law (M.G.L. c.51 §§ 1F & 26) that requires voters to register at least 20 days prior to participating in an election, and Boston’s voter registration system requires residents to actively “opt-in” to the registration process; and
- WHEREAS,** These restrictions on registration disenfranchise voters and possibly prevented thousands of Bostonians from participating in the 2016 Presidential Primary, disproportionately affecting low-income and minority residents; and
- WHEREAS,** Although a Superior Court judge has recently stopped this practice, such an arbitrary timeline is still on the books and the judge’s order is being appealed; and
- WHEREAS,** The City of Boston values diversity and is committed to protecting the civil rights of all of its residents; and
- WHEREAS,** As threats of voter suppression dominate the national news cycle, Boston has a unique opportunity to lead on the municipal level in exploring innovative ways to reduce barriers to voting; and
- WHEREAS,** In addition to eliminating voter registration deadlines and allowing same-day voter registration, we should explore the opportunities provided during routine interactions with residents, including Boston Public Schools registration and Neighborhood Parking Permit applications, to establish an automatic, “opt-out” voter registration system; ***THEREFORE BE IT***
- ORDERED,** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to further examine the City of Boston’s voter registration practices and to ensure the protection of civil rights of all Bostonians, and that representatives from the Boston Elections Department, the Boston Transportation Department, Boston Public Schools, Action for Boston Community Development, MassVOTE, and other interested parties be invited to testify.

Filed on: July 28, 2017