

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Senate HELP Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate HELP Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and members of the Senate HELP Committee,

The undersigned organizations write to support protecting and expanding the campus voter registration provision in the Higher Education Act. Speaking as organizations that are dedicated to promoting civic and voter participation among young people, it is vital that existing federal law promote the registration of students to the fullest extent possible.

Findings from the behavioral science nonprofit, ideas42, show that a lack of understanding about the registration process can be one of the greatest deterrents for young voters. As new voters, students don't necessarily know how to vote, or what the voting experience will be like. Students arriving on campus each August have a very short window in most states before voter registration deadlines are looming, and may miss the opportunity to participate in their first elections if voter registration information is presented too late. Having long served as incubators of young adult civic engagement, institutions of higher education can offer students a smooth entry into our democratic process by helping to reduce any ambiguity and uncertainty around registering and voting.

We are most concerned about the proposed language in H.R. 4508, the PROSPER Act, that would remove the following guidance:

- The timeline when institutions should request voter registration forms from their state in the lead up to an election.
- Clarity on which elections are covered by the provision.
- Definitional language outlining that institutions must send a voter registration-only email to their students. In other words, institutions would be compliant to the amended provision as long as they link to any voter registration material within an electronic transmission that contains other types of content, rendering the voter registration content lost in the shuffle.

We are hopeful that a bipartisan consensus around the Higher Education Act can be reached in the Senate that would reject these narrowing provisions, and instead strengthen the existing law in the following ways:

- Removing the exemption that allows six states to avoid this requirement.
  - All states should do as much as possible to ensure their citizens can vote, regardless if they have same-day registration or not (the original impetus for the exemption).

- Expanding the elections implicated by the provision to include state legislative and judicial elections, and revamp the requirement to focus on the academic calendar, not the electoral calendar.
  - The language in the provision should be expanded to all state elections, and the requirement should apply in non-federal election years.
  - Schools should also be required to send voter registration emails ahead of deadlines to register for the primary and general election in a given year.
- Creating a right of action that allows private citizens and/or law enforcement officials to notify the Department of Education and an institution of failure to comply with the HEA, and then press charges themselves if the failure is not corrected.
  - Currently, the provision can only be enforced by the Department of Education, who has limited time and resources. Allowing for private individuals to notify state officials of possible non-compliance, and then giving both the right to sue for compliance will ensure schools are committed to honoring the provision.
- Making public the individual administrator in charge of enforcing the provision at each institution.
  - This ensures that there is accountability within institutions and that students can contact someone to ask about voter registration.

We look forward to continuing to work with your offices and the HELP Committee as the Higher Education Act reauthorization process moves forward.

Sincerely,

American Organization of University Women (AAUW)  
 Andrew Goodman Foundation  
 Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)  
 Association of Big Ten Students  
 Association of Young Americans  
 CALPIRG Students  
 Campus Vote Project  
 Center for Civic Justice at Stony Brook University  
 Common Cause  
 ConnPIRG Students  
 Demos  
 Equality Pennsylvania  
 Fair Elections Legal Network  
 Generation Citizen  
 Georgia Shift  
 Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University  
 League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
 Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG)  
 National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)  
 National Campus Leadership Council  
 Oregon Student Association  
 Rock the Vote

Student Public Interest Research Groups  
The Associated Students of Michigan State University  
The Democracy Commitment  
The Minnesota Student Association Executive Board  
Turn Up Turnout  
University of Pennsylvania Center for Minority Serving Institutions  
University of Wisconsin - Madison  
Voto Latino  
Walk 2 Vote  
Young Invincibles  
YVoteNY