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## **STATES HAVE POWER TO INCREASE YOUTH VOTER PARTICIPATION**

### **New Study Examines Impact of State Election Law Reforms on Young Voters Election Day Registration Most Effective in Boosting Youth Voter Turnout**

Minneapolis, MN – With a record youth voter turnout in the 2008 election, allowing voters to register at the polls on Election Day was the most effective way to boost youth voter turnout according to a new report analyzing the impact of state election law reforms on young people in the 2008 election.

The report, conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, found young Americans in the nine states with Election Day registration laws (EDR) were 41 percent more likely to vote than those living in states without EDR after controlling for education, gender, age, race/ethnicity and marital status. EDR also may decrease the disparity between young and older voter turnout. Before implementing EDR, Idaho, New Hampshire and Wyoming were amongst the worst states in terms of turnout inequality between young and older Americans. This gap has closed in all three states since EDR was implemented. The full fact sheet can be found at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

Released at the National Association of Secretaries of State summer meeting, CIRCLE Senior Researcher Emily Kirby said the results of the study prove states can do more to increase youth voter participation. "Young voters came out in record numbers in the 2008 election with 51 percent going to the polls, but the turnout ranged widely across states," said Kirby. "Seven of the top ten states had the most ambitious voter turnout measures. It is crucial that states use this information to see which methods work best and tailor the legislation to the needs and characteristics of their younger constituents."

While EDR showed the most results, the study also concluded keeping polls open for more than 12 hours on Election Day increased the youth voting rate by seven percentage points among full-time working youth and five percent points among part-time working youth. Part-time students also benefited from extended voting hours, also receiving a five percentage points boost.

The study also found offering no-excuse absentee voting proved to be effective. In the 2008 election, 14 % of American youth voted by mail. In the states where No-Excuse Absentee Voting was an option, 23% of young people who voted did so via absentee

ballot. Results also showed states requiring all registered citizens to be mailed information on polling locations produced higher youth turnout rates than states that did not require such action.

The report also produced a couple unexpected results. The 30 states that required private firms to provide time-off or vacation time to employees to vote saw no significant link to an increase in youth turnout. In addition young voters in 32 states that permitted no-excuse pre-Election Day in-person voting were not more likely to vote than others. However, 24 percent of 18- to 29-year-old voters from the states that allowed in-person early voting voted early and in person.

“The study serves as a guidebook for what works and what does not,” said Kirby. “It’s time for our state legislators to take action and implement laws that allow citizens from every stage of life to participate in our government to the fullest possible extent.”

***CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)*** conducts and promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. A part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, CIRCLE has received funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.

***The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service***, a national leader in civic engagement, prepares students from all fields of Tufts University to become engaged public citizens and community leaders.

***Tufts University***, located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville, and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the University’s schools is widely encouraged.

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