



**LEGISLATION AND
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March 22, 2019

Honorable Thomas J. Umberg
Chair, Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 3076
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 57 (BATES) as amended February 25, 2019 – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Umberg:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **regrets to inform you that we respectfully oppose SB 57**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before the Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee on April 2, 2019.

Existing law establishes the California New Motor Voter Program. As enacted in 2015 (AB 1461, Chapter 729, Statutes of 2015), the program is intended to improve voter registration by making registration easier when citizens get or renew a driver's license, thereby increasing opportunities for eligible citizens to participate in democracy by voting. Under the program, eligible applicants completing a driver license, identification card, or change of address transaction online, by mail or in person at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) are automatically registered to vote by the Secretary of State, unless they choose to opt out of the automatic voter registration.

DRC recognizes that the launch of the Motor Voter program has been anything but smooth, understands that implementation issues are being worked out, and is hopeful that remaining issues will be resolved.

This bill would change a fundamental feature of the Motor Voter program by requiring a person to affirmatively agree to become registered to vote during a transaction with the DMV—i.e., to opt in—rather than having the individual automatically registered by the Secretary of State unless they choose to opt out. In creating an additional, opt-in, step in the registration process the foreseeable and inevitable result of this bill would be a reduction in the number of new registered voters through the program. As such, rather than addressing the process issues that arose, particularly in the initial stages of implementation of the Motor Voter program, this bill would undermine the fundamental purpose and intent of the program.

Properly implemented, the California New Motor Voter Program removes one of the many barriers encountered by many people with disabilities in exercising their right to vote. Under the program, individuals with manual dexterity disabilities, for example, do not have to fill out a driver's license or identification card application and a separate voter registration card. DRC urges that any modifications to the Motor Voter Program be intended to enhance, rather than undercut, its effectiveness.

For these reasons, DRC opposes this bill. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position or if I can provide any further information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis Child". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Curtis" and last name "Child" clearly distinguishable.

Curtis Child
Legislative Director
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Elections and Constitutional
Amendments Committee
Darren Chesin, Chief Consultant, Senate Elections and Constitutional
Amendments Committee
Honorable Patricia Bates, California State Senate
Sarah Couch, Legislative Director, Office of Senator Bates