Priority Summaries

Each summary is to be placed above the Democracy Map of each priority page.

**Priority #1: Election Day Registration (EDR)**

Currently, MA voters must register twenty days before an election in order to participate. Removing this barrier, and allowing eligible voters to register up to, and on, election day would allow more Massachusetts voters to make their voices heard – a critical aspect of a healthy democracy. Currently, twenty-two states allow EDR in some form. In those states, voter [turnout has increased considerably](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/election-day-registration-and-the-limits-of-litigation). Demos, a non-partisan public policy organization [found in a 2009 survey](https://www.demos.org/research/what-same-day-registration-where-it-available) that implementing EDR created “minimal” costs, as legislators merely reallocated existing resources, and actually reduced the need for provisional ballots – saving the time and expense of processing those ballots. Voters registering on election day would still be required to provide proof of identity and proof of residence, making the process of registration no different from that of the current process.

**Priority #2: Early Voting & Vote-By-Mail**

Representative democracy is stronger when more constituents participate in elections, and turnout is highest when participation is made easy. Massachusetts participation rates in the most recent elections indicate it was a success – which stems largely from the emergency acts smartly passed by the Legislature in response to COVID-19 (see [St.2020 c.115](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2020/Chapter115) and [St.2020 c.255](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2020/Chapter255)). Among the temporary changes made to our election systems was a relaxing of vote-by-mail (absentee ballot) restrictions, allowing individuals from across the state to vote early and by absentee ballot. [42% of registered voters in the Commonwealth took advantage of the relatively easy means to vote](https://www.bostonherald.com/2020/11/20/mail-in-ballots-made-up-42-of-massachusetts-votes-cast-in-november-election/) and would likely do so again if given the opportunity. Massachusetts should retain these improved voting mechanisms.

**Priority #3: Publicly Financed Campaigns**

In 1998, the voters of Massachusetts [overwhelmingly](https://ballotpedia.org/Massachusetts_Campaign_Finance_Reform_Initiative%2C_Question_2_%281998%29) approved a ballot measure to allow candidates who agreed to spending and donation limits access to public funds. But in 2003, the legislature [repealed the fair elections law](https://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/21/us/massachusetts-legislature-repeals-clean-elections-law.html) as a last-minute amendment to the state budget. Public funding provisions exist in the Commonwealth for candidates for statewide office, but candidates for state legislature seats have no such support. The data on publicly financed elections is [clear](https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/FreshStart_PublicFinancingCT_0.pdf). When Connecticut implemented publicly financed elections, legislators were able to spend less time fundraising and spend more time with constituents. More citizens became donors and educated themselves about policy issues. The influence of lobbyists declined, and more bipartisan, publicly supported bills were passed. The people of Massachusetts deserve responsive representation in the state legislature, and adopting public financing would help achieve that goal.