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OPEN FORUM | Proposition 52

Election-day registration a win for California

By Hubert H. "Buck" Humphrey

You might think my family would have mixed feelings about election-day voter registration. My late grandfather, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, won his last term in the U.S. Senate in an election in which 23 percent of the voters registered directly at their polling place. On the other hand, my father, Hubert "Skip" Humphrey III, lost a close three-way race for Minnesota governor in 1998 — a loss that some analysts pin on Jesse Ventura's ability to mobilize unregistered voters in the last few days of the campaign.

But this is one issue where three generations of Humphreys have always been of the same mind. We might win an election. We might lose an election. But our democracy always comes out on top when barriers to voting are eliminated.

California voters have the chance to bring election-day voter registration to California on Nov. 5. They can vote yes on Proposition 52 with confi-

dence because of the election reform's long history of success in six states.

In Minnesota, voters have been allowed to register and vote on the same day since 1974. Today, nearly 70 percent of new registrations take place at the polls. And there has been no evi-

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Five other states that allow election-day voter registration have had the same experience: Voter turnout goes up, with no increase in voter fraud.

In fact, in Minnesota, same-day registration is not even an issue anymore — unless someone criticizes it. This fall, I'm running against a Republican incumbent for the position of secretary of state. My opponent was quoted in the Wall Street

Journal as having

doubts about election-day voter registration. Her statements caused an outrage back home and she quickly reaffirmed her support for an election reform that Minnesotans now take for granted.

Minnesota is proud to be the first state in the nation to implement election-day voter registration. Not coincidentally, we also have one of the highest voter turnout rates in the United States. A recent study by professors from MIT and CalTech estimates that same-day registration increased turnout in our state by 3 to 6 percent. In California, the experts say, turnout could increase by as much as 9 percent. That's because of the state's high percentage of young and highly mobile citizens — two groups that have the hardest time navigating a two-step registration process.

California has 2 million voters to gain and nothing to lose. Vote yes on Proposition 52.

Buck Humphrey is running for secretary of state in Minnesota.



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