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Date: March 12, 2015

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New Report Ranks Voter Turnout in All 50 States

Large Turnout Advantage in States with Election Day Registration and Political Competition

Boston, March 12, 2015 – As the nation commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Nonprofit VOTE is pleased to release its biennial voter turnout report, *America Goes to the Polls 2014*, based on final data certified by state election offices. The report ranks voter turnout in all 50 states to look at major factors underlying voter participation in this historically low-turnout election.

While just 36.6% of eligible citizens voted, the lowest in a midterm since World War II, turnout varied widely across states by as much as 30 percentage points. **Maine led the nation with 58.5% turnout among eligible voters**, follow by Wisconsin at 56.8%, and Colorado at 54.5%. Nevada, Tennessee, New York, Texas and Indiana made up the bottom five all with less than 30% of their eligible voters participating.

“Clearly there’s much work to do to foster a healthy democracy when well below half the electorate votes in a national election,” states Brian Miller, executive director of Nonprofit VOTE. “The good news is that higher turnout states show us how we can increase voter turnout across the nation.”

The states with Election Day Registration (EDR) had the highest voter participation rates averaging 48%, 12 points higher than the turnout in states without it. EDR allows voters to correct a registration problem when they vote. Seven of the top 10 turnout states have EDR. None of the bottom 10 turnout states have EDR.

Four states - Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois and the District of Columbia - used it for the first time in a midterm election bringing the number of EDR states to 13. As of February 2015, Election Day Registration legislation had been proposed in 14 additional states, including Alaska, Georgia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah and Vermont.

“While opponents of the legislation have argued that Election Day Registration places undue burdens on state election officials, the technologies we have today make it far easier than in the past,” states George Pillsbury, founder of Nonprofit VOTE, “The success of EDR states over 40

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years shows it works and no voter need be turned away because of a problem with their registration.”

Competition was a major driver bringing voters to the polls. Voter turnout averaged 11 points or 33% higher in the 22 states with competitive statewide races for U.S. Senate or Governor compared to states without one. Nine of the top ten turnout states had a competitive statewide contest while 19 of the bottom 20 had none. Meanwhile competition in House races plummeted with only 39 of 435 seats ranked close or a toss-up by the Cook Political Report compared to 100 in 2010 and 57 in 2012.

The report recommends additional policy changes that could improve the registration process and foster greater voter participation. These include pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds, implementing best practices in early voting, allowing ex-offenders to regain their voting rights and using nonpartisan redistricting commissions to oversee decennial redistricting – similar to recommendations made by the Presidential Commission on Election Administration and the Bipartisan Policy Center.

The report’s ranking is based on the certified counts of total votes cast as a percentage of their state’s voting eligible population. **The *America Goes to the Polls 2014* report is available at <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/americagoestothepolls2014>**

Nonprofit VOTE partners with America’s nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote. Nonprofit VOTE is the largest source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.

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