

Offered by Councilors Josh Zakim and Kim Janey
Flynn, O'Malley, Edwards, Baker, Ciommo, Essaibi-George, Flaherty, McCarthy, Wu and Campbell



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND EIGHTEEN

HOME RULE PETITION
EARLY VOTING FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

WHEREAS, The ability for all citizens to participate in elections is a fundamental civil right and a central principle of our democracy, where they can make their voices heard; and,

WHEREAS, Government at all levels should take proactive steps to ensure that all eligible citizens are able to exercise their right to vote; and,

WHEREAS, Early voting can help ease access to the ballot for Boston voters, shorten lines at polling locations, and improve the voting experience overall; and,

WHEREAS, Voter turnout was less than 28% during the 2017 Boston Municipal election, and since voter participation is typically low for municipal elections, the increased awareness brought on by providing early voting dates could be especially helpful in improving voter turnout; and

WHEREAS, Extending the available days and times for people to cast their ballots will make it easier for Bostonians of all backgrounds to participate in our municipal elections;

NOW THEREFORE,

ORDERED:

That a petition to the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, accompanied by a bill for a special law related to the City of Boston to be filed with a copy of this order be, and hereby is, approved under Clause One (1) of Section Eight (8) of Article Two (2), as amended, of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to the end that legislation be adopted precisely as follows, except for clerical or editorial changes of form only:

PETITION FOR A SPECIAL LAW RE: AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF BOSTON TO OFFER EARLY VOTING IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

SECTION 1.

Beginning in the year 2019, notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the City of Boston's Board of Election Commissioners shall offer early voting for municipal elections.

The City of Boston's Board of Election Commissioners shall allow any qualified voter, as defined in section 1 of chapter 51 of the General Laws, to cast a ballot for any biennial municipal election during the early voting period.

The City of Boston's Board of Election Commissioners shall promulgate regulations to implement this act consistent with section 25B of chapter 54 of the General Laws. Such regulations shall include, but shall not be limited to, a process for establishing early voting locations, dates, staffing, and a process for applying for, receiving, separating, compiling, recording, and securing early voter ballots. Each early voting site shall be accessible to persons with disabilities.

SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take full effect upon its passage.

Filed in Council: October 22, 2018