

**RESPONSE TO MAY 11 REPORT  
OF LATINO POLICY AND POLITICS INITIATIVE**

The Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (LPPI) released [a report](#) on automatic voter registration (AVR) on May 11, 2020.

In April of 2019, the Brennan Center released [a report](#) on the effect of AVR on registration counts. By comparing the number of registrations occurring each week before and after the policy went into effect in each census tract in each state with the policy, the Brennan Center report demonstrates that AVR significantly boosted the number of individuals being registered to vote. The new LPPI paper comes to the same conclusion: AVR works.

The LPPI report examined how AVR systems have been implemented in four states: Georgia, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Vermont, finding evidence that AVR increased the registration rate in each of the states. The LPPI report concludes that states need to make more information about the program available before and after implementation and without that information, researchers and advocates cannot know how successful the policy really is.

While we agree wholeheartedly that states should make more information about the voters registered through AVR available, even at an aggregate level, we disagree that available data makes estimating the effect of the policy impossible. LPPI argues that, in order to estimate the effect of the policy, “a researcher needs access to the state list of registered voters (the voter file) with indicators for the method by which the voter was registered” (page 20). Although such an indicator would be helpful for understanding precisely which voters were registered via AVR, there are other ways of estimating the effect of a policy. Many peer-reviewed papers estimate the effect of policy changes on *overall* voter registration and turnout without directly observing which *individuals* were directly impacted by the policy.<sup>1</sup>

By comparing the number of weekly transactions before and after the policy change – and controlling for other factors, like population growth or partisanship that might have influenced voter registration – the 2019 Brennan Center report successfully estimated the effect of the policy change. Although the Brennan Center report did not claim to identify which individuals would or would not have been registered in the absence of AVR, we nonetheless demonstrated that AVR increased aggregate registrations in each state in which it was implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Ansolabehere, Stephen, and David M. Konisky. “The Introduction of Voter Registration and Its Effect on Turnout.” *Political Analysis* 14, no. 1 (ed 2006): 83–100. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpi034>; Brown, Robert D., and Justin Wedeking. “People Who Have Their Tickets But Do Not Use Them: ‘Motor Voter,’ Registration, and Turnout Revisited.” *American Politics Research* 34, no. 4 (July 1, 2006): 479–504. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X05281122>; Nickerson, David W. “Do Voter Registration Drives Increase Participation? For Whom and When?” *The Journal of Politics* 77, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 88–101. <https://doi.org/10.1086/678391>; Rugeley, Cynthia, and Robert A. Jackson. “Getting on the Rolls: Analyzing the Effects of Lowered Barriers on Voter Registration.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 56–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/153244000900900103>.