Voter Registration for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century
Modernizing voter registration
Report on recent reforms

- Studied automated agency registration and online registration
- Detailed interviews with 29 state and local officials in 15 states
- Detailed analysis of all available documentary evidence and registration data from past 10 years
How automated voter registration works

**Step 1:**
DMV customers say they wish to register to vote and affirm their eligibility. Their information is entered into the DMV database system.

**Step 2:**
The state voter registration database system collects voter registration data from the DMV’s system overnight and presents them to local election officials for review.

**Step 3:**
Local election officials review the new registrations.

**Step 4:**
Valid registrations are accepted and posted to the voter rolls.
States with automated registration

- 7 states fully automated at DMVs
- 10 states partially automated at DMVs
Distinguishing automated systems

- Data collection at DMV or voter registration agency
## Distinguishing automated systems

### Collecting Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Has the DMV Eliminated Separate Forms for Voter Registration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>Applicants Fill Out a Single Form for the DMV and Voter Registration and Sign Separate Signature Cards for Voter Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewers Enter DMV and Voter Registration Data into Their Computers and Print Pre-Populated Voter Registration Forms for Applicants to Sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>Applicants Fill Out a Single Form for the DMV and Voter Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewers Enter DMV and Voter Registration Data into Their Computers; No Use of Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants Use a Self-Service Computer Program to Enter DMV and Voter Registration Data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distinguishing automated systems

• Data transfer
Distinguishing automated systems

When the DMV Electronically Transfers Voter Registration Data to Election Officials,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Does the DMV Include All Data Elements?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Does the DMV Do So in a Format That Uploads Immediately into Registration Databases?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas*</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Texas is currently in the process of adopting an automated system. A minority of counties still use paper forms, but officials expect that these will have transitioned to a paperless system by the end of May 2010.
Eleven states currently or will soon offer online voter registration.
Automated and online registration

States with at least some automated data transfer from DMVs and/or online voter registration
Automated, online, and permanent registration

- Automated and online
- Permanent registration
- Modernized in more ways than one

Map showing the status of registration in different states across the United States.
Automated, online, permanent, and Election Day registration

- Automated and online
- Permanent registration
- Election Day registration
- Modernized in more ways than one

[Map showing states with different registration options]
Growing Adoption of Paperless Registration

1990s

- AR, CA, DE, KY, MI, PA, SC & WA begin transmitting some data from DMV offices to election officials.

2002

- AZ launches online registration.
- PA & RI introduce fully automated voter registration at the DMV.
- AZ implements partial automation at the DMV.

2005

- MI DMV offices begin sharing digitized signatures with election officials.

2006

- NC & SD adopt partial DMV automation.
- FL adopts full DMV automation.
- DE develops online registration.

2007

- WA & KS introduce full automation at the DMV.
- WA launches online registration.

2008

- DE & AZ develop full DMV automation.
- KS launches online registration.

2009

- AR & TX develop full DMV automation.
- CO, IN, LA, OR & UT introduce online registration.
- CA, NC & NV developing online registration.
- Paperless registration reforms considered in OH, CO, WI, and elsewhere.

2010
States adopting paperless registration in past 2 years
Infrastructure in place in every state

- Statewide voter registration databases
- Most agency lists are now in computerized databases
- Selective Service registration
Benefits of voter registration modernization

- Cost effective
- Makes voter rolls more accurate
- Increases registration rates
Modernizing is cost effective
Current system: big drain on county budgets

Sources: Los Angeles County, CA

Sources: Franklin County, OH

Cost effective
## Last minute registration costs in Ohio in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Additional Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen County (pop. 100,000)</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County (pop. 1.1 million)</td>
<td>$337,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga County (pop. 1.3 million)</td>
<td>$1.5 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These costs quickly add up

- Oregon’s registration system
  - Cost nearly $9 million in 2008
  - Average of $8.43 per registration transaction
  - Average of $4.11 per active registration record

- Extrapolation: $700 million nationally in 2008 for 174 million active records
# Modernization: Inexpensive to implement

## Automated Registration
- South Dakota: $60,000 for partial automation
- Rhode Island: $70,000 at the DMV

## Online Registration
- Oregon: $200,000

## Both Automated & Online
- Kansas: No separate appropriations
- Arizona: $130,000
- Washington: $279,000

### Cost effective
**Significant annual savings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Savings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maricopa County, Arizona</td>
<td>Over $450,000 in 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Over $200,000 in 2009, beyond prior savings from partial automation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>$126,000 in 2008 in the Secretary of State’s office; more in the counties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case study: Maricopa County, Arizona

Over $450,000 in savings in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost to manually process paper registration form:</td>
<td>$ 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to manually process an electronic registration:</td>
<td>$ 0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to process electronic registration with partially automated review:</td>
<td>$ 0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Time for manual data-entry saved by paperless registration: **20,000 hours** (10 FTEs)
Breakdown of savings in Maricopa County

Savings Breakdown for Maricopa County, Arizona, in 2008

- Lowering Printing Costs
  - 13%
  - $60,000

- Automating Routine Review
  - 30%
  - $139,000

- Eliminating One Position for Scanning Paper Signatures
  - 8%
  - $36,000

- Eliminating Data Entry and Reducing Errors
  - 49%
  - $230,000

Cost effective
Modernizing makes rolls more accurate

Makes rolls more accurate
Challenge: Reliance on paper

- Handwriting
- Data entry
- Typos
- Mail problems
- Duplicates

Makes rolls more accurate
Challenge: Keeping rolls up to date

- 12% of voting-age citizens (almost 20 million) moved in 2008
- 23% of voting-age citizens below poverty line moved in 2008
- Numbers higher in jurisdictions with high rates of foreclosures
  - E.g., in Clark County, Nevada, 20% of voting-age population moved in 2009; 5,000 in one week of April alone

Makes rolls more accurate
Challenge: last minute registrations

Source: Florida

Makes rolls more accurate
Reduced errors in Maricopa County

Disproportionate Error Rates: Paper Registrations in Maricopa County, Arizona, August 2009

- As a proportion of all registrations received
- As a proportion of defective registrations on file

Makes rolls more accurate
Reduced errors

Officials across the country confirm that automation increases accuracy

- Arizona
- Kansas
- Michigan
- North Carolina
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Washington
Modernizing increases registration rates
Challenge: Low voter registration rates

Registration Rate

- Argentina: 99%
- Sweden: 98%
- Mexico: 95%
- Great Britain: 95%
- Peru: 95%
- Belgium: 94%
- Germany: 93%
- Australia: 93%
- Canada: 93%
- Australia: 92%
- France: 91%
- Burundi: 91%
- United States: 71%

Increases registration rates
DMV registration rates before and after automation

- **Arizona**
  - 1999-2000: 4.00%
  - 2007-2008: 12.00%

- **North Carolina**
  - 2003-2004: 6.00%
  - 2005-2006: 9.00%
  - 2007-2008: 12.00%

Increases in registration rates.
DMV registration rates before and after automation

**South Dakota**

- 2003-2004
- 2005-2006
- 2007-2008

**Rhode Island**

- 2005
- 2006
DMV registration rates before and after automation

**Washington**

- 2007: 2.00%
- 2008: 4.00%
- 2009: 5.00%

**Kansas**

- 2007: 2.00%
- 2009: 6.00%
User support

Growing Use of Paperless Registration in Arizona

As a Percentage of All Registrations

Year

2003 2004 2005* 2006 2007 2008 2009

Online Registration
Automated Motor Vehicle Registration
Online + Automated Registration

* Arizona introduced automated voter registration in October 2005.
Support for modernizing the system

“There is a surprising amount of agreement on both sides of the aisle about how to modernize the registration system. . . Bringing our voter registration system into the 21st century must be the priority for improving the election process.”

“One key area where improvements are necessary, and possible, is the modernization of our voter registration system.”
— Robin Carnahan (MO) and Trey Grayson (KY) (Roll Call, 03/10/2009)

“Voter registration modernization would "remove the single biggest barrier to voting in the United States, our antiquated registration system."
— Attorney General Eric Holder (Brennan Legacy Awards Dinner, 11/17/2009)
Prominent supporters bridge party lines

- Robert Bauer (D)
- Ken Blackwell (R)
- Michael Bloomberg (R)
- Robin Carnahan (D)
- Doug Chapin
- Pedro Cortes (D)
- Matt Damschroder (R)
- John Danforth (R)
- Thomas Daschle (D)
- Marc Elias (D)
- Harold Ford Jr. (D)
- Trey Grayson (R)
- Dean Logan (D)
- Thomas Mann
- Susan Molinari (R)
- Ralph Munro (R)
- Norman Ornstein
- Trevor Potter (R)
- John Tanner
Voter Registration for the 21st Century

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