

BACKGROUND

All eligible citizens must register in order to vote. In order to register, an individual must meet three basic requirements: 1) Be at least 18 years of age at the time of the next election, (2) Be a U.S. citizen, and (3) Be a resident of the jurisdiction where the individual is registering. Under federal law, every state must allow residents to register to vote at least 30 days before Election Day, though many states extend the deadline to register. Additionally, in some states, individuals who have been convicted of a felony or have been found by a court to be incompetent may be ineligible to vote. There are many ways to register to vote. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (“the Motor Voter Act”) offers individuals the opportunity to register to vote when they apply for or renew a driver’s license, and requires states to offer voter registration at all offices that provide public assistance and state-funded programs to persons with disabilities. A voter may also use the federal mail-in form, which every state must accept and use and includes instructions for where to send it in each state.

CHALLENGES TO VOTER REGISTRATION

Some states have made it more difficult for people to register to vote. They have imposed restrictions on voter registration drives, undertaken aggressive “purge” campaigns to remove voters from the voter rolls, and added requirements for additional proof of citizenship. Problems with the voter registration system include inadequate resources, clerical errors, and failures to notify registrants of problems with their registration forms.

NEED TO MODERNIZE VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM

Our voter registration system currently prevents more than a third of eligible Americans from voting. It is imperative that the system is modernized to allow for automatic registration, online registration, portable registration, pre-registration, and same day registration.

- Automatic registration would allow states to automatically or affirmatively register eligible citizens to vote using available databases maintained by motor vehicle authorities and other state agencies, as well as federal databases such as the Selective Service
- Online registration would allow an additional and convenient method of voter registration
- Portable registration would allow registration to move with the voter when they move across the city or across the country
- Pre-registration would allow citizens under the age of 18 to be put on conditional voter rolls and then have their records automatically activated when they turn 18
- Same day registration would allow any eligible American to register to vote or update their registration at the polling place on Election Day.

STATES WITH COMPONENTS OF MVR OR CURRENTLY CONSIDERING PROPOSALS

- 15 States allow Online Voter Registration: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut*, Hawaii*, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington (*Indicates law passed but not implemented)
- States considering online voter registration in 2013: Arkansas, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico*, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia (passed), and West Virginia (*Permits voter to update existing records electronically)
- 22 States have fully or partially automated the voter registration process at DMVs: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington
- 12 states and the District of Columbia have either Election Day or Same Day Registration: California, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana*, New Hampshire, North Carolina*, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Wyoming (*States with legislation repealing same day registration)
- The state of Oregon is considering a voter modernization bill and North Dakota does not have voter registration. Milwaukee voters overwhelming supported an advisory referendum to keep same day registration by 73%-27%