VOTER REGISTRATION MODERNIZATION IN OHIO

A Sophisticated System for More Accurate Voter Rolls, Prevention of Voter Fraud, and Greater Efficiency of Our Local Boards of Elections

Every day, Ohioans are abandoning their voter registrations. They may move out of state, register a second time at a new address, pass away, or simply decide not to vote. However, the result is the same – thousands of abandoned registrations that clog up the voter rolls and leave them more vulnerable to voter fraud.

To prevent election fraud, state and federal law require Ohio to maintain accurate voter lists. The state and federal laws that require voter list maintenance were written to combat fraud and enhance election system efficiencies. Keeping an accurate registered voter list has been a responsibility that has been carried out by Republican and Democratic Secretaries of State for decades. However, it's clearer than ever that Ohio has relied upon an unsophisticated voter registration system that has become less of a tool for registering and updating voter information, and more of a political talking point.

The status quo is antiquated and makes government far less efficient. The process to keep accurate voter rolls relies upon out-of-date mechanisms that allow for inactive registrations to remain on the books for years. Additionally, local boards of elections are forced to spend a significant amount of time attempting to manage this archaic system. There must be a better way.

Ohio must embrace a modernized system that will make our voter rolls more accurate. Instead of relying on voters to remember to update their information at their local board of elections or on the Secretary of State website, let's allow state government to automate it. A Voter Verification and Registration (VVR) system that allows Ohioans to seamlessly update their registration information when they interact with state government will significantly improve the accuracy of Ohio's voter rolls.

> **EXAMPLE:** Presently, eligible voters are asked to complete a paper registration form when they visit their local BMV – oftentimes leading to improperly filled out forms. With Voter Verification and Registration (VVR), your information could be filled in for you and presented on a screen — making it easy to choose to register to vote or update your registration.

Office of the Ohio Secretary of State

Decreasing the number of registrations impacted by voter list maintenance. A VVR system that incorporates activity at the BMV will have a significant impact on two particular populations: individuals who may have registered at multiple addresses and infrequent voters. Both will likely have activity at the BMV over the course of the six-year period that is considered for voter activity in the list maintenance process. For example, currently if someone moves and registers in a new county without cancelling their registration in their former county, that old registration will receive a confirmation notice after two years, a last-chance notice after nearly six years, and eventual cancellation. Under VVR, BMV activity will allow that registration address to be updated and the old one cancelled without becoming a part of the voter list maintenance process.

Ensuring only citizens can vote. By law, only U.S. citizens can vote in our elections. Current procedures dictate an annual review of the voter rolls to determine the citizenship of Ohioans registered to vote. We can build upon that system. VVR can provide a citizenship check done in a better, more effective way – and on the front end, before any vote can be cast.

While registrations are not expected to significantly increase, the confidence of Ohio voters in their state government will. According to data provided by the U.S. Census and Ohio's own voter registration database, over 90 percent of Ohioans are already registered to vote. And yet, more than 130,000 people were required to vote provisionally in the 2016 general election. The high number of Ohioans already registered is a strong indicator that VVR won't necessarily increase the number of registered voters. However, it will significantly improve voter roll accuracy which will decrease the number of voters required to cast their ballot provisionally. That is how we increase the increase the confidence of Ohio voters in the ability of their state and local governments to administer elections effectively and properly.

The Outcome of Implementing VVR:

- More accurate voter lists

- Less risk of voter fraud

- A more confident voting populace

- Better citizenship checks

- More efficient local boards of elections

VVR: BY THE NUMBERS

0.1%: The percentage of Ohioans who re-registered to vote out of 265,000 mailings to abandoned registrations courtesy Secretary LaRose's Fresh Start initiative.

(SOURCE: Ohio Secretary of State)

8,640,000: The number of Ohioans legally allowed to register to vote in November 2018

(SOURCE: U.S. Census)

8,070,917: The number of registered voters in November 2018

(SOURCE: Ohio Secretary of State)

93.4%: The percentage of eligible Ohioans registered to vote in November 2018

(SOURCE: U.S. Census and Ohio Secretary of State)

WHAT VVR IS NOT

"Mr. LaRose refers to this as an 'automated' system rather than an 'automatic' system, in which someone is automatically registered upon turning 18 without having lifted a finger and would be informed only after the fact.

-Jim Provance, Toledo Blade, April 24, 2019