

To: Senate Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs

Date: December 18, 2013

From: Paul Malischke, malischke@yahoo.com

Subject: Electronic, Instant Check, Voter Registration - part of AB-225 as passed by the Assembly

During a busy election season, our municipal and county clerks complete a marathon of reading hand-written registration forms, and manually typing them into the SVRS. It is a method prone to errors and inefficiencies. Some forms are not complete and some are barely legible. This means extra follow-up work for the clerks. Also, about 10 to 15% of the registrations fail the HAVA check – checking name, date of birth, and driver license or social security number. When these checks fail, there is follow-up required on the part of the clerk and voter to determine why it failed. The peak volume of applications occurs at the same time a clerk is getting all the other items ready for the upcoming election.

Fourteen states have established a better way to register voters. They have established an electronic method of registering voters that is secure, more accurate, saves money, and ensures the timely processing of forms. There are five additional states that have recently passed legislation to implement such a system, and expect to have their system working by next year. Although there are some differences among the states' systems, the major specifications for these systems are quite similar from state to state, providing a proven formula for a successful system. AB-225 contains the specifications and restrictions that are used successfully in these other states.

Some key points in AB-225 as passed by the Assembly:

- As soon as the data is entered, AB-225 calls for an instant check against the database from the Division of Motor Vehicles. It checks name, date of birth, and driver license or DOT ID card number.
- If they do not match, the voter application does not go forward.
- The system would close 20 days before the election, the same time that open registration ends now.
- A verification postcard would be sent to the voter.

An additional security measure that you might consider adding to the bill would be to require the applicant to include the last four digits of their social security number in addition to the driver license number, as several of the other states do.

The clerk saves time and money because they do not have to type the data in. Typographical errors are reduced. The HAVA check has already been successfully completed, even before the application gets to the clerk.

Once legislators learn the advantages of electronic registration and how the restrictions maintain accuracy, it has often passed these other states with broad support.

For instance, in South Carolina, Act 265 passed both houses unanimously in 2012, and was signed by Republican Governor Nikki Haley. In Colorado, it passed the House 60 to 4, passed the Colorado Senate unanimously, and has been administered by two Secretaries of State, first a Democrat, and now a Republican.

The strength of the system is in the restrictions that only those with a driver license or DOT ID card can register electronically, and that it requires instant matching. But this is also its weakness, as many eligible voters do not have this identification. Therefore, we must also maintain or improve opportunities to use paper forms. For instance, SB-198 would improve the Special Registration Deputy program by making it more efficient and improving accountability. I hope this committee will consider having a hearing on that bill.

Today we can go online to apply for Social Security, register for organ donation, or get a fishing license online. Our DOT lists 18 functions that customers can do online regarding their driver license. We are encouraged to file income tax forms electronically, because it can be done more accurately, faster, and it is less expensive to process. These are the same benefits we can gain by instituting electronic, instant-check, voter registration.

Resources

States with working systems: Arizona, California, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, Washington

States that have passed legislation and are developing systems: Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, West Virginia

Detailed information, including links to other states' legislation, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/OLVRWI>

The National Conference of State Legislatures has a summary of the current status of electronic registration:

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx>