

To: Government Accountability Board
Date: March 22, 2011
From: Paul Malischke

Subject: Enhanced mail-in registration, Item J, page 60

Your staff is about to launch a new registration module, but plans to needlessly exclude voters who do not have a driver's license (DL) or identification card from the Department of Transportation.

Please consider the following motion:

Motion: The new enhanced mail-in registration system shall be launched when it is configured to include all eligible applicants in a nondiscriminatory manner, regardless of whether they have a DL or DOT identification card.

This enhanced mail-in registration is a series of web pages that help a voter to fill out a registration. When the voter is done, they print, sign and mail the form. It is going to help eliminate typographical errors, and eliminate incomplete forms. It is a big step towards modernizing our voter registration system.

Our current system leads to typographical errors, resulting in HAVA check failures, and verification postcards that bounce back to the clerks. This results in extra hoops that the voter has to jump through, often through no fault of their own. The new module will be a great advantage to voters.

The major flaw is that it would needlessly exclude those who don't have a DL. Your staff has three reasons for excluding those without a driver's license. None of the reasons hold up under scrutiny.

1) Staff's first reason is that they do not want to establish a new registration method and then take it away. They are assuming that in the future there will be legislation that will allow paperless online registration, and because of inherent characteristics, it will be limited to those with a DL. Your staff assumes this would replace the module now ready to be launched. Instead, the future module should work side-by-side with the enhanced mail-in registration module. All voters could come to the same initial web page, and then be directed properly, either to the module for those with a DL, or to the module for those without.

2) Staff's second reason is that some people with a DL make a mistake on the existing paper form, and instead of entering their DL number, they use their social security number. But web pages can be used effectively to emphasize to applicants that if they have a DL, they must use that number.

Your staff is suggesting that because some voters with a DL are making a mistake, the voters without a DL should be penalized. They would be penalized by being excluded from this new modern method of registering. That is illogical and unfair!

3) Staff's third reason is that the module is ready for launch in May, and any changes will delay the launch. Why hurry? We don't have a statewide election coming up until next year. We might have some recall elections, which will be under intense scrutiny. For this reason alone, it may be prudent to delay the launch until September.

Delaware and Washington DC have successful similar systems. Both of these allow their use by any eligible voter, regardless of whether they have a DL.