



Online Voter Registration Would Help Clerks, Help Voters, and Save \$\$

The Governor's budget proposes that the Division of Motor Vehicles become more efficient by increasing their online services. Another important online capability should be added to the budget. Voters should be able to register or change their address online. There would be a direct immediate financial payback for municipalities by saving the cost of manual data entry from a huge stack of paper forms.

Benefits for Voters

Voters would benefit from a more timely, accessible and reliable way to register, with immediate confirmation that the registration was accepted. This eliminates worries about being told at the polls, "You are not on the list"—a frequent consequence of paper forms that are entered late, or with errors.

Follow the successful model of other states

Arizona and Washington have successfully instituted online voter registration by partially integrating it with the driver's license system. Arizona's system has been in place since 2002, and in 2008, 60% of those who registered used the online system. Washington's system has been in effect for a year, and is highly acclaimed by their Secretary of State. California has passed enabling legislation to have an online system. In order to maintain the integrity of the voter list, there are these limitations:

- Only those with a driver's license or state identification card can use the online system.
- Online registration closes when open registration closes. In Wisconsin this is 20 days before the election.

HAVA checks

In 2008, Wisconsin had a well-publicized battle on how to handle "HAVA checks", the comparison of voter registrations to the driver's license database. In contrast, states that have online registration handle this automatically as part of the process. No extra effort is needed by the voter or the election administrator for the matching process, and controversy is minimized.

Benefits for election administrators

The data submitted online is more complete and accurate than on paper forms. Online registration significantly reduces the costly and heavy workload of entering data from paper forms, most of which are received when other election tasks are mounting. Last fall, clerks struggled to process forms in time to get voters on the poll list. If the bulk of registrations are handled automatically, our election administrators will be able to deal promptly with the paper forms from other voters.

Next Step

In order for Wisconsin to put an online system into place by next year, the Wisconsin budget should include this. The Government Accountability Board and the Department of Transportation should work together on implementation.

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