



FLORIDA STATE ASSOCIATION OF SUPERVISORS OF ELECTIONS

PO Box 350 | Tallahassee, FL 32302 | Telephone: (850) 599-9120

March 24, 2016

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Florida Department of State
R.A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

With the recent press coverage of the ongoing issue of problems within the Department Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) voter registration system, and in consideration of the public engagement this election cycle, the FSASE feels it is time to take a stance in support of improving the voter registration service offered at the DHSMV as a result of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). The issues that have come to light recently are not new issues, and have in fact been ongoing since the inception of NVRA.

Although the press implies that parties have been "switched" at the DHSMV, it is more a function of the registration software used by the clerks at the Tax Collector's office. Voters who are registering for the first time in Florida are being incorrectly processed as a change of address. This module of the software does not allow for a party selection because the assumption is that the voter's existing party will stay with the record. Because the registrant is not in the Florida Voter Registration System (FVRS), there is no party to transfer with the record, and therefore, the voter defaults to unknown party. Because the Supervisors' of Elections receive no paper trail that can be scanned to a voter's record, there is no immediate evidence in support of, or to disprove, a voter's claims when errors have allegedly been made. Many provisional ballots are issued for this reason. On further research and with examination of the DHSMV transactions through the Driver and Vehicle Information Database (DAVID), the problem almost always manifests in improper processing of the voter information through the wrong transaction.

In 2006, when the DHSMV began the electronic suspension of registrations to FVRS, they started issuing paper receipts to voter registrants. Voters were instructed to retain their receipt and to follow-up with the Supervisor's Office if they didn't receive verification of their registration via a Voter Information Card, but this system has proven to be highly ineffective. In the rare instance the voter has been able to produce a receipt, we have been able to restore the voter registration transaction, but in most cases, voters have not followed-up and are unable to produce the receipt.

In the short term, the software could be altered to disallow any transaction that does not ask for the voter's confirmation of their party. If all transactions required the same

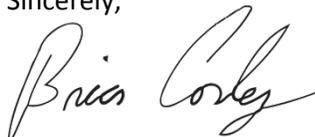
information as an original registration, there would be no missing information to delay the voter registration process, and no opportunity for misinterpretation by the Tax Collector's staff.

There is also an ongoing problem with voters who incorrectly state that their registration is "current", when in fact there is no active voter registration record in FVRS, or the record that exists needs an address update. If the records marked "current" could be suspended to the individual counties, staff could follow-up with those voters whose registration record is not found to be current, and these scenarios could be proactively resolved. It would also be beneficial to the accuracy of FVRS if the DHSMV provided information to the supervisors when there is a transaction in the Tax Collector's office which involves a correction in the date of birth.

The resurgence of these issues and the ongoing problems experienced by voters serves to support the concept of a "voter driven" registration system, either on-line or as a kiosk concept within the Tax Collector's Office. The current system of third party involvement, and in particular the lack of any evidential paper trail, has invited errors, has further eroded voter confidence, and has placed an unfair burden on the Supervisors of Elections to be responsible for problems created out of their control. The climate is ripe for a system which empowers people to register to vote rather than enable them with a system which is historically flawed. An ideal system would ultimately put the responsibility of accurate voter registration information on the voter, but under the current operations within the DHSMV this is unlikely.

In the name of "good government" we must work together with the Tax Collectors and the DHSMV to make improvements to the current voter registration system by implementing immediate changes, and to plan for a future with consideration to these shortcomings. With accountability being such a critical element of elections administration, it doesn't make sense that the status quo of voter registration knowingly undermines our ability to be effective keepers of the voter registration records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Corley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian E. Corley
President, FSASE

/tsb