



FSASE Position Paper: Online Voter Registration Application

It is the position of the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections (FSASE) that the 2015 regular legislative session is the appropriate time for Florida to pursue Online Voter Registration (OVR) application with an implementation to be determined by the Department of State and the Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles in an expeditious timeframe. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), as of June 2014, twenty states currently offer online voter registration. This method would complement and augment the current method of registering to vote by allowing elections' officials to harness technology. More importantly, it would allow eligible electors to register to vote online in a convenient yet secure manner. The current method of registering to vote by accessing an on-line voter registration application through the Division of Elections (DOE) or Supervisor of Elections websites requires the voter to print, sign, date, and mail or deliver the application. An OVR process would eliminate the need to print and mail the application by having the applicant agree to use an existing signature that is already on file through the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) and/or Tax Collector. In the interest of access to voter registration for all voters, the traditional method of registering to vote would still be an option for those who do not have access to a computer.

With the passage of this legislation, a coordinated effort between the Florida Department of State, DHSMV and the Supervisors of Elections would be necessary during implementation to ensure congruity of the system. In researching the concept of online voter registration, it's important to note that Florida would be joining twenty states which have already implemented OVR, and the data has clearly shown that registering to vote online is not a partisan issue. There is no pattern of increase or decrease of party affiliation registration when compared to traditional voter registration.

In analyzing the prospective pros and cons, it becomes apparent that there are only benefits which include:

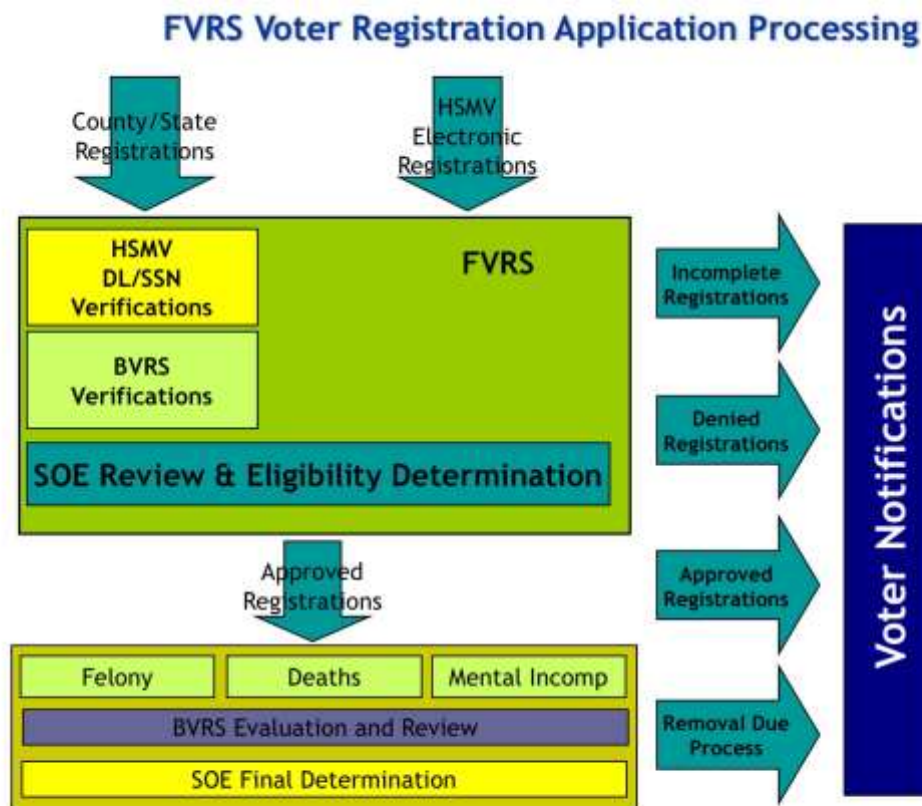
- Accessibility and convenience for voters to register 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year
- Reduction in cost to the Division of Elections and respective Supervisors of Elections
- Reduction in data entry errors and the resultant increase in the accuracy of voter rolls
- Bolstered integrity of the process as a result of OVR persons who previously presented themselves to DHSMV/Tax Collector staff

- Reduction in fraud as reported by Tammy Patrick, Elections Administrator with Maricopa County, Arizona (the first state to implement OVR), who cites no instances of fraud in conjunction with OVR
- Non-Political (Endorsed by the Bi-Partisan Policy Center & Pew Charitable Trusts)

Voter Registration Application in Florida: How is it currently done?

The voter either completes the Florida voter registration application and mails it or has it delivered to their respective Supervisor of Elections. Additionally, in accordance with the National Voting Rights Act (NVRA) also known as the “Motor Voter” law, the individual verbally relays information to the DHSMV or County Tax Collector staff that inputs the data. The voter is then given a receipt of the transaction.

As the below flowchart outlines, applications are entered into the Florida Voter Registration System (FVRS) and then electronically forwarded to the Division of Elections for verification and validity of the data provided. It is important to note that the verification of the data provided will not cease or change with OVR.



Voter Registration in Florida: What would an OVR application process be like?

An interactive web-based voter registration application process which mimics the paper application process is already in widespread use in Florida, but could be more streamlined by the addition of a simple set of enhancements that could provide immediate feedback to the applicant and final notification of verification within 24 hours.

The current process would in no way be compromised. The applicant will still be required to affirm their identity by providing either a Florida Driver License or Florida ID Number. The verification process with the current method of voter registration through the Division of Elections would not be altered. A signature for the applicant would be retrieved from the DHSMV records, thus eliminating the steps of printing and mailing the form.

Legislative Impact:

Since the state of Florida does not have an Interactive Registration Form transaction at this time, the Division of Elections would need to construct the entire site. This could significantly lengthen implementation timelines, either because of the need to construct a site or to go through an acquisition process to get one constructed. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the Division of Elections would need to coordinate efforts with the Florida Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles and the Supervisors of Elections.

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