THE DMV: A KEY ALLY IN VOTER REGISTRATION (AND OTHER ELECTION ADMINISTRATION TOO)

LISA DANETZ
NCSL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT
AUGUST 7, 2019
DMVs play a foundational role in much election administration:

- Voter Registration Applications
- Voter Registration Verification
- Voter Registration List Maintenance
- Candidate Support
- On Election Day
HOW DID MOTOR VEHICLES DEPARTMENTS EVER GET INTO THE ELECTIONS FIELD ANYWAY?
BIG PICTURE

ANSWER

Secure Identification

IT Infrastructure
NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT (NVRA): THE “MOTOR VOTER” LAW

- Of many provisions, the central provision requires voter registration to be integrated with driver’s license applications and renewals, and voter registration changes of address to occur as part of the driver’s license change of address process.

- The law presumes DMVs to be the primary location at which individuals will register to vote.
DMV “services are among the most widely used services offered by the government in the USA”.

- Reporting a move (to change driver’s license address; to get a new license)
- Coming of age (to get a driver’s license or non-driving identification card),
- Getting married or divorced (to change a name),
- Transitioning from one gender to another (to correct gender in driver’s license),

At the time of the law’s consideration:
- 90 percent of individuals had a driver’s license or non-driver identification card through a state DMV
- 27 states and D.C. already had a voter registration process through their DMVs
“The driver's license procedure appears to be ideally suited to the purpose of registering voters. . . . The states have developed exacting procedures to assure proper and correct identification of all licensees and to assure that a person has but a single license. Driver license applications require most of the information needed to determine the eligibility of a voting registration applicant, and include the additional protection of a photograph. This provision for simultaneous motor-voter applications permits the voter registrars to piggy-back on the identification techniques developed to assure accuracy in the licensing process.” (Emphasis added)

NVRA SENATE REPORT
ANOTHER FEDERAL LAW: HAVA

Verification of voter registration applicant identity:

1. States must include a voter registration applicant’s driver’s license number, or the last four digits of the applicant’s social security number if the applicant has no driver’s license, on every voter registration application (for federal elections) so that states can verify the information submitted by the applicant;

2. State must require presentation of certain identification, when casting a ballot, from new voters who register by mail.
IMPACT OF NVRA AND HAVA ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES:

- Under NVRA, information is transferred from DMVs to elections officials;
- Under HAVA, information is transferred from elections officials to DMVs.
WHAT ELECTION-RELATED FUNCTIONS ARE CURRENTLY OWNED BY DMVS?
2017-2018 EAC REPORT: 60% OF ALL VOTER REGISTRATION TRANSACTIONS RELIED ON DMV DATA

1. Motor Voter Registration
   • Most common way people register to vote
   • 44.9% of all Voter Registration Applications
   • 11% Increase Since 2015-2016 Likely Due to Automatic Voter Registration

2. Online Voter Registration
   • Second most common way people register to vote
   • Grabs signatures from DMV databases
   • 16.1% of all Voter Registration Applications
OTHER VOTER REGISTRATION MECHANISMS FACILITATED BY DMV DATA

- ERIC Registration
- Automatic Voter Registration
- Pre-Registration
VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES ARE REQUIRED TO BE VERIFIED THROUGH DMVs

1. Driver’s License Number
2. Last Four Digits of Social Security Number, SSA Check Performed by State DMV (through AAMVA information system)
1. ERIC (Electronic Registration Information Center)

2. Effective Compliant Implementation of Motor Voter (Colorado Graph)
1. Candidate Petition Signatures

2. Clean Elections Qualifying Contribution Identity Verification
1. Photo Identification

2. Polling Place

ELECTION DAY
WHAT ARE OBSTACLES TO, AND FACTORS IN, A STATE’S PERFORMANCE?
OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS

- Old Technology
- DMV Funding Methods
- Prioritization
FACTORS FOR STATE SUCCESS

- Relationship between Agencies
- Resources
- Upgraded Technology
THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME!