



Expanding Voter Registration Opportunities

Online Registration and Pre-Registration

Voter registration problems often prevent people from voting—particularly younger and new voters or people who have recently moved. Among those who did not vote in the 2008 presidential election, one in five reported that they had either missed the registration deadline—which can be up to 30 days before the election—or simply didn't know where and how to register. In the same election, one million people went to the polls but couldn't vote due to a registration problem.¹

Recognizing the need to improve voter registration, many states have developed new systems and strategies. One of the earliest and most effective registration innovations was Election Day Registration, also known as same-day registration. It has been on the books for almost four decades and allows residents to register (or update their registration) and vote on the same day.²

Today, new technology and novel strategies have created even more opportunities—and often simpler methods—to register. These trends have allowed voters to easily register for the first time or simply update their registration after a move or name change.

Online Registration

The popularity of the internet, better statewide databases, and increased inter-department information sharing have given rise to online voter registration.

In some states, voters can register online or update their information without having to print or mail any paperwork. However, in order to register online a voter's signature must usually already be on file with the state. States that currently offer online registration are:

Arizona, California,* Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and the District of Columbia.**

*California has passed online voter registration legislation, but implementation is stalled pending the completion of a statewide voter registration database, likely in 2015. In the meantime, local counties are permitted to develop their own online registration systems.

**Only residents of Clark County can register online.

Seventy-nine percent of adults 18 and older are internet users, and among 18 to 29-year-olds that number jumps to 95%.³ Because online registration is convenient and quick, it will only become more relevant and popular in the coming years. Moreover, widespread implementation could potentially boost registration rates for young voters who are registered at lower rates.

For more information on online registration, visit your state elections website.

Pre-Registration

In a step toward automating voter registration, some jurisdictions allow 16 and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote, and then automatically add them to the voting rolls when they turn 18. This strategy not only consolidates activities, but can also increase registration rates by channeling the enthusiasm of first-time trips to the DMV into a civic outlet. States that currently offer pre-registration beginning:

At age 16 are **Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, North Carolina, Rhode Island** and the **District of Columbia**, and;

At age 17 are **California** and **Oregon**.

Young people are registered to vote at much lower rates than the general population: just 59% of eligible 18 to 24-year-olds are registered to vote, compared to 71% of all eligible voters. Advance-registration reaches young voters early on, building enthusiasm for voting and increasing the likelihood that they will become habitual voters.

For more information on pre-registration, visit <http://www.fairvote.org/youth-preregistration-fact-sheet>.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008

² See our factsheet on Election Day Registration for more information.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 1157. Adult Computer and Adult Internet Users by Selected Characteristics: 2000 to 2010