



Andrew M. Cuomo - Governor

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Governor Cuomo Announces Reforms to Expand Access to Voter Registration

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Online voter registration, electronic transmission of applications, and expanded foreign language application options are parts of new, more efficient system

Albany, NY (August 16, 2012)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today launched a sweeping new initiative to expand access to voter registration and streamline DMV services by allowing New Yorkers, for the first time ever, to apply to register to vote, or update their address or party enrollment, through a secure online site.

"Today, we are knocking down longstanding barriers that have prevented many New Yorkers from participating in the democratic process, while creating a more streamlined and more efficient system that will save taxpayers' money," Governor Cuomo said. "At the DMV, or in their own homes, New Yorkers will now have a convenient and secure way to ensure they are able to register and exercise their right to vote."

"Governor Cuomo asked the Department of Motor Vehicles to re-examine how we did business and to find ways to make government more accessible to the public," said DMV Commissioner Barbara J. Fiala. "Getting away from paper applications and making use of the technology we are announcing today will improve efficiency, be cost effective, and better serve the people of New York State."

New York currently ranks 47th in the nation in voter registration, with less than 64% of eligible residents registered to vote.

The DMV processes roughly 300,000 motor voter applications a year. This is currently a cumbersome and time-consuming manual process, where drivers fill out paper forms at one of 129 DMV branches, which then have to be sorted and mailed by hand to one of the county boards of elections. This process is prone to human error, delays and, in some cases, to applications not getting processed.

The new system will replace the vast majority of paper forms and allow for the centralization and digital transmission of voter registration applications.

Under the new program as outlined in the attached Powerpoint presentation, persons with a driver's license or non-driver's ID seeking to register, or to update their address or party enrollment information, can do so:

- **Online, through DMV's "MyDMV" Web site** <https://my.dmv.ny.gov>. MyDMV requires users to create a secure online account that is validated through the verification of personal information, such as date of birth, social security number, address, and license document number. Applicants must have a valid New York State license or identification card to qualify, which are issued after a rigorous, in-person identity proofing process at a DMV office. More than 700,000 New Yorkers currently have a MyDMV account and that number is growing daily.
- **New computerized electronic data entry (or VeriFone) devices at each DMV location.** In every DMV office, new electronic terminals will allow registrants to apply to register to vote or update their registration information themselves electronically without completing any paper forms. These transactions will be overseen by DMV representatives and are subject to the same security standards as the current system. The devices are also equipped to handle credit card transactions for DMV business.

These new applications will include a digital copy of a voter's "wet" signature that drivers provide to the DMV when they are issued a license or non-driver ID. The signature transmitted to the county BOE is the same signature that appears on their DMV-issued license.

Once the program is fully implemented, the applications will be electronically transferred via both XML file and pdf to the county board of elections, a process often referred to as "automated" registration. The county boards will thus be able to eliminate the manual data entry that is now required to process paper application forms.

In the interim, the DMV will print the electronically-captured voter registration applications with a digitized signature and mail them from their central Albany office to the county boards of elections. This will mean that DMV's batching and mailing from its local offices will be largely eliminated, reducing costs. The county boards will receive a single daily document drop that will be easier to process, track, and scan.

Increased Voter Registration Rates from Online & Automated DMV Registration

- According to the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, 14 states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington—currently or will soon offer online voter registration.
- Registration rates among 18-24 year-old citizens rose from 28 to 53 percent after Arizona introduced online and automated registration.
- A recent study of Arizona's online registration system found that young and minority voters are disproportionately likely to register online.
- After registration was automated at DMVs, DMV voter registrations nearly doubled in Washington and Kansas and increased seven-fold in South Dakota.

Cost Savings from Online & Automated DMV Registration

- Studies in Arizona and Delaware have demonstrated substantial cost savings for DMVs and county governments from automated and online voter registration.
- In New York State, cost savings for DMV alone are estimated to be at least \$270,000 annually. Additional savings for the county boards of elections once their software has been programmed to accept electronically the voter registration applications is estimated to be at least \$150,000 annually.

Automated Voter Registration is More Accurate

Officials in states that have adopted online and automated voter registration consistently confirm that paperless registration produces fewer errors than paper forms and reduces opportunities for fraud. A 2009 survey of incomplete and incorrect registrations in Maricopa County, Arizona found that electronic voter registrations are as much as five times less error-prone than their paper-based counterparts.

Expanded Foreign Language Access to Voter Registration

- Beginning today, DMV will make its driver license application (which includes the voter registration application) form available online and in its New York City offices in Chinese, Korean, and Bengali. The application had previously been available in Spanish. Notices will also be placed in those offices to alert customers that those translated forms are available.
- The Verifone terminals in each DMV office across the State will offer voter registration in Spanish as well as English.

Orange County Elections Commissioner Susan Bahren said, "The new voter registration transmittal program with DMV will assist our office in being able to process transactions faster and more accurately almost eliminating the need to contact voters for clarification, it will also decrease the paper process in our office significantly. I am looking forward to continuing this working relationship as we will move ahead to submitting the voter registration applications electronically. This is a great move for both DMV and the County Boards of Elections."

Saratoga County Elections Commissioner William Frucci said, "The electronic exchange of voter registration data will help streamline the registration process. In view of the fact that we operate under very restrictive time constraints this process will provide the voter's information from the department of motor vehicles to the county boards of elections more timely and more efficiently."

Madison County Elections Commissioner Laura Costello said, "The voter registration and move transmittals generated by the new DMV system are a positive improvement over the previous documents. The registration format mirrors the NYS voter registration form and the information is legible and complete. The new process promises to be time efficient and secure."

Erie County Elections Commissioner Dennis Ward said, "At the Erie County Board of Elections, we look forward to the use of the new New York State DMV Voter Registration application system. It is our belief that this is a major technological step forward which will result in the savings of employee time and taxpayer dollars. At the same time, the built-in safeguards will continue the policy of safeguarding the voting system against fraud while also meeting the voter identification requirements of the federal Help America Vote Act. The daily transfers will allow quicker processing of applications and the typed registration forms will be easier to process and will reduce the chance of error. We thank the State Department of Motor Vehicles for the initiative in taking this step forward."

John Kowal, Vice President of Programs at the Brennan Center for Justice, said: "Today, the Empire State, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, is showing the nation that it is ready to lead when it comes to innovative election reform. Creating more options for voters to register, and ensuring they make it onto the rolls, will make a real difference. Some states that have instituted similar programs have seen up to an eight-fold increase in voter registrations through the DMV, while saving hundreds of thousands of dollars. That is important for democracy and important for New York."

Alex Camarda, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, said, "Citizens Union commends Governor Cuomo, the State Board of Elections, and the Department of Motor Vehicles on this important advancement in making voter registration easier for New Yorkers. For far too long, New York has been conducting an antiquated and cumbersome form of paper-based voter registration that diminishes participation in our democracy while increasing costs to taxpayers. The reforms announced today will modernize and ease the process by enabling New Yorkers to register online or electronically in-person at the DMV. This initiative serves as a model for all state agencies required to offer the opportunity to register those it serves."

Sally Robinson, President, League of Women Voters of New York State, said, "With the ability to register prospective voters online through the secure MyDMV system, New York will become one of the leaders in online voter registration across the country. Online voter registration will not only provide cost savings and increased accuracy, it will also be a great convenience to voters. In a world that has largely left behind paper, moving New York State towards paperless voter registration will benefit both taxpayers and voters. The experience of other states makes it clear that electronically collecting voter registrations, and ultimately providing them to boards of election in the same form, will both save money and increase accuracy of the voter rolls."

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