



**to**



# **Rhode Island Agency-Based Voter Registration**

***National Voter Registration Act of 1993***

**&**

***Help America Vote Act of 2002***



**RI Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, RI 02904  
<http://www.elections.ri.gov>**

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# BACKGROUND

## ABOUT THE ACTS

In 1993, the United States Congress passed, and President Bill Clinton signed into law, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). In passing this legislation, the Congress affirmed that not only do the citizens of the United States possess the right to vote, but that federal, state and local governments have a duty to promote the exercise of that fundamental right. In addition, the Congress expressed its concern relative to the possible disenfranchisement of various groups due to discriminatory and unfair registration laws and procedures and the resulting detrimental effect on voter participation which may occur in elections for federal office.

The legislative intent of the NVRA is to increase the opportunities afforded to eligible citizens to register to vote thereby increasing the number of citizens who register to vote and enhancing the level of voter participation in elections. In conjunction with the passage of the Act, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed and the Governor signed, legislation reflecting the intent and requirements of the NVRA.

The availability of voter registration services at selected agencies has been identified by the Act as a vehicle to increase the registration opportunities for citizens throughout the United States. Consequently, among the means of registering to vote required by Congress is that known as **Agency Registration**. It is designed to increase the number of Americans registered to vote.

As a result of the passage of **The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)**, the State of Rhode Island received \$11 million dollars to improve voter registration systems and elections.

The voter registration form has been modified to allow for registrants to answer two HAVA required questions\* (see below) and to provide for the inclusion of a Rhode Island driver's license number or the last four digits of their social security number in order to verify identity for voter registration purposes.

### **The required questions are:**

1. \*Are you a citizen of the United States?
2. \*Are you at least 16 years of age?

Registrants who answer no to either question should be instructed not to complete the voter registration form, as they are considered ineligible.

Applicants should provide his/her driver's license number in box 3 if the applicant has a current and valid driver's license. In the case of an applicant who does not have a Rhode Island driver's license he/she shall provide the last four digits of his/her social security number or Rhode Island I.D. provided by the DVM. While not required, you should not discourage the client from doing so as their information can be verified when being processed by the Central Voter Registration System used by the State of Rhode Island.

## **AGENCY PARTICIPATION**

The following agencies are required by the NVRA to offer voter registration services:

- all offices in the state which provide public assistance;
- at, or through, any offices in the state that provide state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities;
- at armed forces recruitment offices
- the Department of Corrections; and
- at other such agencies as shall be determined by the Board of Elections.

In addition, the NVRA requires that every applicant for a motor vehicle driver's license or a renewal, or a personal identification card issued by the Division of Motor Vehicles and who is eligible to register to vote shall be afforded the opportunity to register to vote. Voter registration services are, therefore, provided at offices of the Division of Motor Vehicles throughout Rhode Island.

## **WHEN AGENCIES MUST OFFER VOTER REGISTRATION SERVICES**

The NVRA requires that the opportunity to register to vote be offered to a participating agency's applicants/clients each time an applicant/client:

- applies for, recertifies or renews for services or assistance; or
- submits a change of address with the agency; or
- upon discharge from the Department of Corrections

The appropriate form to be used to execute voter registrations for the above activities is the Agency Voter Registration Form. (See Appendix A.)

### **ASSISTING THE APPLICANT/CLIENT WITH VOTER REGISTRATION**

Participating agencies are required to provide the applicant/client with the same amount of assistance in completing the voter registration form as they would provide the applicant/client in completing the agency's own forms, unless the applicant/client refuses such assistance.

Agency representatives are prohibited from seeking to influence an applicant's/client's decision regarding voter registration or party preference. Similarly, agency representatives cannot make any statement or take any action whose purpose or effect is:

- to discourage the applicant/client from registering to vote; or
- to lead the applicant/client to believe that a decision whether or not to register to vote has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits.

### **INTERFERENCE WITH THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS**

The NVRA prohibits interference in the voter registration process. The Act prohibits anyone from knowingly and willfully intimidating, threatening or coercing any person to vote or attempting to register to vote. Further, knowing and willful procurement or submission of fraudulent voter registration applications is prohibited.

Under the provisions of the Act, persons interfering with the voter registration process may be fined in accordance with Title 18 of the United States Code or imprisoned not more than five (5) years, or both.

# VOTER REGISTRATION MATERIALS

The following materials are required for conducting agency-based voter registration: Agency Voter Registration Forms and packing slips. In addition, the agency will need the form entitled "State of Rhode Island Agency-Based Voter Registration Monthly Activity Report." See Appendix for sample forms.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The NVRA requires each participating agency to file periodic reports on various voter registration activities. These reports shall be made on the form entitled "State of Rhode Island Agency-Based Voter Registration Monthly Activity Report" and shall be filed on a monthly basis and must be received at the Board of Elections within ten (10) days after the close of each month.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions, comments and inquiries regarding the implementation or execution of agency-based registration may be directed to:

Voter Registration Coordinator  
Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, Rhode Island 02904  
Phone: 401-222-2345

The Board of Elections strongly urges each agency to designate a coordinator to oversee the voter registration program and a contact person for coordinating communications between the agency and Board of Elections.

# THE AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

## THE AGENCY VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

The Agency Voter Registration Form is comprised of two parts and **MUST BE COMPLETED IN INK**. The **certification form**, located in the upper-left part of the Form, is used to document the applicant's/client's decision to register to vote or to decline to register to vote. The voter **registration form** (the lower part of the Form) is that which is transmitted, filed and recorded as the registrant's voter registration record, assuming the applicant/client wishes to register and completes the form. The information on the voter registration form is also used to assign the registrant to the proper voting districts. In addition, the upper-right part of the Agency Voter Registration form contains important information about an applicant's right to register to vote.

***The certification form is required by federal and state law. It documents the interaction between an agency and its applicants/clients with regard to voter registration. It must be retained for 24 months by the participating agency.***

## **STEPS IN THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS**

Registering to vote at an agency using an Agency Voter Registration Form is a three-step process for the applicant/client. Those steps are as follows:

- 1) **Read and understand the information and instructions** in the upper-left and upper-right parts of the Form. (The agency representative may help an applicant/client who requests assistance.)
- 2) **Complete the certification form** (located in the upper-left part of the Form).
- 3) **Complete the voter registration form** (located in the lower part of the Form) if the applicant/client has indicated that he/she wishes to register to vote from or would like to change his/her registration address and/or name.

## **HOW TO COMPLETE THE CERTIFICATION**

Each applicant/client should be offered the opportunity to register to vote. Upon being offered the opportunity to vote, each applicant/client should indicate on the certification form whether he/she would like to register to vote at the agency or submit an address change for voter registration purposes. In response to the question, "If you are **not** registered to vote where you live now, would you like to register here today?" the applicant/client should check either "yes" or "no." The applicant/client should then sign and date the form in the space below the aforementioned question.

- ***If a person decides to register to vote***, he or she should fill out the voter registration form. They must also check "Yes" on the certification form and sign it.
- ***If a person desires to change their address for voter registration purposes***, he or she should complete the entire voter registration form (**Items 11 & 12** must be completed when recording name or address changes.) They must also check "Yes" on the certification form and sign it.
- ***A person can indicate that he/she is declining to register by marking the appropriate box on the certification form. However, if a person fails to complete the certification form and does*** not indicate whether he/she wishes to register to vote or declines to register to vote, the agency representative should write across the certification form the word "**REFUSED**" and print the applicant's/client's name and the current date in the appropriate spaces.

***The applicant/client must have the same opportunity to complete the certification form and the voter registration form as he/she is given to complete the agency's own forms.***

## HOW TO COMPLETE THE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

A person who chooses to fill out the voter registration form may do so in private or may request help from an agency representative.

### ***If an applicant/client requires assistance filling out the Form...***

If a person requires assistance filling out the Form, the agency representative must provide the person the same degree of assistance for voter registration as is provided for completing agency forms.

### ***If an applicant/client would prefer to take the Agency Voter Registration Form home...***

If a person wishes to take the Form home to complete and return at another time or mail to the canvassing office of their city/town (the addresses are listed on the reverse side of the form), the agency representative should: 1) detach and retain that part of the Agency Voter Registration Form containing the certification form (upper-left part of the Form); 2) write across the certification form the word "RETAINED" and print the applicant's/client's name and current date in the appropriate spaces; and 3) give to the applicant/client the remainder of the Agency Voter Registration Form (this would include the upper right section and the voter registration form below it.)

**It is essential that registration forms be FILLED OUT IN INK AND BE SIGNED, DATED AND COMPLETED IN FULL. The agency representative should review the form for completeness.**

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF VOTER REGISTRATION RECORDS

Information relating to a declination or acceptance of voter registration services at a participating agency is confidential. Use of this information is limited to voter registration purposes. Other uses are prohibited.

## WHAT TO DO WITH COMPLETED CERTIFICATION FORMS

Completed certification forms must be filed and retained by the participating agency for a period of twenty-four (24) months.

## WHAT TO DO WITH COMPLETED VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

Completed voter registration forms are required to be transmitted by agencies to the Board of Elections. The completed forms must be received at the Board of Elections within seven (7) days after acceptance, or if accepted within five days before the last day to register to vote for an election, within three (3) days of such acceptance. (To be eligible to vote in an election a person must be registered at least 30 days prior to the election.)

- ***Sorting of forms.*** The agency is responsible for sorting the completed voter registration forms by community prior to transmitting them to the Board of Elections for processing.

- **Excess registration forms due to declinations.** When a person declines to register to vote, a blank voter registration form will be left over once the certification statement has been completed. These blank forms should be delivered to the Board of Elections for disposition. Do not destroy any voter registration forms.
- **Packing slips.** For each package of forms being sent to the Board of Elections, an agency representative must fill out a packing slip to be included in the transmittal package. The packing slip must be completed in full, including: the name and address of the source agency (and field office applicable) for the registration forms, the name and phone number of the agency representative that prepared the package for transmittal and the number of forms being transmitted.
- **Transmittal package.** A 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 envelope should be used as the transmittal package. Each agency must use its mailing address as the return address on each transmittal package. Included in the transmittal package shall be the following:
  - 1) completed voter registration forms;
  - 2) excess registration forms due to declinations
  - 3) packing slip

The transmittal package should be sent to:

Voter Registration Coordinator  
 c/o Rhode Island Board of Elections  
 50 Branch Avenue  
 Providence, Rhode Island 02904

## **THE PROCESS OF TRANSMITTING VOTER REGISTRATIONS**

Agencies are responsible for collecting and preparing the forms from their agency to be included in the transmittal package. Once received at the Board of Elections, completed voter registration forms from all participating agencies are forwarded to the Board of Canvassers in each community.

## **HOW WILL A PERSON KNOW IF THEIR REGISTRATION WAS ACCEPTED?**

The Board of Canvassers in the community in which the person has registered to vote will mail to each registrant an Acknowledgment Notice to let the voter know that his/her registration was accepted. The notice will tell the voter which voting district he/she lives in so that he/she will know where to vote.

If the person does not receive an Acknowledgment Notice within 3 weeks, he/she should contact the Board of Canvassers in his/her community.

## **ADMINISTERING AN AGENCY VOTER REGISTRATION PROGRAM**

Among the important aspects to consider in administering an agency voter registration program are:

- ***the need to appoint someone in each agency office to be in charge of and responsible for voter registration activities.*** This person should be responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of forms, monitoring voter registration activities, training new employees, resolving questions and problems that arise in coordination with state or local election officials and the like.
- ***the need to train all agency employees involved with voter registration.*** A successful program requires adequate training of all agency staff involved with voter registration – how to ensure that voter registration forms are completed and signed correctly, how to offer and provide assistance to applicants/clients, etc. After an initial training of all current employees, new employees can be trained by the person in charge as they join the staff.
- ***the accountability of voter registration forms.*** In light of the record keeping and reporting requirements of the Act agencies may want to "track" or maintain a record of the number of forms processed and forwarded to election officials.

## **APPENDIX**

*AGENCY VOTER REGISTRATION FORM (p. 12)*

*AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT (p. 13-14)*

*PACKING SLIP (p. 15)*



**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION**

**MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT**

\* Registration Coordinator must complete the back of this form\*

Agency: _____		Month: _____	
Number of Persons Applying for Services/Assistance Change of Address	Number of Persons Registering to Vote	Number of Persons Who Declined To Register to Vote and Registration Agent Indicated	
		REFUSED	RETAINED
<u>AGENT CERTIFICATION</u>			
I hereby certify that I am this agency's authorized voter registration coordinator, and I have truthfully and accurately completed this form* in conformance with the provisions of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), based on information I have received from our listed registration agents.			
Registration Coordinator: _____		Date: _____	
Address: _____		Phone: _____	
SIGNATURE: _____			
Signed and sworn before me this _____ day of _____ 20_____			
NOTARY PUBLIC: _____			

**Voter Registration Coordinator  
Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, R.I. 02904**

**This form must be transmitted to the Board of Elections within 10 days from the last day of the preceding month**



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AGENCY-BASED  
VOTER REGISTRATIONS

**PACKING SLIP**

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Field Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Mailed or Delivered: \_\_\_\_\_

# Of Completed Voter Registration Forms *

Agency Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Rep. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

*\* Agencies are responsible for sorting completed voter registrations by community prior to transmitting them to the Board Of Elections.*

Forward to

Voter Registration Coordinator  
Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, R.I. 02904

## **ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

This document has been prepared by the Rhode Island Board of Elections to assist in the implementation of voter registration in state agencies. It is advisory in nature and is intended to serve as a guide to explain the responsibilities of participating agencies offering voter registration services to applicants for services or their clients.

To obtain copies of this guide or other information related to the implementation of the agency-based registration program, or to offer suggested modifications to this publication, please contact the Voter Registration Coordinator at the Board of Elections.