

Bring to vote for the first time: please refer to the application instructions and I swear/affirm that: requirements of my state and subscribed to any oath required. The information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge under penalty of perjury. If I have provided false information, I may be fined, imprisoned, or (if not a U.S. citizen) deported from or refused entry to the United States.

Please fill out the sections below if they apply to you.
If this application is for a change of name, what was your name before you changed it?
A Mr. Miss Last Name
 Mrs. Ms. First Name

Voter Registration Application

Before completing this form, review the General, Application, and State specific instructions.

Are you a citizen of the United States of America? Yes No
 Will you be 18 years old on or before election day? Yes No
If you checked "No" in response to either of these questions, do not complete form.
 (Please see state-specific instructions for rules regarding eligibility to register prior to age 18.)

1	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Miss Last Name <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Ms.	First Name	Middle Name(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Jr <input type="checkbox"/> II <input type="checkbox"/> Sr <input type="checkbox"/> IV
2	Home Address	Apt. or Lot #	City/Town	State Zip Code
3	Address Where You Get Your Mail If Different From Above		City/Town	State Zip Code
4	Date of Birth Month Day Year	5 Telephone Number (optional)	6 ID Number - (See item 6 in the instructions for your state)	
7	Choice of Party (see item 7 in the instructions for your State)	8 Race or Ethnic Group (see item 8 in the instructions for your State)		

9 I have reviewed my state's instructions and I swear/affirm that:
 ■ I am a United States citizen
 ■ I meet the eligibility requirements of my state and subscribe to any oath required.
 ■ The information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge under penalty of perjury. If I have provided false information, I may be fined, imprisoned, or (if not a U.S. citizen) deported from or refused entry to the United States.

Please sign full name (or put mark) ▲
 Date: _____
 Month Day Year

If you are registering to vote for the first time: please refer to the application instructions for information on submitting copies of valid identification documents with this form.

Please fill out the sections below if they apply to you.

If this application is for a change of name, what was your name before you changed it?
 A Mr. Miss Last Name
 Mrs. Ms. First Name Middle Name(s) Jr II
 Sr IV

If you were registered before but this is the first time you are registering from the address in Box 2, what was your address where you were registered before?
 B Street (or route and box number) Apt. or Lot # City/Town/County State Zip Code

If you live in a rural area but do not have a street number, or if you have no address, please show on the map where you live.
 ■ Write in the names of the crossroads (or streets) nearest to where you live.
 ■ Draw an X to show where you live.
 ■ Use a dot to show any schools, churches, stores, or other landmarks near where you live, and write the name of the landmark.

C

Example	Route #2	● Grocery Store	
		● Woodchuck Road	
		● Public School	X

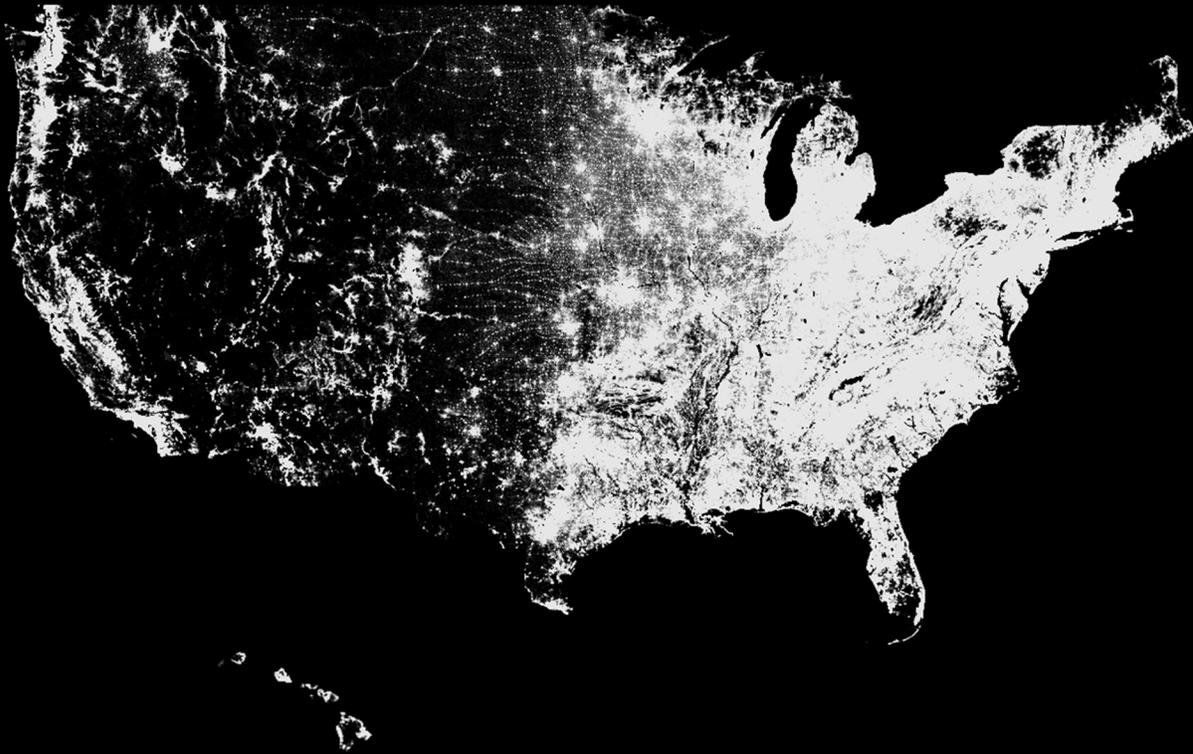
If the applicant is unable to sign, who helped the applicant fill out this application? Give name, address and phone number (phone number optional).
 D

Mail this application to the address provided for your State.

IMPLEMENTING AND ASSESSING AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

LESSONS LEARNED AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE U.S.

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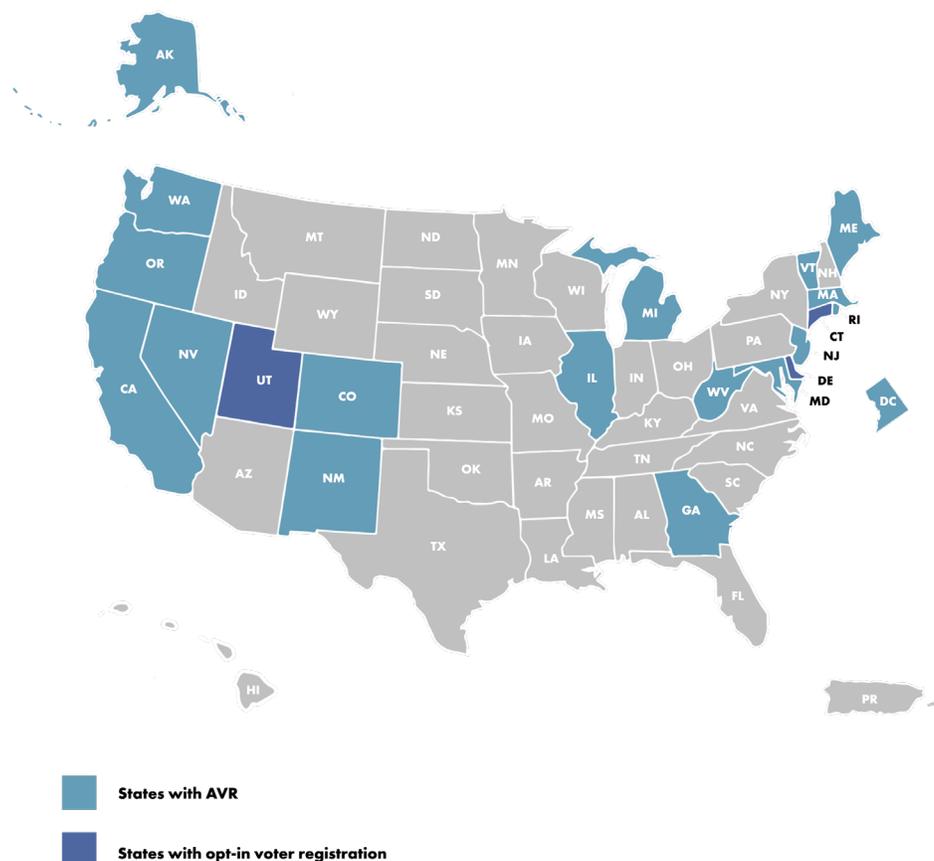
OVERVIEW

What is AVR?

While there is significant variation in methods for persons to register to vote, voter registration before the passage of the first Automatic Voter Registration law was based on an opt-in-system. Eligible people were provided the opportunity to register to vote, whether it was as easy as providing a checkmark on a DMV driver's license application field to have their information transmitted to a state elections office, or as hard as physically visiting a state elections office to obtain a registration form and return it to a certified elections office representative. Under this opt-in system, eligible persons were required to agree to be added to the voter registration list in their respective state.

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) significantly reforms the registration process by changing the system from opt-in to opt-out. That is, with AVR, the relevant information that people provide on forms like driver's license applications, vehicle registration applications or renewals, etc. is automatically transmitted to state elections offices to determine if people are eligible to vote. When enough information is provided to accurately verify that a person is eligible to register to vote, they are then added to their state's list of registered voters without having to offer verbal or written consent to do so. On these forms, however, people are able to opt-out by declining to be registered to vote if they choose to do so for any reason, including if they are not eligible to register. Figure 1 shows which states have passed and enacted AVR.

Figure 1. States That Have Approved Enacted Automatic Voter Registration



AVR and Race

AVR is said to increase the number of people registered to vote by removing a barrier to voter participation. A [Brennan Center report](#) finds that AVR increases registration and that these results are robust to different types of states. The effect holds in both small and large states, and in states with different partisan makeup.¹ Though non-Hispanic white people [make up a plurality of the unregistered population in all states](#), as a whole, [advocates hope](#) that AVR will help diversify the electorate to include more marginalized racial minorities and lower income earners.

It is currently unclear what the impact of AVR is across racial groups. The Brennan Center report² notes that the increase in voter registration for states that implemented AVR was greatest in Georgia³ (93.7%) and lowest in the District of Columbia⁴ (9.4%). Although wide variation between these two AVR examples could partially be attributed to other factors (such as statehood, immigrant population, competitive elections, etc.), they have in common that they are some of the most diverse jurisdictions in the United States, warranting a racial component to any analysis of AVR's impact. Currently, the data needed to assess the impact that race might have is either unavailable, as in states do not track or offer individual-level data on who uses AVR, or helpful individual and aggregate data is not available to the public.

AVR Goals

While the goal of AVR is to increase voter registration, implicit in that goal is that AVR registrants will then participate in elections. When the benefits of voting outweigh the costs, people are more likely to cast a ballot and participate (Downs and Downs 1957). A variety of studies in political science and political psychology verify this foundational finding, noting that even though the electorate perceives relatively low benefits to voting, even slight increases to barriers can have a detectable impact on voter participation. Increased costs to voting have a disproportionate negative impact for groups in the electorate with access to the least resources (Hershey 2009; Barreto, Nuño, and Sanchez 2009; Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017; Nickerson 2015; Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978; Sobel and Smith 2009). In reducing barriers to the electoral process, we should expect that AVR should also increase participation. Currently, no study or report gives an in-depth analysis on how AVR's goal to increase participation itself has been met or how it has not been met for groups, especially for marginalized racial groups.

Marginalized groups, including racial minorities, are especially sensitive to changes in election law. Reducing the barriers to voting by conducting elections exclusively through mail increases turnout for Black and Latino voters (Southwell 2010; Atsusaka, Menger, and Stein 2019). Restrictive regulations on organizations that serve marginalized groups through voter registration drives disproportionately reduce registration for young people and Democrats (Herron and Smith 2013).

Additionally, studies find that reductions to the early voting period and hours that polling locations are open reduce turnout for those least likely to vote, including racial minorities, registered Democrats, voters without party affiliation, and those who chose to vote on the last Sunday before an election (Herron and Smith 2014; Gronke and Stewart, n.d.; Herron and Smith 2012; Walker, Herron, and Smith 2019; Herron and Smith 2015b, [a] 2015). Policies like AVR undoubtedly have a different impact for some racial groups than others, so an analysis on AVR that does not measure racial differences excludes groups who are potentially most sensitive to changes.

Not only are marginalized groups sensitive to changes in election law, but they are also subject to their unequal enforcement. Black and Latino voters are more likely than white voters to be asked to show ID at the polls (Cobb 2012), and the same is true of younger Black people and younger Latino voters, even in states that do not have a photo ID requirement (Rogowski and Cohen 2014). Even actions as trivial as voters seeking information from administrative bureaucrats about voter requirements yields poorer service in the form of lower frequencies of response and lesser-quality responses for Latinos than it does for whites (White, Nathan, and Faller 2015). Additionally, reducing the early voting period has a disproportionately negative impact on racial minorities, poor people, first time voters, and low propensity voters (Herron and Smith 2012, [a] 2015). Reducing the total number of polling place locations available, also known as polling place consolidation, decreases voter turnout in elections (McNulty, Dowling, and Ariotti 2009). In not tracking the disparate impact administering AVR might have on some racial groups, we overlook how AVR agencies might better serve groups who are historically underserved.

Origins of AVR — Legislative History

The US Constitution delegates the authority to states to administer and oversee elections, which produces significant variation in election policy from state to state. While states ultimately set their own election policies that must adhere to federal minimum requirements, county and local subdivisions oversee these elections, so the application of these laws vary even within one state. Counties and local jurisdictions are tasked with implementing election policy and funding elections, but states determine the election policy guidelines, often providing minimum standards for all jurisdictions within their boundaries that counties can choose to go above and beyond as long as they fund these efforts additional efforts.

Though states administer elections, there are a couple federal election policy standards that characterize modern election practices: The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993 and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. Both of these federal acts expanded and standardized voter registration and voting systems, but states have since enacted their own policy to build off of where these provisions fall short.

The **National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993** was first in a modern wave of reforms to the voter registration process. Also known as the **“Motor Voter Act”**, the NVRA expanded voter registration opportunities and set federal standards to maintain their registration records.

Under the provisions of the NVRA, people were given the opportunity to apply for voter registration at the same time when they apply for a driver's license or seek to renew a driver's license and these applications were to be forwarded to the appropriate state election officials, they were provided the opportunity to register by mail using state forms developed in conjunction with the Election Assistance Commission, and they were provided the opportunity to register to vote at any office providing public assistance or any office providing state-funded programs aimed at serving persons with disabilities. Additionally, the NVRA set requirements for states to keep their voter registration lists accurate and current. The NVRA's provisions significantly expanded efforts to provide more opportunity and access to voter registration for eligible people, but it was not a panacea for all problems with election policy, which remained fragmented from state to state.

The 2000 Presidential election, decided ultimately in *Bush v Gore* by the Supreme Court over the Constitutionality of a Florida recount policy⁵, demonstrated the need for sweeping improvements and uniformity in election administration nationwide. In Florida during the 2000 election, election officials moved to punch card voting machines, where the technology did not always punch a whole completely out of a ballot to indicate voters' choices. This led to controversy when the Gore campaign requested a manual recount in select counties instead of the machine recount, a process where officials could exercise discretion in deciding where partial punches --hanging chads-- indicated voter intent, while the Bush campaign worked to stop a manual recount, citing that similarly punched ballots could be counted differently depending on the counties in which they were cast (a 14th Amendment equal protection claim).

Florida's manual recount debacle, which was ultimately resolved in *Bush v Gore*, highlighted the need for more uniformity in election rules throughout the country. As such, the Help America Vote Act was passed soon after to do just that for the registration process. The **Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)** spearheaded a wave of new election reforms in the 21st Century. HAVA was aimed at improving voter access to elections and improving voting systems nationwide. The act specifically set minimum requirements for states to follow in administering elections and provides funding for them to do so. The provisions in HAVA for voter registration did not go very far in expanding access to voter registration, requiring maintenance to the **National Voter Registration** form and that states each keep and maintain their own computerized voter databases with required standards, but the act did not do much else to reform the registration process.

Soon after HAVA, a wave of states passed reforms aimed at making voter registration and election participation even easier for eligible people. Today, there is significant variation in the voter registration process from state to state. Some states offer more expansive opportunities for eligible persons to register, and on the other side of the spectrum, some states only offer the federally-required bare minimum for opportunities to register to vote. This produces variation from state to state where eligible people may register at either an elections office, Department of Motor Vehicles office, at state offices providing public assistance, through select third parties (voter registration drives), online, on the same day as an election, or they may pre-register (for 16 and 17 year-olds).

Variation in AVR

As states move towards automatically registering potential voters there has been great variation in the approaches taken to implement AVR. The differences in approaches to implementing AVR are mostly related to the agencies that participate and the system in place for applicants to decline to register to vote. **Table 1** displays details regarding variation in AVR implementation in each state. We also included non-AVR states that implement an opt-in voter registration system (Connecticut, Delaware, and Utah).

The implementation of AVR varies significantly beginning with the different offices that are designated voter registration agencies. Currently, 17 states and the District of Columbia are implementing or planning to implement AVR through the Department of Motor Vehicles, wherein an eligible voter who interacts with the DMV is registered to vote. In addition to processing voter registration at the DMV, states like Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Washington are also relying on designated social service agencies to register applicants. More recently, Alaska decided to implement AVR through its Permanent Fund Dividend Application.

There are also considerable differences in methods of declination as states are implementing differing methods for opting out of AVR. Prior to the first enactment of AVR in Oregon, some states were already implementing Motor Voter Registration, an opt-in system, wherein applicants are asked if they would like to register to vote during their DMV transaction.⁶ In a front-end system, applicants are presented with a notice during their transaction that tells them their information will be used for voter registration unless they decline. The front-end system allows for customers to opt-out while interacting with the agency. Currently 15 states implement a front-end system with New Mexico and West Virginia expected to follow suit in 2021.

In a back-end system states determine whether an applicant is eligible to be registered to vote with the personal information they provide. If applicants meet eligibility requirements, they are later sent a notice via mail notifying them that they will be registered to vote by a certain date unless they decide to opt-out by signing and returning the postcard. The back-end system is currently implemented in Oregon for DMV customers and Alaska through its Permanent Fund. Colorado is expected to implement a back-end system by July of 2020. The state of Massachusetts implements a back-end like system wherein individuals who interact with the DMV and/or select social service agencies are given the option to opt-out at point of service and are also sent a notice from their local election official confirming that they will be registered to vote within a specified timeframe.

Table 1. Details of AVR in each state

STATE	PASSED	BILL NUMBER	IMPLEMENTED	APPROVAL METHOD	PARTICIPATING AGENCIES	DECLINATION TYPE
ALASKA	Nov. 2016	Measure 1	Mar. 2017	Initiative	Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD)	Back-end-post-transaction notice
CALIFORNIA	Oct. 2015	A 1461	Apr. 2018	Legislative and Governor	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
COLORADO	2017	Administrative Agreement	Phase 1: Feb. 2017, Phase 2: Jul. 2020	Administrative through DMV	DMV	Phase 1: Front-end, phase 2: Back-end mailer
CONNECTICUT*	May-16	Administrative Agreement	7-Aug-18	Administrative through SoS and DMV	DMV	Opt-in system
DELAWARE*	Feb. 2009	Administrative Agreement	Feb. 2009	Administrative through DMV	DMV	Opt-in system
DC	Feb. 2017	B21-0194	Mar. 2017	Congress and City Council	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
GEORGIA	2016	Administrative Agreement	Sept. 2016	Administrative through DMV	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
ILLINOIS	Aug. 2017	SB 1933	Jul. 2018	Legislative and Governor	DMV and designated agencies	Front-end: at point-of-service
MAINE	Jun. 2019	H.P. 1070 - L.D. 1463	Expected 2022	Legislative and Governor	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
MARYLAND	Apr. 2018	SB 1048	Jul. 2019	Legislative	DMV and designated agencies	Front-end: at point-of-service
MASSACHUSETTS	Aug. 2018	HB 4834	Expected Jan. 2020	Legislative and Governor	DMV and designated agencies	Back-end-post-transaction notice
MICHIGAN	Nov. 2018	Ballot initiative	Expected 2019	Initiative	Not implemented yet	Not implemented yet
NEVADA	Nov. 2018	Ballot initiative	No Estimate Available	Initiative	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
NEW JERSEY	Apr. 2018	AB 2014	Nov. 2018	Legislative	DMV and designated agencies	Front-end: at point-of-service
NEW MEXICO	Feb. 2019	HB 84	Action Postponed Indefinitely	Legislative and Governor	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
OREGON	Mar. 2015	HB 2177	Mar. 2015	Legislative	DMV	Back-end-post-transaction notice
RHODE ISLAND	Jul. 2017	HB 5702	Jun. 2018	Legislative	DMV and designated agencies	Front-end: at point-of-service
UTAH*	Mar. 2018	HB 161	May-18	Legislative and Governor		Opt-in system
VERMONT	Apr. 2016	HB 458	Jan. 2017	Legislative	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service
WASHINGTON	Mar. 2018	HB 2595	Jun. 2018	Legislative	DMV and designated agencies	Front-end: at point-of-service
WEST VIRGINIA	May. 2016	HB 4013	Expected 2021	Legislative	DMV	Front-end: at point-of-service

* Not AVR states but implement an opt-in system.

METHODOLOGY

UCLA LPPI researchers conducted a two phase study to assess the implementation and impact of Automatic Voter Registration. During the first phase of data collection, researchers contacted key staff members from the Office of the Secretary of State, Department of Motor Vehicles, Board of Elections, and other state agencies for all states that had enacted AVR. This particular study focuses on the implementation and impact of AVR across the states of Georgia, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Researchers requested AVR related voter registration data from January 2019 through June 2019 for each state and submitted public records requests in efforts to access this data. Given that the implementation of AVR is fairly recent across participating states, most states currently do not produce publicly available AVR data nor do their voter registration data contain an AVR flag. At the time of this study, some states were in transition to implement AVR and were in the process of hiring data analysts to start producing AVR data. In the case of Illinois, the bill that established AVR also mandates that the Illinois State Board of Elections submit an annual public report to the General Assembly and the Governor detailing the progress made towards implementing AVR and providing certain statistics.⁷ However, the reported data is not disaggregated and does not specify new AVR registrants. The state of Vermont shared two data points, the number of records that had been transmitted from the DMV and the approximate number that participated in the 2018 general election, however, these two data points were not sufficient for a thorough analysis. Another bureaucratic roadblock that prevented researchers from acquiring AVR specific data are current federal laws that prohibit disclosing the source of a person's application when it comes through other state agencies.

In the second phase of this study, researchers focused on collecting voter registration data for Georgia, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Vermont over time to identify voter registration trends before and after the implementation of AVR. We also requested disaggregated data with racial/ethnic, age, and gender breakdowns, but none of the aforementioned states were able to provide such data. The primary data used for this analysis were directly provided by the Office of the Secretary of State. Each LPPI state provided yearly, and to the extent possible, monthly voter registration data. Supplemental voter registration data came from publicly available data reported on each state's Board of Elections website. This data was sufficient for researchers to conduct an analysis of voter registration counts prior to the enactment of AVR and post-implementation. Supplemental data disaggregated by race/ethnicity was collected from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and Catalist for the years 2012-2018. Supplemental data tables can be found in **Appendix II, Tables 1 - 9**.

In efforts to develop a cohesive and in-depth analysis of voter registration accessibility and modernization, researchers identified the different modes of voter registration available for all 50 states. Researchers also tracked data to document recent legislative efforts that aim to introduce and/or expand Automatic Voter Registration across all 50 states. For a detailed summary see **Appendix I, Tables 1 and 2**.

STATE PROFILES

GEORGIA

Implementation

In 2016, Georgia's Department of Driver Services and the Attorney General's office administratively approved Automatic Voter Registration (AVR). Its implementation began on September 1st, allowing the Department of Driver Services to transmit information from transactions to the Secretary of State to either update a voter's registration or register the person to vote if they are eligible, then county registrars process the new registration applications or update existing voter registration. At the point of transaction, people may decline being considered for voter registration.

The push for AVR began in Georgia's legislature during the 2015-2016 regular session. State Senators Bill Jackson (R-24), Nan Orrock (D-36), Vincent Fort (D-39), Steve Henson (D-41), and Gail Davenport (D-44) introduced [Senate Bill 31](#) on January 14, 2015, where it later died in committee. The bill originally called for a formal amendment to the Georgia elections code* to allow for circumstances where voters would automatically be registered to vote unless they opt-out. Though the bill never received a vote, the Attorney General's office implemented AVR administratively at the end of that regular legislative session.

Data Limitations

Though AVR in Georgia is established through an administrative agreement between the Attorney General and the Department of Driver Services, applications from transactions are sent directly to the Secretary of State and are processed by county registrars. Data from this program can be tracked by either the Secretary of State or by the county registrars, but it is better if it is done through the Secretary of State, where eligibility is determined and officials can keep track of useful information like rejected registration and the reasons for those rejections.

Currently, the state of Georgia does not offer publicly available data to track the impact of AVR, although it is noted that voter [registration has increased](#) in general. In order to assess whether or not AVR is effective with the most accurate methodology available, a researcher needs access to the state list of registered voters (the voter file), and that needs to include a flag or indicator for the method by which the voter was registered, even if this flag is only included for those who were registered through an AVR application. The voter file does not contain such a flag, though the file itself is available to the public. It can be purchased for \$5,000 for records (\$500 for CD-ROM) for non-commercial purposes only by most entities (state residents, candidates, researchers, voters, political committees, etc.). It contains additional flags for absentee voter status and comes with vote history (the last few elections the voter participated in). Moreover, there are no data sources available that keep track of AVR through aggregated totals at the election precinct, county, city, or any other political district levels.

We initially contacted the Director of Elections and were referred to the Director of Communications who directed us to submit a public records request in order to access information related to AVR. After several attempts, a staff member from the Elections Division agreed to answer some questions regarding Automatic Voter Registration.

According to this information, the Department of Driver Services is responsible for overseeing Automatic Voter Registration but individual counties are responsible for collecting data related to AVR. While the State of Georgia is responsible for holding the data, only counties can access and use this data. In further attempts to identify who oversees and produces data related to AVR, we contacted the elections system specialist. Georgia's voter files can be publicly accessed but do not contain an AVR flag and no data is produced regarding how many individuals have participated or been declined from Automatic Voter Registration. No data was publically available for the State of Georgia at the time of this study.

Voter Registration Accessibility

In addition to AVR, Georgia's basic voter registration is fairly accessible for prospective eligible voters. The voter registration application is available to download online as a [PDF file](#) or in person at any local [county board of registrars' office](#) or election office, public library, public assistance office, recruitment office, schools, and other government offices. Voters can return the application by mail, with postage paid, to the Secretary of State in a pre-addressed envelope. Applicants may also [register online](#) to vote. When registration forms are received by the Secretary of State, applications for eligible prospective voters are then forwarded to county registrars for processing, where voters will be issued a precinct card. The forms and instructions are available statewide in English only, but some jurisdictions and counties may offer them in other languages. Georgia does not currently allow for Election Day Registration.

Georgia's absentee voting is cumbersome. Voters may make a request to vote absentee, but they must apply to do so for each election for which they wish to vote absentee. That is, if there is a Primary Election in March and a General Election later that same year in November, a voter must apply to vote absentee separately for both of those elections. Any voter may request to vote absentee without needing an excuse. Georgia allows voters to [apply for permanent absentee status](#) if they meet selective eligibility criteria. In order to become a permanent absentee voter, a person must be 65 years of age or older, must be a temporary or permanent resident overseas, must be military overseas or stateside, or must have a physical disability.

Program Uptake in Georgia: Impacts that AVR has had on registration [brief analysis]

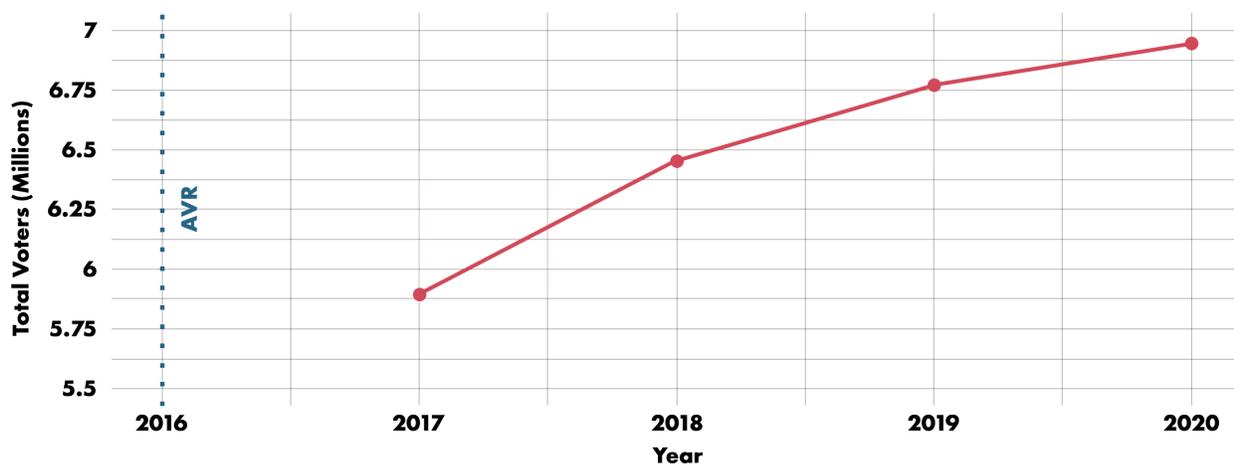
The state of Georgia has seen a considerable increase in voter registration since implementing Automatic Voter Registration, though a lack of data doesn't allow us to rule out other competing explanations. A [local news outlet reports](#) that there were 559,179 voter registration applications through the Department of Driver Services between January 1, 2017 and May 1, 2017, when the same period in 2015 saw 95,102 voter registration applications from the Department of Driver Services for the same period. Though they report on registration statistics from the Secretary of State, it is uncertain whether the 464,000 more applications from the Department of Driver Services are the result of Automatic Voter Registration.

Previously mentioned data limitations keep us from calculating exactly how many registrations are directly attributed to the switch to AVR and in which counties, cities, or other jurisdictions we see the largest increase in registration. Georgia's Secretary of State receives all AVR applications to verify eligibility, then they are sent to county registrar offices to further process, making it hard to track these figures. Some counties do not keep available records beyond what is mandated by the state or federal governments, while others may be thoroughly detailed and state or federal laws limit them from disclosing much.

Program uptake in Georgia is promising. The data included in this report show steady increases in voter registrations in Georgia after the program was implemented in 2016. We requested monthly registration data spanning from a couple years before AVR's implementation up until a couple years after, but received incomplete data from the Secretary of State's office. Due to missing data limitations, we incorporate Georgia registration data from the last month available of each year from 2017 to 2020. **Figure 2** demonstrates a rise in voter registration over the entire period. Though more data is needed to analyze this trend, registration since program uptake seems to remain on the rise.

There are significant limitations in evaluating program uptake. The data presently available does not help determine how many AVR registrants become active voters and cast ballots in elections. It does, however, suggest that voter registration is on the rise in the period after AVR. While this may be the trend, the context of the elections after AVR uptake in Georgia complicates things further, as the 2018 Gubernatorial election saw the Stacey Abrams campaign register record numbers of voters. While other contextual details about Georgia's electoral climate may have contributed to rises in voter registration, nonetheless, the uptake of AVR seems promising.

Figure 2. Georgia Program Uptake: 2017-2019



Georgia implemented AVR on September 1, 2016

ILLINOIS

Implementation

In May of 2017, the Illinois legislature passed SB1933 that established Automatic Voter Registration.⁹ The law implemented a “dual-purpose application” wherein individuals applying for a service offered by a designated Automatic Voter Registration agency and meet the requirements of the federal REAL ID Act of 2005 are automatically registered to vote in Illinois. The bill passed with support from both chambers of the state legislature and immediately went into effect in August 2017 after Governor Bruce Rauner signed it into law. Initially, the law had set July 2018 as the deadline for the Secretary of State’s Office to offer Automatic Voter Registration; however, AVR was not fully available until July of 2019.¹⁰ The Automatic Voter Registration of individuals occurs when eligible individuals apply for or renew a driver’s license, state identification card, or seek services at any of the designated agencies.

The first phase of AVR in Illinois consisted of an “opt-in” process wherein the information of individuals visiting the DMV or other social service agencies are checked in the state’s voter rolls and are then given the option to register or update their information. The most recent phase of AVR was introduced in January 2019, where an “opt-out” system was implemented. The law requires that any information provided to any of the designated Automatic Voter Registration agencies be used to register customers to vote or update an existing registration. Applicants are provided with an opportunity to select one box on the application indicating that they do not wish to be registered during the transaction. In the state of Illinois, designated agencies are determined to have access to reliable personal information and are required to electronically share these data with the State Board of Elections to complete the person’s registration. The State Board of Elections has entered interagency contracts with several divisions of the Department of Human Services, the Department of Employment Security, the Department of Natural Resources, among other state and federal government agencies to participate in the Automatic Voter Registration program.

In 2018, Representative Sonya Harper introduced HB 4517 and HB5718, which aimed to expand AVR.¹¹ The bill would amend the elections code allowing for the Automatic Voter Registration of persons released from the Department of Corrections and issued a state identification card by the Secretary of State. The Act would have included the Department of Corrections as a designated Automatic Voter Registration agency. The latest version of the bill failed to pass in January of 2019.

Data Limitations

In the State of Illinois, the Secretary of State and the State Board of Elections are responsible for establishing the Automatic Voter Registration program and the Election Specialist is the primary supervisor of the program. The Illinois State Board of Elections is mandated to produce an annual public report to the General Assembly and the governor detailing the progress made with the implementation of AVR. The report produced by the Election Specialist and AVR Coordinator details certain statistics of individuals who have been registered to vote through the Online Voter Application and the total applications received by the Secretary of State. AVR data remains limited as the state’s voter file does not contain an AVR flag.

After a close review of the documents, researchers were only able to identify the total applications received, registered, newly registered, updated, and rejected by the Secretary of State. While the Board of Elections provides aggregated counts of registrants, there is no breakdown by registration method, race/ethnicity, gender, nor age.

Voter Registration Accessibility

The state of Illinois has additional modes of registration available for eligible individuals. Eligible persons are able to register to vote in-person at any designated agency. Applicants are also able to register to vote by mail and online by filling out an online voter application. In order to do so, they must have an Illinois driver's license (or state ID number), date the license or ID was issued, the last four digits of social security number, and birthdate.¹² Illinois' online registration has the following languages available: English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi.

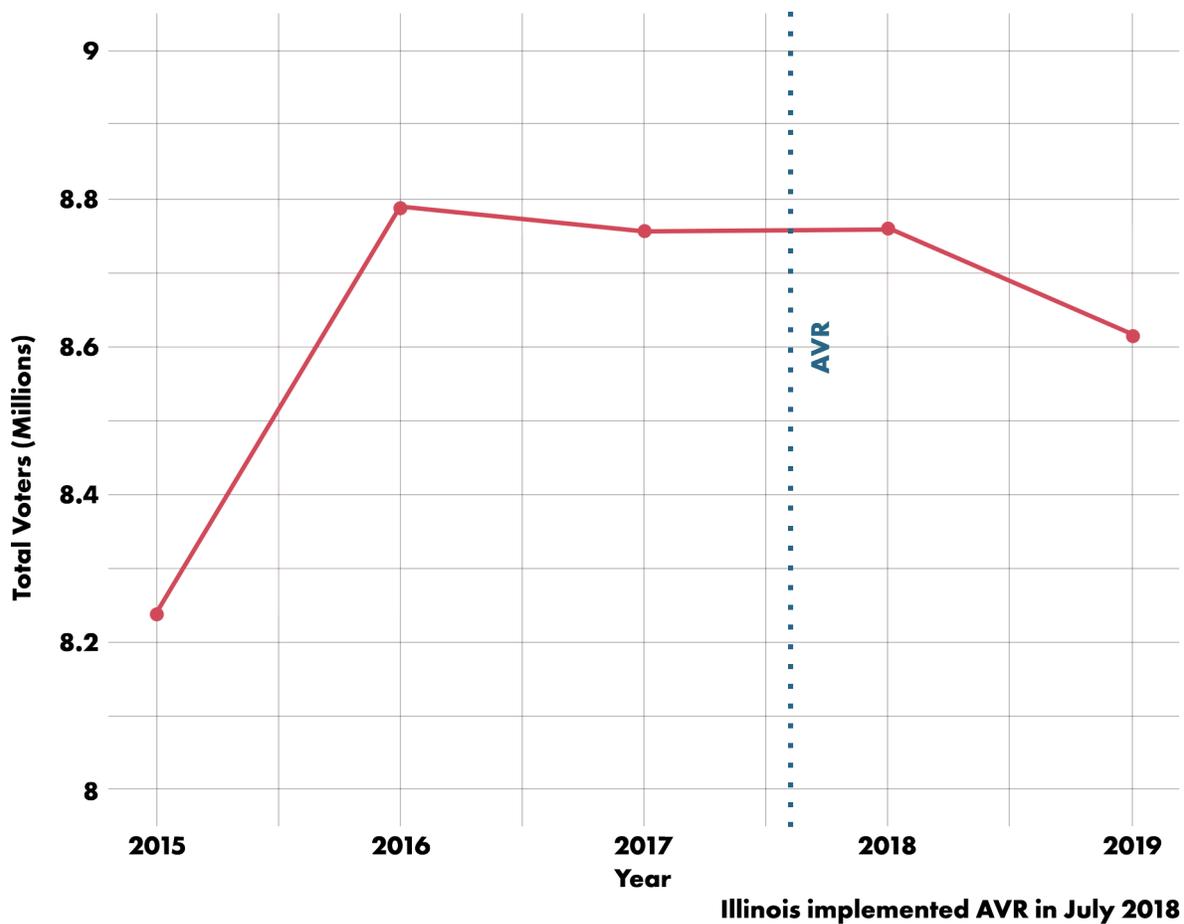
Potential voters are also given the option to register to vote on Election Day. There is a grace period registration in which voters are given an extension to register to vote from the 27th day prior to an election through Election Day, however, this grace period registration is only available in-person at authorized sites. Lastly, any registered voter may also apply for a no-excuse based absentee ballot by requesting to vote by mail ballot without specifying any reason for their absence on Election Day. Illinois does not provide excused based absentee ballots or excused based permanent absentee ballots.

Program Uptake in Illinois: Impacts that AVR has had on registration [brief analysis]

In the state of Illinois voter registration has increased since the implementation of Automatic Voter Registration in 2018. Illinois experienced a delay in the complete implementation of AVR due to delays related to the REAL ID and a change in plans from SOS regarding their front-end processing. Opt-in registration was in place by the original July 1, 2018 deadline. During this phase of AVR implementation, the State Board of Elections reported receiving 224,386 voter registration applications. The Secretary of State received 60,976 new registration applications from July 2, 2018 through November 26, 2018 but did not specify how many of these applications were through AVR.¹³ Since the full implementation of the opt-out system in July 2019, the Illinois Secretary of State recorded 136,321 newly registered voters from November 30, 2018 through November 26, 2019.¹⁴ According to the most recent annual report, over 650,000 new or updated voter registration applications have been electronically transmitted to the State Board of Elections from the Secretary of State. Approximately 25% of the reported transactions, from July 1, 2019 to the publication of the report in November 2019, are opt-out registration applications. While the report provides several data points, the statistics presented are aggregated and include persons who were registered to vote through AVR and those who submitted an application through the state's online voter application. At the time of this report, the state of Illinois' voter file is only available to members of registered political committees and governmental entities and does not contain a flag of how the person became registered.

In order to illustrate the impact of Illinois' uptake of Automatic Voter Registration, we analyzed voter registration data provided by the Illinois Board of Elections (BOE). We requested monthly and yearly voter registration totals from a few years prior to the implementation of AVR and a year after. The Illinois BOE provided us with yearly data of registered voters for general election years from 1988 -2018 and partial monthly data from 2015 – 2019. While the data we received was partial, we were able to record the total number of registered voters for the month of September for non-election years and November for election years. **Figure 3** plots voter registration trends prior to and post-AVR implementation. The data demonstrate evidence that suggest a marginal increase in total registered voters after the uptake of AVR compared to total registrations prior.

Figure 3. Illinois Program Uptake: 2015-2019



RHODE ISLAND

Implementation

In July 2017, Rhode Island passed H 5702 and established its AVR program that automatically registers eligible citizens to vote when they interact with the Department of Motor Vehicles.¹⁵ The bill was a bipartisan approach to registering eligible voters and received overwhelming support from both chambers in the Rhode Island legislature before being signed into law by Governor Gina Raimondo. Automatic Voter Registration was officially implemented at the Department of Motor Vehicles in June 2018 with plans to expand to other state agencies that comply with the standards to verify voter eligibility. The Automatic Voter Registration of eligible individuals in Rhode Island occurs when applying for a driver's license or renewing their existing driver's license, unless they explicitly decline.

The Rhode Island AVR program, like other states, follows an opt-out system wherein eligible individuals are automatically registered to vote at points-of service in any designated AVR agency unless they explicitly decline. Eligible applicants are automatically registered to vote or their current registration is updated to reflect a change in address if it is no longer current when they apply for a driver's license or state issued identification card at the Department of Motor Vehicles. The completed voter registration application is then sent to the central voter registration system by the Department of Motor Vehicles, no later than one business day after the date of acceptance. In order to facilitate this process, provisions of the AVR bill instructed the DMV to ensure that the Rhode Island motor vehicle licensing computer system is capable of meeting the requirements to verify voter eligibility requirements.

Data Limitations

In the State of Rhode Island, the Secretary of State's office oversees voter registration and works with the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Director of Elections is the primary person responsible for overseeing Automatic Voter Registration. Rhode Island's voter registration data contains an AVR flag and just recently began producing Automatic Voter Registration counts but is not yet publicly available. According to email correspondence from the Director of Elections, approximately 6,900 new voters were registered via AVR and were eligible to vote as of October 2018. Of the new AVR registrants, 48% voted in the 2018 election. There were an additional 2,400 Rhode Islanders who registered via AVR but were under eighteen at the time of the election. These statistics were shared by the Director of Elections via direct contact. At the time of this study, the only publically available data available were aggregated precinct level data of likely registered voters due to AVR. This data does not contain a breakdown by race/ethnicity nor gender as it is not a part of their voter registration forms.

Voter Registration Accessibility

Prospective Rhode Island voters are also able to register to vote in-person at designated agencies, by mail, and online. If voters would like to register in-person, they may do so at any designated social services agency. In order to register to vote online, voters must have a Rhode Island driver's license or state ID card. The online registration form is currently available in English and Spanish.¹⁶ In most circumstances, the state of Rhode Island does not allow for same day registration.

In order to be eligible to vote, prospective voters must register to vote at least 30 days before election day. For Presidential elections, however, prospective voters can visit their city hall or town hall to register to vote for the President/Vice-President only.

In order to vote-by-mail or through an absentee ballot in Rhode Island, voters must meet specific circumstances. The circumstances include: a voter who is incapacitated to the extent that they cannot vote at the polls, an elector who is confined to an institution like a resting home, a voter that is temporarily absent from Rhode Island due to military services, a voter who cannot vote at their polling place on the day of the elections, or by filling out a no excuse mail ballot. Rhode Island also provides emergency mail ballots. Currently, Rhode Island does not offer excuse based permanent absentee or no excuse based permanent absentee registration.

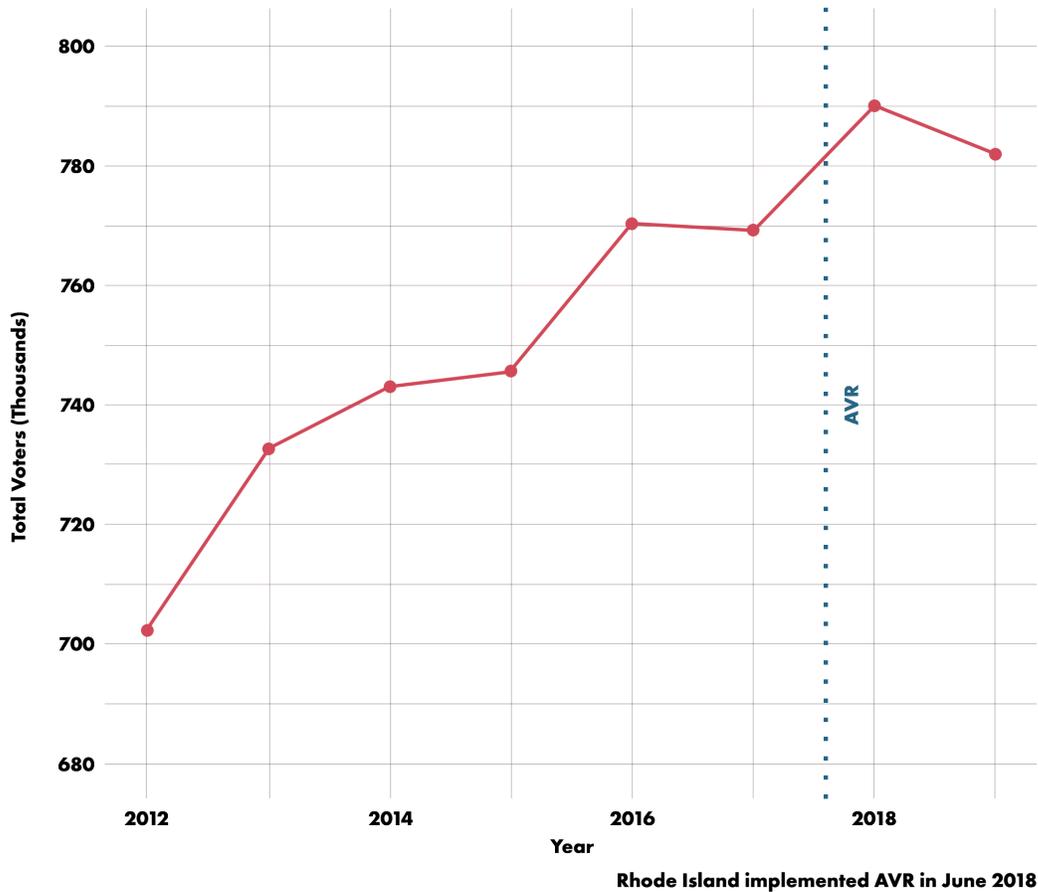
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Program Uptake in Rhode Island: Impacts that AVR has had on registration [brief analysis]

The state of Rhode Island has experienced an increase in registered voters since the uptake of Automatic Voter Registration in 2018. At the time of this study, Rhode Island did not produce any AVR related data and was in the process of hiring a data analyst. Throughout the period of this study we were in constant communication with the Rhode Island Secretary of State and the Director of Elections, who provided us with a few data points over email correspondence. The Director of Elections noted that 6,900 new voters were registered after four months of implementing AVR. While this data was informally shared, the Director of Elections mentioned that they were actively working on producing AVR statistics and making them publicly available.

Program uptake in Rhode Island has been well received as voter registration has increased since the implementation of AVR. The Rhode Island Director of Elections provided us with high quality monthly data of registered voters from 2012-2019. We recorded the total number of registered voters in the month of November for all years. **Figure 4** illustrates voter registration trends over the seven-year period and demonstrates a rise in registered voters after the implementation of AVR. This data provides promising evidence that suggests AVR has led to an increase in registered voters in Rhode Island.

Figure 4. Rhode Island Program Uptake: 2012-2019



VERMONT

Implementation

Vermont currently has Automatic Voter Registration. Representative [Christopher Pearson](#) of Vermont's Progressive Party introduced [H.458 \(Act 80\)](#) into the state House of Representatives on March 10, 2015 where it remained stuck in the Committee on Transportation until January 13, 2016. Once Representative Patrick Brennan pushed to have the bill moved to the Committee on Government Operations, it moved through legislative hurdles much more quickly. The bill was officially passed through the state legislature on April 13, 2016 and on April 28, 2016, Governor Peter Smumlin officially signed it into law. It was then implemented on January 1, 2017. The [Act](#) states that those who apply for or renew a driver's license or identification card through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will be automatically registered to vote if they are eligible, unless they choose to opt-out. Additionally, it calls for the Secretary of State to consult with the Office of the Attorney General for ways to register 16-year-olds who will be 18-years-old on or before the next election through this system.

Data Limitations

In Vermont, AVR establishes a relationship between the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Secretary of State, where the DMV securely sends transaction records to the Secretary of State. Data from this program can be tracked on the receiving end by the Secretary of State, but DMV records would also help in learning how many people opt-out of AVR. Concerned parties should not have to wade between the two entities hoping to piece together whatever non-confidential information they can to assess AVR. Instead, there is a need to keep track of how many applications come out of each DMV and how many opt-out at those DMVs.

Currently, the state does not offer publicly available data to track the impact of AVR, although an [analysis from the Brennan Center](#) finds that registration has increased through AVR. In order to assess whether or not AVR is effective and if it leads to any voter participation, a researcher needs access to the state list of registered voters (the voter file) with indicators for the method by which the voter was registered, even if this flag is only included for those who were registered through an AVR application. The Vermont voter file does not contain such a flag, though the file itself is available to the public for non-commercial use at no charge. It contains additional flags for absentee voter status and comes with vote history (the last few elections the voter participated in). There are no data sources available that keep track of AVR through aggregated totals at the election precinct, county, city, or any other political district levels.

The Elections Division is the primary overseer of the implementation of Automatic Voter Registration. Vermont's voter file does not contain an AVR flag on individual registrants since federal law prohibits disclosing the source of a person's application when it comes through other state agencies. As of January 2017, when Automatic Voter Registration commenced, a total of 39,894 records have been transmitted from the Department of Motor Vehicles. Approximately 11,754 AVR registrants participated in the 2018 General Election. The Elections Division office produces total counts of automatic voter registrants, however, this data is not publically available but they were willing to share specific numbers over the phone and via email. Further, at the time of inquiry no specific race/ethnicity, gender nor age breakdowns were available.

Voter Registration Accessibility

In Vermont, voter registration is relatively accessible. Voters may [register online](#) to vote, or they must submit a registration application to a town or city clerk's office. It is noted that there is no deadline for online registration, though the application is only available online in English. People who register to vote online must also include a photocopy of a current and valid photo ID or passport, a bank statement, utility bill, or government document that contains their name and current address.

A PDF file for the paper application to register can be found [here](#). If a person is registering to vote for the first time in the State and if they are mailing in their application to a town or city clerk's office, they must also submit a photocopy of their identification (see above for valid forms of ID).

Absentee voting provisions are easy to access, as they do not require an excuse to obtain. Any voter can request that the town clerk mail them a ballot for “early and absentee voting.” All requests for an “early voter absentee ballot” must be submitted by 5 p.m. or by the close of the town clerk’s office on the day before an election. Absentee ballots must be returned to the town clerk’s office before the close of the office on the day before the election, or to the polling place before 7 p.m. on the day of the election, in order to be counted. A request for absentee status is required prior to each election via Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) application, as there is no permanent absentee status available.

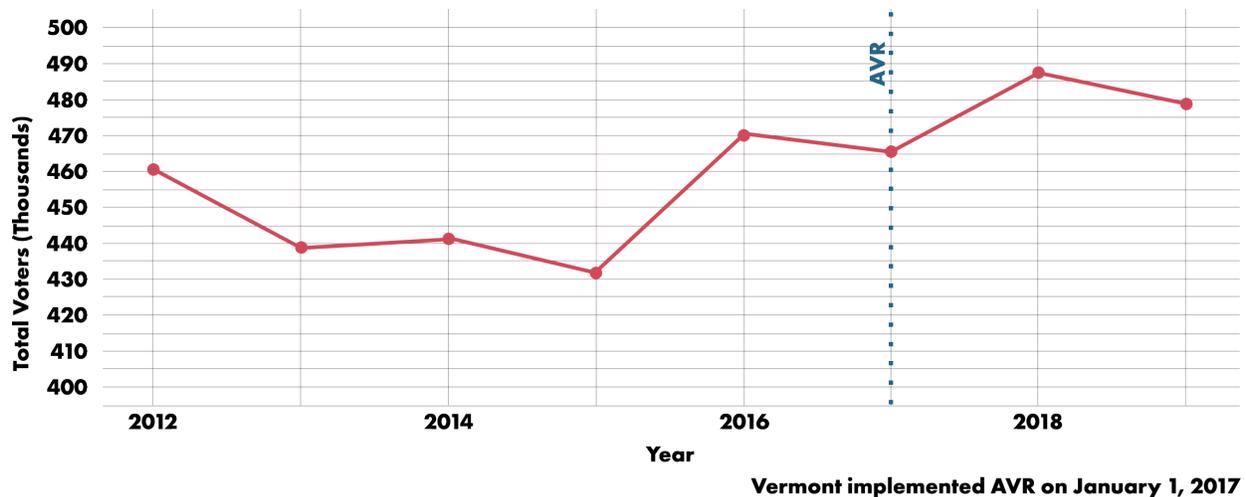
Program Uptake in Vermont: Impacts that AVR has had on registration [brief analysis]

Voter registration in Vermont has increased ever since the uptake of Automatic Voter Registration in 2017. The Elections Division of the Secretary of State’s office provided us with data showing that, at the time of this report, 39,894 records have been transmitted from the Department of Motor Vehicles since January 2017. Additionally, they provided us with data demonstrating that 11,754 AVR registrants participated in the 2018 General Election. Data limitations in what they provided us demonstrate the need for more transparency in AVR related figures and a need for better program monitoring. This data provides some promising evidence that AVR has led to an increase in registrants in Vermont and that a significant portion of these registrants may go on to vote, even in low turnout elections like midterm general elections.

Program uptake in Vermont is good. The data included in this report show some evidence of an increase in total registered voters after AVR uptake, compared to registration prior. We requested data on yearly and monthly registration totals from a couple years before AVR was implemented to a couple years after AVR and found that the Secretary of State’s office was more than willing to provide high quality, complete data where they could. We acquired these total registrant counts for a period from 2012 to 2019. Figure 5 plots what voter registration trends have looked like over the period and demonstrates a rise in voter registration.

We face significant limitations in evaluating program uptake in Vermont without better data. The data presently available does not help determine how many AVR registrants become active voters and cast ballots in elections, although the information the Elections Division shared is evidence that this occurs. Without improvements to the data and how AVR and AVR participation is tracked, we are unable to determine the rate of participation for AVR registrants. **Figure 5** suggests that voter registration is on a modest rise in the period after AVR. There is difficulty in determining exactly how much of this trend is attributable to Vermont’s uptake of AVR. In 2016 and 2020, Vermont US Senator Bernie Sanders ran for the Democratic Party’s Presidential nomination, changing significantly the electoral context in Vermont. Without better data, we are unable to determine to what extent this electoral context may have increased voter registration. Despite these problems, data on the uptake of AVR seems to reveal that AVR’s effect is promising.

Figure 5. Vermont Program Uptake: 2012-2019



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Tracking Data:

In order for both internal and external evaluations to take place, there must be a robust and transparent data tracking system in place. Already, public voting offices are tasked with creating data reports on voter registration and voter turnout, including details on methods of voting used such as absentee versus in-person. Extending this to track and tabulate use of the Automatic Voter Registration system is simple, straightforward, and ensures accountability.

Systematic Data Tracking:

Our study highlights the need for a systematic approach to track Automatic Voter Registration data as well as the need to make this data publicly available. Currently, there is no uniform process for tracking data of individuals who are registered to vote through AVR. While most state agencies that participate in AVR have a relationship with the Secretary of State, there is no clearly defined infrastructure in place for tracking and recording this data. Further, all states hold voter files, but most do not contain an indicator for the method of registration, such as AVR. There is also little to no existing voter registration data with indicators of registration that are broken down by race/ethnicity, age, and gender. While the data on Automatic Voter Registration is scant, this data is rarely publicly available. Our findings suggest that as states move forward with implementing AVR policies they should also implement a systematic data tracking process, and produce publicly available disaggregated AVR data. This data is vital for researchers and key stakeholders to assess the implementation and impact of newfound voter registration programs.

1. Require that AVR participating states submit a report on the progress of AVR implementation and statistics of AVR applicants. In the case of Illinois, the bill that established AVR also mandates that the Illinois State Board of Elections submit an annual public report to the General Assembly and the Governor detailing the progress made towards implementing AVR and providing certain statistics.¹⁷
 - a. States like Rhode Island have also moved forward with hiring a designated AVR data analyst to produce AVR statistics. At the time this report was written, the data analyst was a recent hire and in the process of beginning to AVR statistics that would be publicly available.
 - b. Following best practices of states such as California¹⁸ and Texas¹⁹ which have public databases that report voter registration statistics at different levels, AVR data should be tabulated by:
 - County or political subdivision
 - Age of registrants
 - Party affiliation
 - Surname analysis or BISG²⁰
 - Aggregated to the voting precinct level
 - c. Anonymized aggregate data tables should be publicly posted by state elections office.

AVR Oversight:

Across states, there are differences in how public agencies interact and oversee Automatic Voter Registration, leading to multiple differences in tracking and monitoring the process. Agencies overseeing elections and state-issued identification are almost always separate and in different divisions, creating opportunities for data-sharing shortcomings. We recommend standardization in AVR oversight to address this issue.

1. Appoint a Designated AVR Director and Support Staff
 - a. Require AVR states to have an AVR director who oversees the implementation and communicates with the Secretary of State, DMV, and other involved state agencies. Following the practices of the state of Illinois, the AVR Director should also be responsible for reporting on the progress towards implementing AVR and producing AVR data and/or annual reports to track progress.

- b. The AVR Director should establish relationships and routinely communicate with agencies involved in implementing AVR to address any issues related to the implementation of AVR and the transmission of data to the voter registration database.

2. Infrastructure for Implementation of AVR

- a. Establish an interagency infrastructure that provides the necessary training for the state elections office, DMV, and the Office of the Secretary of State to know about AVR, how it works, and who manages it. Our researchers' attempts at identifying accurate AVR related information highlight the discrepancies as they continuously faced competing information from numerous state agencies and staff.

AVR Implementation:

Where and how voter registration is implemented greatly impacts who is registered to vote. There must be equal and diverse access to public bureaucracies that offer Automatic Voter Registration so that certain subgroups of the population do not have preferential access.

1. Retroactive application of AVR on past qualifying transactions

- a. Requiring AVR to cover recent past transactions at eligible agencies extends the policy to cover as many qualifying people as possible. If the goal of AVR is to register more people to vote, throwing out up-to-date transaction information is bad practice. It arbitrarily limits AVR's reach to the date of implementation, which is largely the product of the speed of the legislative process in addition to how long rulemaking takes to execute that legislation.
 - Example: Oregon, the first AVR state, implemented AVR to include "lookback." This provision identified all qualifying DMV transactions from two years before AVR was implemented, then automatically registered those who were eligible to vote.

2. Transactions at agencies other than the DMV

- a. Include transactions at other agencies in AVR to further reduce the barriers associated with DMV long wait times and appointment accessibility, and to include more agencies which service marginalized groups.
- b. The DMV is the primary agency in AVR policy, with some AVR states only allowing for transactions from the DMV to qualify for new or updated voter registration. This is a problem because at more rural DMV offices, there is often no wait time and people are able to get next-day appointments for at least some of the services offered, while appointment availability at urban offices are much less accessible and wait times are longer.²¹ This creates barriers to accessing AVR for people in urban areas relative to rural areas.

-
- c. AVR is most effective in achieving its goal of expanding the electorate to include those least likely to participate if states partner with agencies that serve these people. Stated earlier in this report, marginalized racial groups and poorer people are the most sensitive to changes in election law and election administration, but they are also the least likely to participate under current and historical electoral conditions. To better incorporate these people, AVR should be available through programs for housing assistance, food assistance programs, medical assistance, etc. run by states.
 - Food assistance programs funded by federal money but administered by states, like The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), requires applicants to fill out information to what AVR-qualifying DMV transactions require, including certification of citizenship and immigration status. Moreover, SNAP programs like California's CalFresh serve people through additional assistance programs like free/reduced school lunch and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), providing more opportunity to incorporate those with the greatest barrier to participation.
 - Example: The state of Alaska offers AVR through applications to their Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD), a fund to pay residents of Alaska if they have lived in the state for at least one year. With such widespread access to this fund for Alaska's residents and explicitly financial gains, AVR transactions should reach more people than at a DMV office. For those who rely on such payments, it is more likely that they will be covered by Alaska's AVR than not.

Streamline Process:

The AVR process should focus on processing registration as quickly as possible and with as little error as possible. This requires a more centralized framework, where states administer the policy and state elections offices are directly accountable for monitoring its progress.

1. States have the authority to determine election laws and administer elections, but they largely delegate administration to counties to conduct elections, with the exceptions of some cities and other special jurisdictions that opt to administer elections on their own separately. States have authority, but counties administer elections. Due to this, AVR in some states first goes through the Secretary of State and then to the counties to process. This threatens AVR. In some poorer counties or counties with fewer resources, it is harder to comply and process AVR applications and to process them in a timely manner. The goal of AVR is not to put strain on county elections offices, but this is what the result that [several Georgia counties](#) experienced upon implementing AVR.

Passive registrants:

AVR is a passive system which registers people to vote through transactions that they would otherwise make without the possibility for registration. People registered through AVR may have one less barrier to participation, but their prior exclusion from the electorate means that they still may not choose to participate without proper notice and incorporation into the process. When a person registers to vote, they are typically sent some generic confirmation in the mail, but in order to encourage participation from AVR registrants, that mail confirmation needs to include information on the process and explicit notice that the person may now vote in elections. Simply, people need to know that they can now vote and they need to know how and where they can vote. For some states, voting may be as simple as showing up to a polling location and checking in, but others require valid forms of identification, so the notice needs to list the steps needed to cast a valid ballot and what the voter's rights are in that state. This should include options voters have to cast a ballot in that state: election day, absentee voting, early voting, etc.

1. Georgia issues a precinct card to every registered voter. [Gwinnett county issues](#) a card with information on each district in which the voter resides at all levels of government; primary, runoff, and general election dates for that calendar year and a disclaimer that city elections are administered separately; instructions on circumstances that require the voter to re-register; etc.

Include an option in the AVR transaction to opt-in to receiving absentee voter status:

States implement AVR to make participation easier, so they should also make voting easier by presenting people the opportunity to receive an absentee ballot in elections. Some AVR states already allow for voters to apply to receive an absentee ballot, with some requiring voters to do so before each election and others allowing for voters to permanently vote absentee. Requiring this additional paperwork makes the most convenient form of voting much less inconvenient to qualify for. At minimum, states with AVR should add this absentee opt-in alternative so that the voter may participate as an absentee for their first election.

CONCLUSION

This report offers a comprehensive review of what different states are doing when it comes to voter registration practices, with a particular focus on Automatic Voter Registration. As is often the case in our federalist system, our research finds that no two states are exactly alike when it comes to engaging their citizenry for elections. When it comes to AVR this is also the case. With 17 states and the District of Columbia now offering some form of Automatic Voter Registration, we conclude that much more work is needed to streamline these operations to create consistency in implementation and consistency in reporting of data. Implementation should be standardized so that the eligible voting public is well-informed of how AVR works, where it is offered, and the benefits of registering to vote. More outreach is needed to communicate with potential voters. Further, not every state provides Automatic Voter Registration at every state agency. For this process to be truly democratic and equal, states should share strategies to roll out AVR at more public bureaucracies to serve more voters. We also found that states varied considerably in what type of data on AVR is publicly reported. In some states researchers can access full details on how many transactions are processed, where, and when, as well as further details on the demographics trends of newly registered voters. In other states there is virtually no public data, often hiding behind a firewall of DMV privacy regulations. States need to work at making AVR data transparent and publicly accountable, in the same way that voter registration records in general are required to be tabulated and reported.

Overall, AVR offers tremendous opportunity to engage more Americans and bring more people into the voter registration system. Whether or not they vote is their own choice, but AVR is right to make it easier and more efficient to become a registered voter in the first place. With more of the public registered, elected officials will have a larger pool of potential voters to communicate with, engage and hopefully encourage to vote. Our democracy thrives when more Americans are fully engaged and AVR offers a step in this direction.

APPENDIX I

Voter Registration Across the United States

In every state except for North Dakota, and in the District of Columbia, people are required to register to vote, but the avenues that people are allowed to use to submit these applications are varied. Counties can decide to go beyond these laws, but they are a minimum requirement. **Table 1** displays the table with all forms of voter registration currently available in each state.

Automatic Voter Registration

Currently 17 states and the District of Columbia have enacted Automatic Voter Registration. Some states like Georgia and Illinois have recently introduced bills to expand AVR. In the state of Georgia, there have been recent efforts to implement AVR in other state agencies. Illinois has also sought to expand AVR by allowing for the Automatic Voter Registration of persons released from the Department of Corrections. The states of Connecticut, Delaware, and Utah have taken steps to modernize their voter registration method by implementing electronic voter registration at DMV offices. However, these states are not considered to have fully implemented AVR because customers must still opt-in to register to vote. **Table 2** tracks all AVR related legislation introduced in the past legislative year that seek to implement or expand AVR across all 50 states.

Mail-in Voter Registration

All states and the District of Columbia allow people to register to vote via a mail-in application. There is a National Mail Voter Registration Form that people can fill out and mail in to their state election offices to register to vote. This form was originally developed through a mandate in the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. The National Mail Voter Registration Form²² currently comes in 15 different languages, including English, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Online Voter Registration

In 40 states and the District of Columbia, people have the additional option to register to vote via an online application.²³ The online voter registration application option is relatively new, with the first state policy implemented in 2002 and most states with the online option implementing it later in the 2010's. For a more detailed visualization of states with online voter registration see **Figure 1**.

Election Day Voter Registration

As shown in **Figure 2**, 21 states and the District of Columbia have a statewide election policy allowing people to register to vote and cast their ballot on election day. Election Day Registration (EDR)²⁴, sometimes known as Same Day Registration, allows eligible residents of a state to register to vote and cast a ballot on the same day, typically on the day of the election but some states allow for this provision on early voting days. Most states with EDR allow for voters to register and vote on election day, but North Carolina²⁵ only allows for EDR during early voting and does not allow for it on Election Day. There is additional variation in EDR availability from state to state. Even in more progressive states like California, statewide EDR is restricted to county election offices or satellite locations that may be hard to reach during polling place hours on election day²⁶, though counties are allowed to offer EDR at more locations. There's no uniformity in what EDR is called. In some states it is known as Conditional Voter Registration and in some states it is known as Same Day Registration.

In-Person Voting

In all states and the District of Columbia, people may register in person to vote. If they choose to register in person, they can either print out their state's application and return it at one of the designated government agencies in their county or they can pick up the application at one of those agencies to fill out there or to return it later for filing.

Absentee Voting

Currently 24 states allow for voters to register to receive an absentee ballot in an election if their circumstances meet at least one of the required excuses. However, 10 states allow people to register to receive absentee ballots in all future elections that they remain eligible for if their circumstances meet at least one of the required excuses. More states allow people to register to receive absentee ballots without requiring them to provide an eligible excuse. Presently, 31 states require no excuse at all to register to receive an absentee ballot during the next election. There are 8 states that require no excuse at all to register to receive an absentee ballot in all future elections in which they are eligible to participate. The states of Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington conduct all elections by mail therefore we listed them as having a form of no-excuse absentee voting. **Figure 3** provides a detailed visualization of the different absentee voting policies in each state.

Table 1. Voter Registration Methods Available Across the United States

STATE	AVR	ELECTION DAY	ABSENTEE REGISTRATION	ABSENTEE-EXCUSE BASED	ABSENTEE-EXCUSE BASED PERMANENT	ABSENTEE-NO EXCUSE REQUIRED	ABSENTEE-NO EXCUSE REQUIRED PERMANENT	ONLINE REGISTRATION	MAIL-IN REGISTRATION	IN-PERSON GOV. AGENCY
ALABAMA			•	X				X	X	X
ALASKA	X		•	X	X	X		X	X	X
ARIZONA			•			X	X	X	X	X
ARKANSAS			•	X					X	X
CALIFORNIA	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
COLORADO	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
CONNECTICUT	•	X	•	X	X			X	X	X
DC	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
DELEWARE	•		•	X	X			X	X	X
FLORIDA			X			X		X	X	X
GEORGIA	X		X	X				X	X	X
HAWAII		X	X			X	X	X	X	X
IDAHO		X	X			X		X	X	X
ILLINOIS	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
INDIANA			•	X		X		X	X	X
IOWA		X	X			X		X	X	X
KANSAS			X	X	X	X		X	X	X
KENTUCKY			•	X				X	X	X
LOUISIANA			•	X				X	X	X
MAINE	X	X	X			X			X	X
MARYLAND	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
MASSACHUSETTS	X		•	X	X			X	X	X
MICHIGAN	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
MINNESOTA		X	X			X	X	X	X	X
MISSISSIPPI			•	X	X				X	X
MISSOURI			•	X	X			X	X	X
MONTANA		X	X			X	X		X	X
NEBRASKA			X			X		X	X	X
NEVADA	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
NEW HAMPSHIRE		X	•	X					X	X
NEW JERSEY	X		X			X	X	•	X	X
NEW MEXICO	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
NEW YORK			•	X	X			X	X	X
NORTH CAROLINA		X	X			X			X	X
NORTH DAKOTA			X			X			X	X
OHIO			X			X		X	X	X
OKLAHOMA			X			X		X	X	X
OREGON	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
PENNSYLVANIA			•	X				X	X	X
PUERTO RICO			•	X					X	X
RHODE ISLAND	X		•			X		X	X	X
SOUTH CAROLINA			•	X				X	X	X
SOUTH DAKOTA			X			X			X	X
TENNESSEE			•	X				X	X	X
TEXAS			•	X					X	X
UTAH	•	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
VERMONT	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
VIRGINIA			•	X				X	X	X
WASHINGTON	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
WEST VIRGINIA	X		•	X				X	X	X
WISCONSIN		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
WYOMING		X	X			X		X	X	X

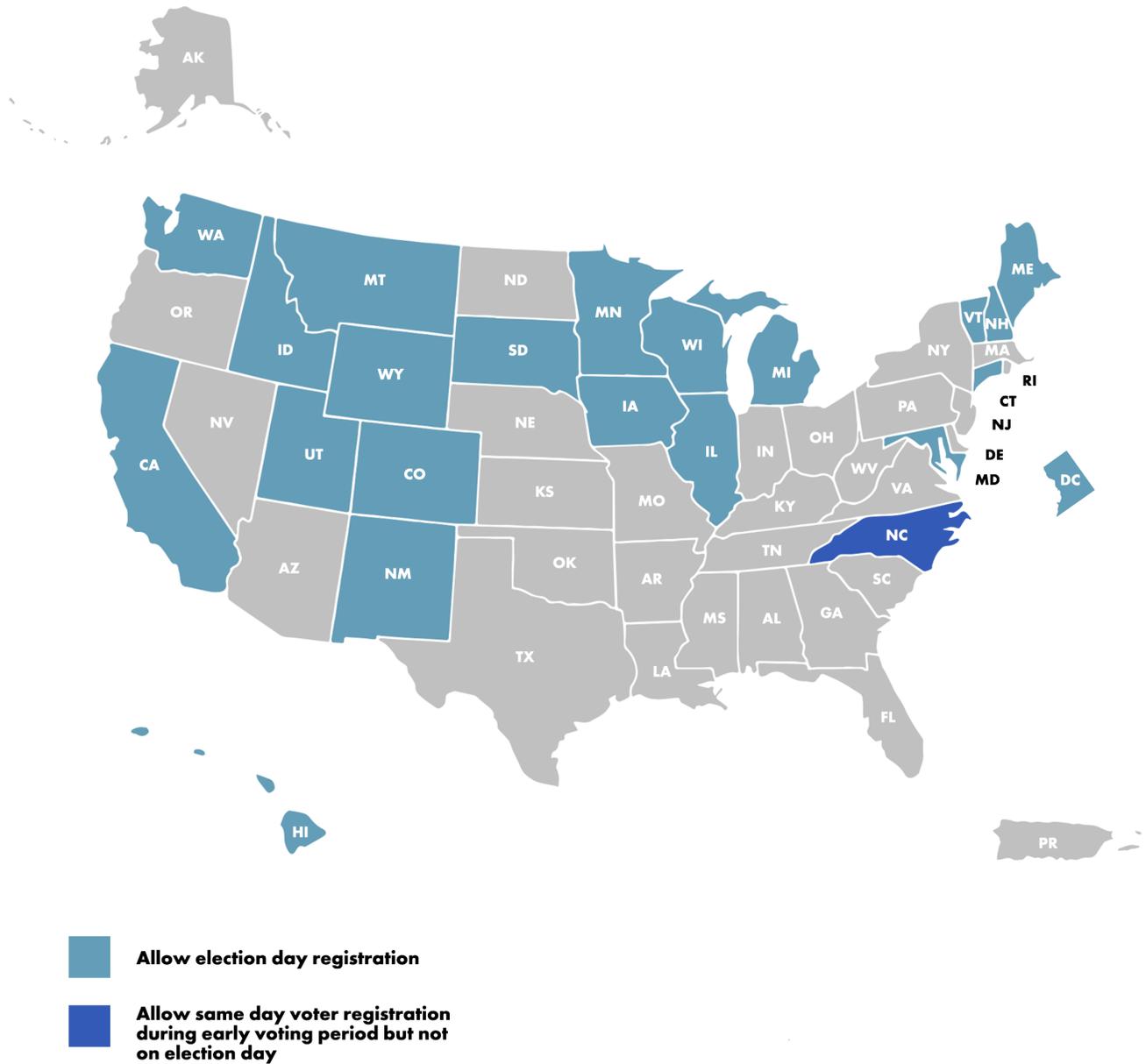
X = full implementation • = conditional implementation

Table 2. AVR Bill Tracker

STATE	YEAR	BILL NUMBER	AVR INTRODUCTION/EXPANSION	DESCRIPTION	OTHER ATTEMPTS
ALABAMA	2019	HB 501	Introduction	This bill would provide for automatic voter registration of qualified persons who apply for or renew a driver's license or nondriver identification card. This bill would provide for automatic updates in voter registration when a person changes the address on his or her driver's license.	
ARIZONA	2019	SCR 1025	Introduction	Under the power of the referendum, as vested in the Legislature, the following measure, relating to voter registration, is enacted to become valid as a law if approved by the voters and on proclamation of the Governor: a person who is applying for a driver license or renewal, including a nonoperating identification license or renewal shall be registered to vote, or shall have an existing voter registration update on completion of the application for the license or renewal. Each person shall be provided an application to decline voter registration at the conclusion of the transaction. The registration shall occur using information the applicant provides according to the requirements.	HB 2215
ARKANSAS	2019	HB 1004	Introduction	An act to create the Arkansas Voter Integrity and Security Act, to require automatic voter registration.	
CALIFORNIA	2019	SB 511	Expansion	This bill would also require the establishment of a committee including representatives of the Secretary of State's office, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and counties, for the purpose of facilitating the sharing of information necessary to implement the program. This bill would further require the Department of Motor Vehicles to train its employees on voter registration practices implementing the program.	
CONNECTICUT	2019	SB 24	Introduction	An act convening automatic voter registration at certain state agencies, admission of applicants to be electors, shall be automatically admitted as an elector unless such applicant declines such admission.	
FLORIDA	2019	SB1760	Introduction	Revising procedures governing voter registration administered by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles; requiring the department to include a voter registration component on specified applications; requiring the Department of State to approve the voter registration component.	
GEORGIA	2019	HB 176	Expansion	Provides that any agency that utilizes applications to provide services or assistance to persons in this state shall provide voter registration applications.	HB 18
HAWAII	2019	SB412	Introduction	Makes an application for voter registration, including an affidavit, part of all driver's license and identification card applications. Automatically registers each applicant who elects to register for voting unless the applicant affirmatively declines to be registered to vote. Requires sharing of information among the counties, DOT, and election personnel.	HB 1379; HB 1544; HB 1203; HB1217
IDAHO	2019	HB 49	Introduction	Amends existing law to provide for the Motor Voter Act, to provide for registration of eligible electors at driver's licensing offices, and to provide that the Division of Motor Vehicles shall forward registration applications to the office of the county clerk.	
ILLINOIS	2018	HB 5617	Expansion	Amends the Election Code. Allows for the automatic voter registration of persons released from the Department of Corrections and issued standard Illinois Identification Cards by the Secretary of State. Includes the Department of Corrections as a "designated automatic voter registration agency" and a "designated government agency" for the purposes of registering voters under the Act. Provides that the Department of Corrections shall be considered a designated government agency until the designated automatic voter registration agency provisions of the Code are fully implemented, at which point, the Department of Corrections shall be considered a designated automatic voter registration agency and cease to be a designated government agency. Amends the Unified Code of Corrections. Provides that upon the release of a committed person on parole, mandatory supervised release, final discharge, pardon, or release for wrongful imprisonment, the Department of Corrections shall provide such person with information concerning voter registration. Makes a conforming change in the Code. Amends the Illinois Identification Card Act to make a conforming change.	
INDIANA	2019	SB 349	Introduction	Provides that an application to obtain or renew a motor vehicle driver's license or permit or an identification card serves as a voter registration application unless the applicant expressly declines on the application to register to vote.	
IOWA	2019	SF 56	Introduction	The bill also allows for automatic voter registration to be completed based upon information received from voter registration agencies, including, under the bill, the department of education, the board of regents and each institution governed by the board of regents, and other state offices that collect personal information sufficient to complete a voter registration application.	HF 56; HF 72; HF 84;

KANSAS	2019	SB159	Introduction	A bill for an act providing for the registration of eligible electors upon review of electronic records received from state agencies and including effective date provisions.	
KENTUCKY	2019	HB364	Introduction	An act to provide that each application for a motor vehicle driver's license shall be a simultaneous application for voter registration unless declined by the applicant.	
LOUISIANA	2019	HB 251	Introduction	Provides for automatic voter registration through driver's license facilities, provides relative to the powers, functions, and duties of the deputy secretary for public safety services of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections.	
MINNESOTA	2020	HF 1328	Introduction	An opt-in motor voter feature where voters can register to vote by checking a box on their driver's license or state ID application or renewal form.	SF 124; HF 45; HF 625; HF HF 951; SF 612; SF 1189
MISSISSIPPI	2019	HB 423	Introduction	Automatic voter registration; authorize for those who apply for the issuance, renewal or change of address of a driver's license.	HB 639; HB 1234; HB 1007
MISSOURI	2019	HB624	Introduction	This bill would enable anyone who is eligible to vote in the state of Missouri shall be registered to vote unless they opt out.	
MONTANA	2019	HB 536	Introduction	A bill that secures voter registration when applying for Driver's License or ID card, unless the applicant opts-out.	
NEBRASKA	2020	LB 687	Introduction	This bill allows for voter registration of applicants for driver's licenses and state identification cards.	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	2019	SB 7	Introduction	An act establishing the secure modern accurate registration act (SMART ACT). Voter registration at the Division of Motor Vehicles – any time a person applies for a driver's license, a nondriver's picture identification card, or a record change to a driver's license or nondriver's picture identification card with the division of motor vehicles, as specified below, during which he or she demonstrates that he or she is a United States citizen, 18 years of age or older, and a resident of New Hampshire, he or she shall, without taking any other action, automatically apply to register to vote unless he or she declines to submit such registration application.	
NEW JERSEY	2019	SB 648	Expansion	Establishes pilot program in Camden County directing MVC to automatically transmit applicant information to Secretary of State for automatic voter registration. Upon receiving an applicant's electronic record and digitized signature, the Secretary of State would transmit the information to the Camden County commissioner of registration. The county commissioner of registration would then notify the applicant of the automatic voter registration and inform the applicant of the process to decline being registered to vote or, if not declining, of the option to select a political party affiliation.	AB 1178
NEW YORK	2020	SB 139	Introduction	An act to amend the election law, in relation to providing for automatic voter registration; establishing a task force on automatic voter registration; and providing for the repeal of certain provisions upon expiration thereof.	S 01278; A 02209; A 03288; A 03005; A 06270; A 06222; S 05215; A 07348; S 06457; A 08280
NORTH CAROLINA	2019	H 589	Introduction	An act to allow for automatic voter registration (AVR) in different public agencies and mandates the state board of elections to inform people about AVR.	S 641; H 574; S 495
OKLAHOMA	2019	HB 2087	Introduction	Allowing for the implementation of automatic voter registration.	HB 2535
PENNSYLVANIA	2019	HB 306	Introduction	Further provide methods of voter registration, providing for automatic registration of qualified electors and further providing for time and for approval of registration applications	HB 1556; HB 1560
SOUTH CAROLINA	2019	H 3041	Introduction	Relating to the application for more vehicles driver's license and voter registration, so as to provide that each state identification card application or motor vehicle driver's license application, including renewal applications, submitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles shall serve as an application for voter registration.	H 0566
TENNESSEE	2019	HB 1002	Introduction	As introduced, requires every applicant for a driver license or photo identification card to be automatically registered to vote upon the applicant's 18th birthday; makes other related revisions.	SB 0837; SB 0777; HB 0334; SB 0822; HB 0553; SB 0998; HB 1210
TEXAS	2019	HB 79	Introduction	Relating to voter registration through the Department of Public Safety, the voter registrar of each county shall automatically register any county resident who is eligible to vote.	HB 140; SB 103; HB 508; SB 1053; HB 2728; SB 2280; SB 103
VIRGINIA	2019	SB 1063	Introduction	Provides for the automatic electronic transmission by the Department of Motor Vehicles to the Department of Elections of certain information for any person coming into an office of the Department of Motor Vehicles or	HB 2390

Figure 2. States That Allow Election Day Voter Registration



APPENDIX II

Supplemental Voter Registration Data

Table 1. Catalist Voter Registration Counts for the State of Georgia

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER	TOTAL
2012	3,798,479	1,951,938	138,841	110,092	5,494	62,945	6,067,789
2014	3,704,262	1,945,740	146,533	114,225	6,064	67,252	5,984,076
2016	4,009,322	2,147,698	192,594	147,200	8,515	83,549	6,588,878
2018	4,093,484	2,266,130	241,675	177,518	11,321	91,682	6,881,810

Table 2. Catalist Voter Registration Counts for the State of Illinois

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER	TOTAL
2012	6,041,217	1,318,170	693,164	274,407	27,334	15,605	8,369,897
2014	5,832,118	1,261,327	704,196	277,529	27,087	15,023	8,117,280
2016	6,079,503	1,346,782	814,701	322,484	30,033	16,340	8,609,843
2018	6,026,765	1,329,996	858,341	342,374	30,904	16,324	8,604,704

Table 3. Catalist Voter Registration Counts for the State of Rhode Island

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER	TOTAL
2012	604,231	36,521	57,652	15,327	4,977	2,467	721,175
2014	608,499	38,730	64,002	16,467	5,281	2,595	735,574
2016	622,985	42,766	74,855	18,257	5,779	2,844	767,486
2018	632,270	44,802	79,805	19,470	6,076	2,899	785,322

Table 4. Catalist Voter Registration Counts for the State of Vermont

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER	TOTAL
2012	422,668	5,858	5,751	3,541	4,415	292	442,525
2014	410,067	5,613	5,680	3,454	4,400	290	429,504
2016	440,326	6,639	6,843	4,313	4,894	322	463,337
2018	454,759	6,639	7,577	4,783	5,194	316	479,268

Table 5. CPS Voter Registration Counts for the State of Georgia

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN
2012	3,006,000	1,511,000	140,000	86,000
2014	2,708,000	1,385,000	99,000	133,000
2016	3,028,000	1,578,000	168,000	106,000
2018	2,973,000	1,600,000	135,000	108,000

Table 6. CPS Voter Registration Counts for the State of Illinois

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN
2012	4,762,000	1,009,000	415,000	243,000
2014	4,269,000	801,000	410,000	192,000
2016	4,839,000	963,000	634,000	244,000
2018	4,436,000	895,000	537,000	214,000

Table 7. CPS Voter Registration Counts for the State of Rhode Island

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN
2012	472,000	41,000	37,000	10,000
2014	434,000	32,000	22,000	2,000
2016	417,000	47,000	67,000	10,000
2018	447,000	34,000	44,000	7,000

Table 8. CPS Voter Registration Counts for the State of Vermont

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN
2012	339,000	3,000	3,000	4,000
2014	316,000	3,000	2,000	1,000
2016	336,000	3,000	3,000	5,000
2018	323,000	3,000	7,000	5,000

Table 9. CPS, Secretary of State, and Catalist Total Voter Registration Counts from 2012-2018

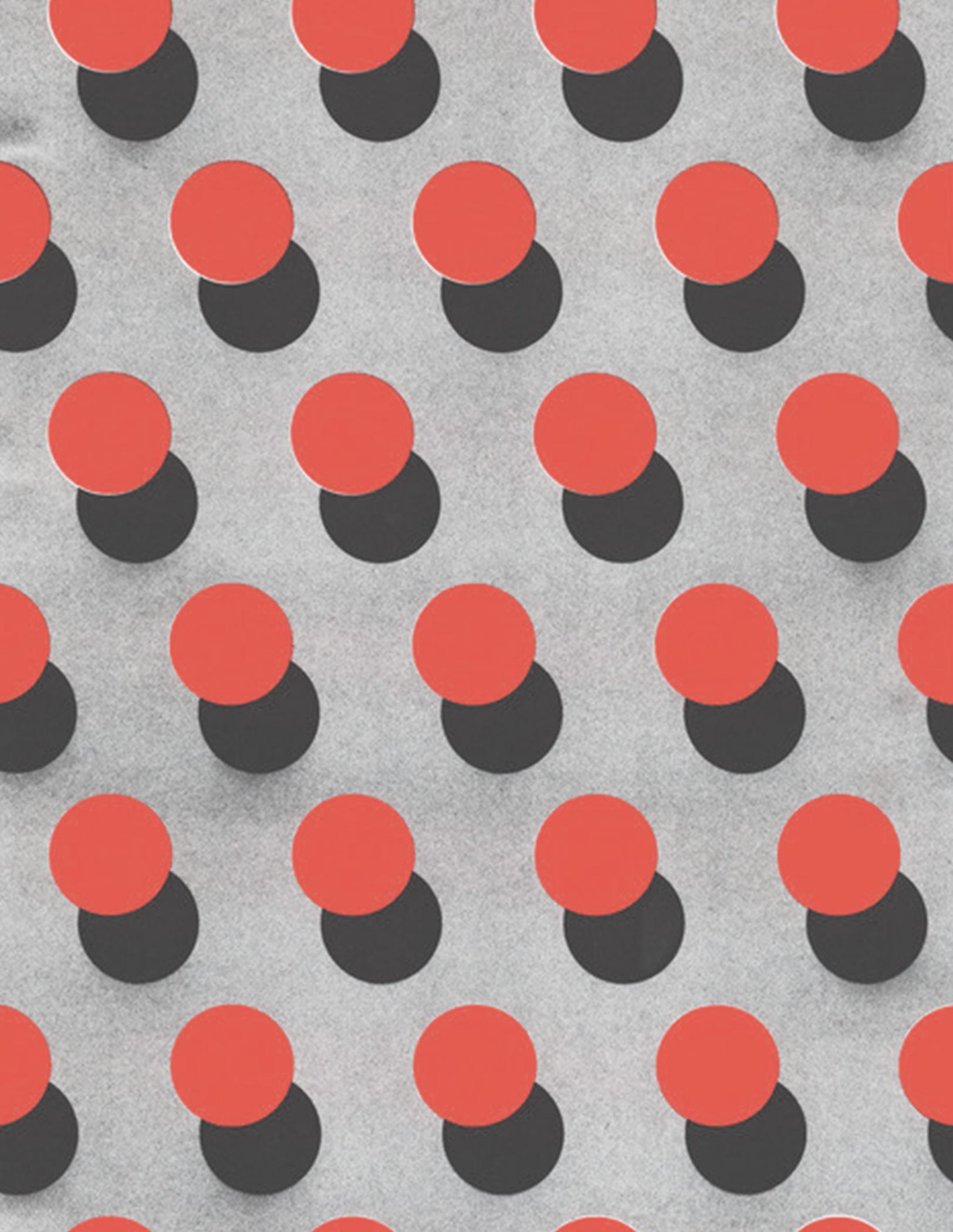
STATE	YEAR	CPS TOTAL REGISTERED	SOS TOTAL REGISTERED	CATALIST TOTAL REGISTERED
GEORGIA	2012	4,767,000	5,360,701	6,067,789
GEORGIA	2014	4,306,000	6,053,385	5,984,076
GEORGIA	2016	4,892,000	6,713,531	6,588,878
GEORGIA	2018	4,840,000	7,006,952	6,881,810
ILLINOIS	2012	6,425,000	7,520,722	8,369,897
ILLINOIS	2014	5,716,000	7,483,031	8,117,280
ILLINOIS	2016	6,665,000	8,029,847	8,609,843
ILLINOIS	2018	6,068,000	8,099,372	8,604,704
RHODE ISLAND	2012	552,000	725,309	721,175
RHODE ISLAND	2014	486,000	752,050	735,574
RHODE ISLAND	2016	538,000	782,693	767,486
RHODE ISLAND	2018	532,000	787,295	785,322
VERMONT	2012	357,000	461,237	442,525
VERMONT	2014	324,000	439,782	429,504
VERMONT	2016	351,000	471,619	463,337
VERMONT	2018	343,000	490,074	479,268

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Morris, Kevin and Peter Dunphy. "AVR Impact on State Voter Registration." 2019. Brennan Center for Justice.
- ² Id.
- ³ Georgia 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates: White 52.4%, Black 32.4%, Hispanic or Latino 9.8%, Asian 4.3%, Other 2.8%.
- ⁴ District of Columbia 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates: Black 46.4%, White 37.1%, Hispanic or Latino 11.3%, Asian 4.4%, Other 3.5%.
- ⁵ Bush v. Gore, 531 U.S. 98 (2000).
- ⁶ The states of Connecticut, Delaware, and Utah currently have an opt-in system in place.
- ⁷ Illinois Public Act 100-O464. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/100/PDF/100-O464.pdf>
- ⁸ Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.
- ⁹ <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/100/PDF/100-O464.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Illinois State Board of Elections Annual Report. <https://www.elections.il.gov/AboutTheBoard/PressReleases.aspx?Year=XZIX-5QqW%2fVjlrPpUTWkl4A%3d%3d&T=637233669275955720>
- ¹¹ HB 4517 <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=B&DocNum=4517&GAID=14&SessionID=91&LegID=109387>
- ¹² <https://ova.elections.il.gov/>
- ¹³ Illinois State Board of Elections, Annual Report. December 2018. <https://www.elections.il.gov/AboutTheBoard/PressReleases.aspx?Year=XZIX5QqW%2fVjlrPpUTWkl4A%3d%3d&T=637233669275955720>
- ¹⁴ Illinois State Board of Elections, Annual Report. November 2019. <https://www.elections.il.gov/AboutTheBoard/PressReleases.aspx?Year=XZIX5QqW%2fVjlrPpUTWkl4A%3d%3d&T=637233669275955720>
- ¹⁵ <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText17/HouseText17/H57O2A.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>
- ¹⁷ Illinois Public Act 100-O464. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/100/PDF/100-O464.pdf>
- ¹⁸ California statewide database, e.g. 2018: <https://statewidedatabase.org/d10/g18.html>
- ¹⁹ Texas Legislative Council, Capitol Data Portal: <https://data.capitol.texas.gov/>
- ²⁰ Improving Ecological Inference by Predicting Individual Ethnicity from Voter Registration Records. <https://imai.fas.harvard.edu/research/files/race.pdf>
- ²¹ YoGov Wizards. "The 21 California DMV's with the Longest Appointment Wait Times". 2017. <https://yogov.org/blog/21-california-dmvs-longest-appointment-wait-times>
- ²² National Mail Voter Registration Form. <https://www.eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form>
- ²³ Online Voter Registration. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx#Table%20of%20states%20w/ovr>
- ²⁴ Same Day Registration (SDR). <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/same-day-registration.aspx>
- ²⁵ North Carolina Same Day Registration and One-Stop Early Voting. <https://www.ncsbe.gov/Voting-Options/One-Stop-Early-Voting>
- ²⁶ California Conditional Voting. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/conditional-voter-reg>

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