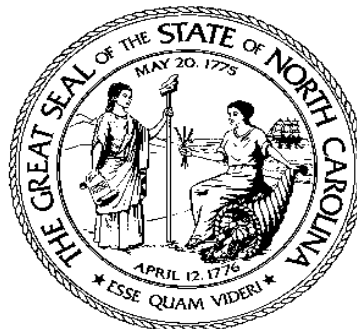


2008 NASCIO RECOGNITION AWARDS

NC Motor Voter Imaging

Cross-Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships Category

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Submitted by:

North Carolina State Board of Elections

B. Executive Summary

The Motor Voter Imaging initiative is a joint effort of the North Carolina State Board of Elections (SBE); the NC Department of Transportation (DOT) and the 130 local Division of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices; and the 100 County Board of Elections (CBE) to improve the efficiency and integrity of North Carolina's voter registrations. Faced with an increasing number of voter registration applications being processed through the DMV offices, the initial business process and technology were contributing to an increase in additional staff-hours needed by all agencies and an increase of ineligible voter registrations resulting from the manual contact points.

While electronic voter data was captured by the DOT system during the driver license application process, state laws and policies still required the paper version of the voter registration application to be physically delivered to the local county board of elections offices. This resulted in delays to complete the verification and validation of voter applications and also presented an increasing problem of missing documents that were lost during the delivery process. The implications of incomplete voter applications can often go unnoticed for months, usually until the voter attempts to cast a ballot in an election. Determining where in the workflow an application was jeopardized was nearly an impossible task, especially if months have passed since the original application was created.

A multi-agency team performed a root-cause analysis for each touch-point that the voter applications crossed to identify the problems and potential solutions. The project team identified three points where the integrity of the application was most at risk; 1) false "new" voter records in the driver license system with no signed paper version of the voter application resulting in denied applications, 2) sorting and delivery of the paper copies of the applications that either were delivered incorrectly, or were unaccounted for, and 3) voter records transferred to the boards of elections from DOT were at risk of being "linked" with the wrong scanned images of the paper copies, resulting in the wrong signature assignments within the voter registration system. Given a minimal budget and restrictions of multiple systems, the project team identified and implemented a scanning solution to eliminate the sorting and delivery process in its entirety, and built minor system improvements for both DOT's State Automated Driver License System (SADLS) and SBE's Statewide Elections Information System (SEIMS) to improve the data entry process and to reduce, if not eliminate, the lost or ineligible voter applications.

As a result of the collaborative efforts, North Carolina was able to not only reduce the amount of time and staff-hours needed to register a voter, but ultimately improved the accountability and reduced the number of lost voter's applications by 54%. Voter registration applications received at DMV offices are now processed near real-time with both the electronic data and the scanned image of the voter signature transmitted from SADLS to SEIMS on a daily basis and then automatically distributed to the respective CBE offices to verify the voter's eligibility. The reduction in turnaround from more than a week to just a day has allowed staff at all agencies the ability to resolve issues before they reach the voter on Election Day.

C. Problem Description

In 1995, the North Carolina State Board of Elections (SBE), County Board of Elections (CBE) and Department of Transportation (DOT) implemented an automated process that allowed North Carolina citizens the opportunity to register to vote at the local Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices in conjunction with applying for or renewing their state driver license or identification card. The initial solution was simple but effective in meeting the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, popularly known as "Motor Voter". While applying for a driver's license, personal information entered into the DOT's State Automated Driver License System (SADLS) during the license intake process is also applied to a voter registration application form and then printed to be reviewed and signed by the applicant. Although the personal data stored in the system is transferred electronically to the respective CBE offices to be processed by the voter registration system, the paper version of the voter application was manually sorted and mailed to the local CBE offices due to state legal and policy restrictions on electronic and digitized copies of signatures.

This first solution eliminated the need for double data entry; however, it imposed additional financial and administrative burdens for the DMV and CBE offices with the handling of the paper copies. The electronic data was transferred during a batch process on a nightly basis. Voter application records received during this process waited in a review state until the paper copy was received by the boards of elections to verify the voter information and record the signature. Delivery of the paper records could take up to a week or more, with over 25% being lost in the DMV sorting process or the USPS delivery process resulting in voter applications that have to be denied. Once the paper records are received, election staff was tasked with scanning these records and then manually linking the image to its respective electronic record, a task that requires approximately three minutes per application.¹ In addition to the extra time needed to process the Motor Voter applications, the most egregious problem faced is when a voter, who believes they registered to vote at the DMV, attempts to vote but is unable to because of an incomplete or missing Motor Voter application.

C1. Problem Solution

During 2004 and 2005, the State Board of Elections had the opportunity to improve the Statewide Elections Information System (SEIMS) to meet federal and state standards facilitated by the funding of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) efforts to improve the technology and data management and accuracy of voter registrations. SBE led a collaborative effort between NC DOT and the local CBE agencies to improve the Motor

¹ In 2000, 50% of the County Board of Elections were scanning voter registration forms, by 2006 98% of the counties, and by 2008, all 100 counties had incorporated scanning and image management.

Voter application technology and process to

- ✓ reduce the delay between the electronic and paper records,
- ✓ reduce the number of lost or misdirected Motor Voter applications, and
- ✓ improve the search capabilities needed to determine if in fact a voter had duly registered at a DMV office.

First, SBE worked with the North Carolina General Assembly to modify state laws to recognize the electronic version of the voter application form as an official document. While this allowed the agencies to use computer generated forms, state policies still required that the voter must provide a written signature. This meant that DMV would still be required to capture the voter's signature on paper. SBE, DOT and the CBE agencies joined together to design and implement a solution that would capture the written signature, reduce the delays in processing a voter's application and eliminate the monetary costs of mailing the paper forms on a weekly basis.

In 2007, a new scanning process was implemented when an applicant registers to vote at a DMV office. The Motor Voter registration card information is generated when a person applying for a license or ID card answers yes to the question "Would you like to register to vote?" The voter registration card is printed in the branch office and signed by the applicant. Each signed card is then scanned at the branch office. The scanned images are matched with the data entered during the Motor Voter registration process. A barcode consisting of customer id and timestamp is placed on the new voter registration card. This barcode is used to match the database record with the scanned image. Automated edits are performed to verify that for every card generated there is a scanned image, for every scanned image created there is a database entry and to search for and eliminate duplicates.

The solution included the scanning and transmission of voter registration documents on existing Multi Function Printers (MFP) located in DMV Driver License offices statewide. The scanned images are stored on the middleware LDSS servers and verified against the voter registration data stored on the SADLS database (DB2). Both scanned images and SADLS customer information is then transmitted to SBE via IBM WebSphere MQ series messaging service for SBE use. An error report is generated for any records that are not matched with a scanned image and a copy of this report is sent to the staff at the DMV help desk for review and prompt problem resolution.

The Scanning Improvement process has been in place for almost two years, and its success has led to two other data exchange efforts with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Correction. Those efforts have been live for the past year.

D. Significance to the Improvement of the Operation of Government

The Motor Voter Project was a joint initiative of the NC State Board of Elections and the NC DOT that benefits all 100 County Board of Elections and 128 DMV offices throughout North Carolina.

As a result of its benefits, including elimination of redundant data entry and improved accuracy, the Motor Voter Project has proven to be extremely popular among both the elections community and the DMV workers. The program required and received the strong commitment of all government agencies involved, making it a perfect example of collaboration between multiple state and local government agencies. The NC State Board of Elections continues to work with the DOT/DMV office to improve the system. One of these improvements is capturing changes of address at the DMV office and electronically sending them to the State Board of Elections office to be processed so the voter registration record is updated and eliminating many provisional ballots being filed on Election Day.

This successful collaboration was the impetus to begin collaborating with other government agencies listed below:

DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services. For the past year, DHHS has been sending information from death certificates to the Election Boards so that registrations can be cancelled and the voter file kept up to date.

DOC – Department of Corrections. Local and State election boards are receiving electronic data from DOC regarding registered voters who are convicted felons and are no longer eligible to vote. In addition, they also receive data from DOC of felons who have completed their sentences and are now able to register to vote.

E. Public Value of the Project

In general, the electronic processing of North Carolina Voter Registrations through the DMV offices provides the following benefits:

1. Faster – Voter registration at the DMV offices are now electronically sent to the State Board of Elections instead of a labor intensive manual process of moving paper. Voter Registrations are now completed within hours instead of weeks.
2. Accurate – Since removing the manual process of data entry and delivery of voter registrations to the Board of Elections, the number of missing Motor Voter registrations has been reduced by 75%. In addition, since the information is entered into the computer system once instead of twice, the data entry errors have significantly decreased.
3. Cost Effective – Since this project began, DMV and the State Board of Elections have had a significant cost savings in the following areas:
 - a. Eliminated shipping costs of sending voter registrations to Election Boards and costs of paper, printing, etc.
 - b. Reduced labor costs since there is no paper to move and no duplicate data entry.

Conclusion

This program represents a positive experience for all those involved—from state agencies to citizens. The DMV wins by having a single, standard electronic process to

collect voter registrations instead of a labor intensive and time consuming manual process. The State Board of Elections wins by being able to collect the data electronically and shipping it to the County Board of Elections. The public wins by being able to verify their registration online in a timely fashion.

With removing the human interaction required for the sorting and delivery and implementing checks-and-balances at multiple points within the workflow, North Carolina has seen an overall reduction in costs resulting from issue resolutions. Even more importantly, the number of missing Motor Voter registrations has been reduced by 75%. The bottom line from this cross boundary project is better service for the residents of North Carolina and more accountability and integrity in the elections conducted in our state.