



The National Voter Registration Act and Voter Registration at Public Assistance Agencies

What is the National Voter Registration Act?

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was passed by Congress in 1993 to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to vote. To make voter registration easier and more accessible, the NVRA includes provisions for mail-in voter registration forms, and requires states to offer voter registration services at public agencies. Although state motor vehicle departments are the most well known of these agencies, other public assistance offices are also required to proactively register voters.

What public agencies are covered by the NVRA?

Any agency or office in a state that administers or provides services or assistance under any public assistance program is required by law to offer voter registration. These include:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program — SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps)
- State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP)
- WIC — Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- State-funded programs for people with disabilities

States may designate other public agencies or offices as voter registration sites, such as libraries, schools, licensing bureaus, and unemployment compensation offices. Contact your Secretary of State's office to learn more about NVRA designated organizations in your state.

What state disability organizations are covered by the NVRA?

Each state designates which disability agencies are required to serve as NVRA voter registration sites. These typically include offices providing vocational rehabilitation, transportation, job training, education, counseling, rehabilitation, or independent-living services for persons with disabilities.

Contact your Secretary of State's office to learn more about NVRA designated organizations in your state.

What voter registration services must be offered?

Designated agencies and offices must: (1) provide voter registration forms to clients and constituents and ask each person about registering to vote; (2) offer to assist registrants with completing the form, and; (3) accept and promptly return completed forms to the proper elections officials.

Do all states implement the NVRA? Is it effective?

Unfortunately many states and nonprofit agencies do not enforce or comply with their obligation to promote voter registration at public assistance agencies. However, in recent years the number of states that do has grown, due to advocacy and legal action by public interest organizations. In states that have acted to improve compliance, the number of voter registration applications from individuals receiving public assistance have increased dramatically.

Are any states exempt from the NVRA?

Yes, states that offer Election Day Registration are exempt.

How can I learn more?

Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, NVRA FAQ, http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/nvra/nvra_faq.php

Project Vote, Public Assistance Agency Registration Project, www.projectvote.org

Demos, Democracy and Elections, www.demos.org